

# Basic instinct

*Tuning into what your body is trying to tell you can help with everything from skin problems to low energy levels.*

*Bella Blissett taps into her natural intuition*

ILLUSTRATION LAUREN BISHOP

**G**ut feeling. A hunch that you can't shake off. That inkling deep down in your bones. Ever since the ancient Greeks first identified it, intuition has been intrinsically bound with our physical being. A delicious, imperceptible sixth sense that bypasses rational thought and comes from our very essence, taking us by the hand and leading us to decisions that are right for our minds, bodies and souls.

Yet in today's world of buzzing BlackBerries, multi-tasking and pressurised split-second decisions, our excessively busy lives rarely allow us any time to decipher the overwhelming array of choices we're faced with every day (remember when you could go into a café and just order 'a coffee'?) Our minds are constantly like fuzzy radios and we've lost the ability we once had to tune in to that intuitive voice. 'Intuition is something we all have, but we need to free ourselves from the entrapment of our heads and place ourselves in a physical and psychological state

that's open to hearing it,' says Becky Walsh, author of *You Do Know: Learning To Act On Intuition Instantly* (Hay House, £12.99).

## *Retune your mind*

As it turns out, there's some truth in the old saying 'sleep on it', when you have a big decision to make. 'Repetitive, rhythmic actions can help to slow a whirring mind after a stressful day, putting it into a mode where it's able to process information during REM sleep most efficiently,' says Walsh. 'Tap into your night-time intuition by walking on the spot or by plodding up and down the stairs for a few minutes before you go to bed and you can wake up with a solution to your conundrum.' Walsh also sets herself an 'intuition reminder' every morning by writing a one-word intention for the day, such as 'friendship', 'calm' or 'inspiration', on a piece of paper and putting it into her purse or pocket – anywhere she'll come across it regularly. 'Try to work with, rather than against, >>>



>>> your inner voice and you'll find that it starts to come to the rescue at times when you would have previously cruised along on autopilot,' she says.

### *Listen to your body*

If you often mindlessly push yourself through a punishing workout, regardless of how tired you are or how sore your muscles feel, you're a typical, counterintuitive exerciser. 'Make "gain don't drain" your new motto and learn to tap into your needs, then tailor your workouts with a daily checklist,' says personal trainer Stephen Price.

On a scale of one to five (the higher the score, the better you feel), rate your energy, mood and muscle soreness first thing every morning. Is your lower back feeling tight? Your daily run could be putting pressure on your pelvis, so do a core and back-strengthening Pilates session instead. Do you sleep badly? Cut your workout time by half and stretch for the rest of the time.

'Persistently waking up grouchy can be a sign of real fatigue, so rather than vent your feelings in a high-intensity boxing or cardio session, try a yoga class to help you sleep and replenish your energy,' adds Price. 'You'll know you are exercising intuitively when every workout leaves you feeling empowered physically and mentally.'

### *Eavesdrop on your skin*

Spotty? Dry? A bit of both? 'Women assume they have sensitive or problem skin, when often they're ignoring its signals and using the wrong products,' says facialist Marie Reynolds, who uses Chinese medicine and her counselling qualifications to diagnose clients' true complexion needs.

'Bypass the latest miracle product, learn to identify key skin markers and you'll make smarter product choices she advises.' Reynolds checks the feet for redness before attributing any under-the-jaw pimples (known as a cortisol rash) to stress, then recommends Image Skincare Ormedic Balancing Anti-Oxidant Serum (£28/30ml, skin geeks.co.uk) that works like therapy for the skin, soothing and rebalancing it when your emotions are all over the place.

Those who suffer from a sallow undertone or eczema and are prone to persistent coughs she'll classify as a 'lung type'. For these, she'll prescribe

daily breathwork exercises (try five minutes of 'lion breathing' with long inhales and sharp exhales to expel toxins and improve respiratory function), plus omega-3 (try Omega 3 Plus, £27.77 for 60 capsules, victoriahealth.com) to counteract scaly skin.

### *Get in the flow*

Ever feel weirdly 'out of body' – like you're watching yourself go through the motions from a few steps away? 'I often see women with a veiled sheen in their eyes that signals a sense of disconnection – like a bad satellite link between their conscious actions and basic needs,' says acupuncturist Ross Barr. Chinese medical theory links this to having poor-quality blood that fails to nourish the body. The result is a reliance on adrenalin, which only increases our jitters and fuzzy-headed feeling.

'Capitalise on the early afternoon window of time where the liver is most effective at strengthening the blood by upping your intake of cleansing leafy green vegetables,' advises Barr. In a hurry or stuck at your desk? Try SaVse's broccoli, pear, spinach and kale smoothie (£2.49, savsesmovies.com) and drink it daily around 3pm to strengthen your blood gradually – and help you regain a sense of clarity and control over your decisions. ■

## 4 WAYS TO ACCESS YOUR INTUITION

■ **For every day:** Stop your mind racing the second your alarm clock rings and set the tone for an intuitive day by shutting your eyes and spending two minutes focusing on the cool of the bathroom floor against your feet or the sound of running water – anything that brings you back into your body.

■ **For big decisions:** When your mind is revolving like a hamster on a wheel, you're acting with your head as opposed to your gut. We often feel an almost physical pull from our chests when we know something is instinctively right. Act on it quickly – then don't second-guess yourself.

■ **For better relationships:** That 'spark' we feel when we truly connect with someone new is a 'resonance' experts link to intuition. Be it a new friend or love interest, get over your hang-ups about making a fool of yourself and swap contact details.

■ **For work stress:** Experts say curiosity is the precursor to intuition. 'We naturally look up for inspiration. So if you've got a high-pressure work project looming, but find your mind is blank, step out of the office and spend two minutes looking at the sky to tune back into your creative intuition,' says Walsh.