

## Listening to your gut has merit

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"If only I had listened to that little voice in the back of my head." How often have you thought that after hiring someone, making a choice in your career or saying or not saying something?

It usually takes getting burned before you listen to that instinctive or intuitive sense you have about a person or situation. But should you always do what that little voice suggests?

Thomas Ingrassia wished he had. He took a job managing a business for a celebrity that seemed to fit his "dream since childhood to work in the entertainment industry," he says. He had left a good job in higher education, and even though something kept telling him to "be cautious and watch out for myself, I didn't listen.

"I think I knew at a gut level right from the start that it would not be a smooth working relationship." Only after he spent "a considerable sum of my money keeping things running while I wasn't receiving compensation for my work" did he leave.

"I should have listened to my gut sooner," he laments.

Photographer Mark Sincevich remembers the day he was asked to come on board full time by the president of a software startup company where he was a part-time consultant.

"I got the pang in my gut in the living room of my townhouse as I was taking a few days to think the decision over," he said. "I ignored my gut, because I saw the promise of stock options. I would later regret the decision."

It can also work the other way. David Becker of Philippe Becker Design was thinking about hiring someone who appeared to have flawless credentials, but instinct told him something was wrong. He spent several thousand dollars conducting a background check and found a court judgment against this person.

What exactly were they listening to - or not listening to? It's an effortless, immediate, unreasoned sense of truth, says David Myers in a Psychology Today article.

And although intuition is a big part of human decision-making, it often errs. It is a wonder, Myers writes, but also perilous, adding that "scientists who expose intuition's flaws note that it works well in some areas but needs restraints and checks in others. ... (We can) think smarter, even while listening to the creative whispers of our unseen mind."

How do you hear the whispers? When my clients are trying to decide something, after going through the logical pros and cons, I ask them how one decision feels versus the other.

Also notice how you physically experience the decision, says Lynn Robinson, author of the upcoming book "Trust Your Gut."

"The ancient Chinese believe that wisdom resides in the stomach," she says. You might break into a sweat when faced with a choice you know isn't right. Or you might feel a tingling zing up your spine, she adds.

Sometimes it can be a matter of life and death. When astronaut R. Michael Mullane was a weapons and navigational systems operator on a fighter jet, he says he failed to challenge a pilot who continued to fly when they may have not had enough fuel to return safely to base, according to a New York Times article.

"Despite the 'little voice in the back of my brain' that told him to say something," he was reluctant to second-guess the pilot, who had more experience. They ran out of fuel and ejected, and the jet "became a \$20 million pile of rubble."

You get data from various sources. In Ingrassia's case, he says, "My head kept telling me to be cautious and watch out for myself" while others warned him the situation was destined to end badly.

The best approach is to weigh reasoning and what you sense.

And if you continue to make bad choices, ask yourself: What am I not paying attention to at such critical moments?

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