



Episode 2: The 2 Things That Keep Us From Trusting Ourselves

Welcome to *In the Right Direction* podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hello my people, it's Deb here. Today I'm starting by asking you a question. Have you ever had a time in your life where you knew you should have listened to your intuition and what your gut was telling you, but you didn't? And maybe you let yourself be convinced to make a choice that you knew would not end well? I think we've all been there at one point or another, when we realized our gut was right all along, and that if we had listened to it, it would have been so much better for us.

This feeling of knowing that I really should have listened to and trusted my gut but didn't happened to me years ago when I was entering medical school. Here was the situation. Toward the end of college, I was trying to figure out what to do next. I knew a few things about myself. I knew that I loved to learn and think about the brain. I knew that I wanted a career that would help me understand the relationship between the brain and behavior and help me work with people to help them understand how their brain was affecting their thoughts and feelings and actions.

I narrowed down my choices to two main career paths. I could go to medical school and get an MD degree or I could go to graduate school to get a PhD in neuropsychology, which was a new field at the time and super interesting and exciting to me. So I talked to lots of professionals, who ultimately convinced me that the better choice was to go to medical school. They told me that an MD had more prestige, that it would give me more options, that it was the right thing to do. So even though I was more excited about the other path, I rationalized that it was the better choice to get an MD.

I applied and got accepted to medical school and a few months later packed my bags and drove 300 miles south to move into my new dorm. I walked into the dorm that day, swiped my shiny ID into the turnstile, and then I saw someone who made me freeze in my tracks. The very first person I saw in that dorm was the one person in the world I had hoped I would never see again. It was someone from college who, let's just say, made me shrink inside.

What did I do? I wish I could tell you that I recognized this as a sign from the universe that the universe was telling me to turn back, that it was okay to change my mind and reevaluate, that it was okay to reconsider a career path that inspired me. But I didn't. I said hello, walked past, moved into my dorm room, and continued anyway. And while parts of the next few years were fine - I made friends, I explored a new city, I learned a lot - parts of it were not. So many times I felt like something just wasn't right, that I didn't seem to have the passion and certainty that my classmates had.

My gut kept telling me this was not what I really wanted to be doing. So what happened? How did I end up in medical school when a part of me knew from day one that it wasn't the right fit? Well, hindsight is always 20/20. And looking back now it's easy to see that my gut was trying to tell me something and that I was not listening. A part of me knew that medical school didn't feel right. But I continued to listen to that logical part of my brain telling me that it was a better decision.

Has this ever happened to you? Where you wake up one day and wonder "why didn't I trust myself?" What gets in the way? In my work, I've noticed that there are two big things that keep us from being aware of and listening to our intuition. First is the pace of life. Because let's face it, we are busy people. We have to do lists. We have expectations, and there are people who rely on us. We just go, go, go, and we rarely stop to reflect. I mean, how often do you stop and ask yourself, "Intuition, what do you think?" I'm guessing not very often, and it's understandable because we're busy, and the busyness of life and all of the expectations others have of us can keep us on a path that feels like it doesn't completely fit.

The second thing that gets in the way is that we forget to pay attention to what our body is telling us. So many of us live in our heads and our thoughts all the time. We forget that our brain and our body are connected, and we forget that we get information from our body all the time. It's just that we often fail to notice or take it seriously. Because our bodies do talk to us all the time through sensations and pains and twinges, and sometimes we listen, but more often than not, we don't.

Now, the good news is that there are ways we can build this muscle of intuition. We can learn to trust ourselves more and to listen to what our gut has to tell us. Here's the neuroscience that backs this up. So here's the cool thing. In our brain, we have these cells called neurons. These are the cells that allow us to think and feel and understand the world around us, and scientists now know that we have those very same thinking and feeling cells in other places in our body. We have them in our heart, and we also have them in our gut.

We have heart neurons and gut neurons, which means that we think and feel just as well with our heart and our gut as we do with our brain. And now's your opportunity to listen to your heart and gut neurons more. So how do you do it? Well, it's easy. Just ask. The next time you have a decision to make, ask your brain, and then ask your heart and ask your gut. See what insights you get from each of them and see how the answers match up or don't.

So, friend, let's talk about you and your life. What decisions are you making now, personally or professionally? And as you think about your decisions, remember that you get to listen to all the wisdom in your body. This includes the wisdom of your brain, your heart, and your gut. You get to balance your intuition with data. You get to take your gut feelings into account, and you get to give yourself permission to trust yourself to know what's most important to you.

I want to thank you for being with me today, and if you want to keep learning more about the wisdom of the body, please check out the resources and book suggestions I share on my website, debelbaum.com. Let's honor our inner wisdom in the next few weeks and keep trusting ourselves and the decisions we're making. Let's practice listening to our intuition.

Talk to you soon!