

## Co-Active® Coaching Skills: Intuition

In addition to the customary five senses that help inform us about our environment, there is a sixth sense, intuition that is extremely valuable in coaching. We see, hear, taste, touch and smell — and we have a “gut reaction.” All six senses provide information on which we make decisions. Intuition is also a talent each of us is given in different measure and a capacity we can all develop. For example, we all have at least a rudimentary vocabulary of sound distinctions. We can hear the difference between a clarinet, a trumpet, and a violin. Composers have learned to “hear” the sounds of many different instruments in their minds as they compose music — even different combinations of instruments — because they have a highly trained ear. Intuition is like that: a natural talent that can be developed.

The first step in using your intuition in coaching is to learn to listen at Level 2 and 3 with your client, with your intuitive receiver tuned in to their wavelength, listening at Level 3, with a soft focus ready to pick up the intuitive messages — signals or nudges.

The second step is to notice that you have received an intuitive signal. Many people feel the intuition in their bodies. Sometimes it is literally a “gut” reaction. Some people don’t feel intuition in their bodies at all — they simply have a sense. It’s good practice to look for yourself, to see where you typically feel the intuition landing.

The third step is the step that is too often left out; that’s to actually speak from your intuition. Intuition is of no benefit to the client unless coaches actually speak what their intuition gives them. You need to put words to the signal, or nudge you received, and say those words out loud. Unfortunately, we often hold back our intuition. We hold back because intuition is looked upon skeptically by our culture — at least compared to the scientific and empirical methods of knowing. Because of that we don’t get much practice using our intuition as we grow up — so our intuitive “ear” is not well trained. Sometimes we hold back because we’re not sure our intuition is “right.” In Co-Active® Coaching, we would say that the noticing, or the nudge, the gut feeling — is always worth paying attention to. It’s never “wrong.” However, the words we put to the intuition — our interpretation might be off target. The key is to speak from your intuition and not be attached to your interpretation. Clients learn that your intuition is an invitation to look to see what might be there for them.

Sometimes the expression of the coach’s intuition will be in the form of words. As in, “my intuition tells me there is a new place to look for you. What would that be?” Sometimes the expression of the intuition will be in the form of a metaphor or image. As in, “I get an image of a door opening. What’s on the other side of the door for you?”

It’s possible that the words or image won’t mean anything to the client, in which case, the coach could simply move on. Or the client might say, “It’s not a new place — it’s an old familiar place — I need to go back and look again.” It’s not about being “right” with your intuition; in coaching, the key is to have the antenna sensitively tuned to pick up signals, and then speak boldly from that intuitive place — and dance with whatever shows up for you and the client.