

HOW TO CULTIVATE YOUR GUT INSTINCTS

HAVE YOU EVER found yourself at a boardroom table, negotiating (silently, with yourself, naturally) about whether you should state your opinion, only to wait too long and have the same insight confidently shared by someone else? Maybe you have “had a feeling” that a specific course of action is the right one, but didn’t trust yourself enough to follow your own lead. Later you discover that someone else had the same idea and ran with it to great success.

Inside many powerhouse women is a graveyard filled with ideas, opinions and strategies we didn’t have the guts to share or implement. I hear a lot about this graveyard and the vast realm of innovative contributions that stay trapped there.

Women often look for tools and tactics they can use to “show up powerfully” or “own it.” They wonder if they should take a professional writing course (so they can write more persuasively), or maybe a public speaking course (so they can articulate their ideas more powerfully).

Enhancing your communications skills is never a bad idea. And yet, when it comes to breaking out of the Graveyard of Great Ideas You Didn’t Share, learning to communicate better is a secondary skill.

The primary skill—without which great oratory or written skills will be a moot point—is self-trust.

Trust yourself. Please don’t skip over this part because you’ve heard it before, because it doesn’t feel ‘tactical’ enough, because you can’t measure it. Instead, take a deep breath and consider the fact that the plateau you’re looking to bust through, the ceiling you want to shatter, the industry you’re attempting to disrupt, the promotion you’re working to attain may be intimately connected to these two career-shaping words: trust yourself.

The more a woman trusts herself and listens to her gut instincts, the more effective she becomes. Period. When you don’t trust yourself, you’re like vapour: all over the place; hard to pin down, not enough power to move anything. When you DO trust yourself,



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you become a force...a force that over time accumulates the resources you need to accomplish just about anything.

So, how do you cultivate your gut instincts so that you trust yourself and act confidently in challenging situations? Here are three tips.

DO THE LEG WORK. We develop gut instincts over time, and we speed up the process with focused training. In an age of faking it ‘til you make it, qualifications and experience are the obvious and most natural starting point for building gut instinct. Be humble. Have patience. Do the leg work.

TAKE SMALL RISKS. It’s one thing to have an instinct about something. It’s another thing to be willing to consistently trust your instincts. The best way to develop the self-trust muscle is to take small daily risks.

Example: if you want to be a powerful voice in the boardroom but have a tendency to stay silent at the table, begin by ensuring you never leave a meeting without having made at least one contribution—asking a thought-provoking question, or stating an opinion. Over time, this track record of speaking up will help you develop the trust you need to go with your gut in the boardroom.

CELEBRATE YOUR WINS. Most of us want evidence that our actions have an impact. Taking time on a weekly basis to celebrate what’s going really well is an excellent way to acknowledge forward progress and establish a direct link between your decisions and your advancement...a link that reinforces your willingness to keep trusting yourself.

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FEEDBACK

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