

Is your brain doing all the heavy lifting? It's time to let your heart & gut help out



ELISABETH KINGSLEY
Leadership & Transition Coach

At some level I think we're all aware that we can "think" with our heart and our gut. It's evidenced in our language all the time. For example, how many times have you heard or said some version of the following: "What is your gut telling you?" or "Follow your heart, it knows."?

Both have the ability to help direct us towards what is meaningful to us as well as make decisions that are aligned with our values. It's possible to ignore these two intelligences, but it takes energy to do so and will wear you out. There is ever increasing neuroscientific research evidencing the neurological wiring of our heart and gut for intelligence. Unlike the mind, your heart and gut often "think" from a truer place, one that knows what's best for you (or your team and organization) and is not wrapped up unhealthily in what other people think. Essentially, the heart is not driven by the ego.

goals, dreams, connection, and kindness. It can help you decipher what you want and what is important in life or in a given situation. The heart possesses a deep sense of moral rightness that extends beyond rule based ethics.

The Gut — The gut specializes in keeping us safe, processing anxiety, taking action and maintaining our core identity. The gut is about courage, action and motivation. It helps you know when to make a brave move (or not). When the gut is "talking" I notice it often shares its wisdom in single words or phrases, "YES!", "Don't do it.", "Let's go!" In Western culture, our educational lives are mostly spent learning to develop head

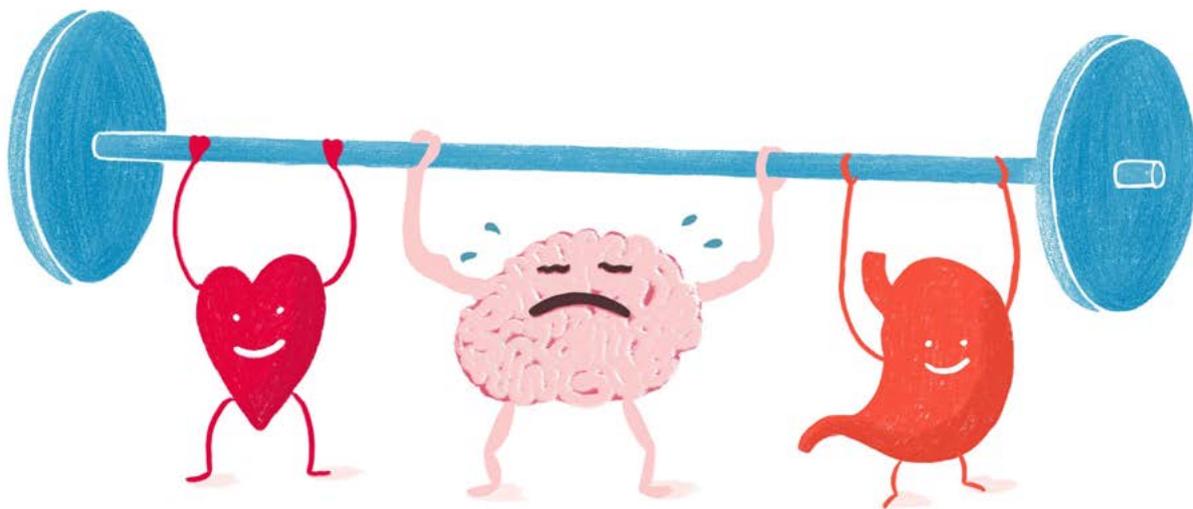


Illustration by Alizée Castel

Yet, many of us are painfully "stuck in our heads."

We allow our brains to run our lives and make our decisions when perhaps our hearts and guts are the ones who should be offering the wisdom and making some of the biggest calls, at the very least they should have a seat at the table. Here's why:

Our hearts and guts have deep intelligence and wisdom to offer us.

The gut specializes in keeping us safe, processing anxiety, taking action and maintaining our core identity

The unique core competencies of the heart and gut:

The Heart — The heart is wired to help us out with things like upholding values, determining passion, and processing emotions. The heart is about love, desires,

oriented analytical and logical intelligence (which is important!). We are trained and encouraged to THINK and therefore good at using the intelligence in our head to make decisions, to be strategic and to make life work for us.

But how good are we at using our hearts? How good are we at trusting our gut?

How often do we check in with these two powerful intelligence centers? Which, by the way, communicate quite differently than our heads. Our heads use thoughts, words and sentences while the communication from our hearts and guts is often described as “a still small voice” and may communicate with a single word or phrase or even just a feeling or strong intuitive sense.

I constantly wonder what would be different in our professional lives, our personal lives and our culture at large if our hearts and guts could take some of the load from our tired brains?

Even more powerfully, what would be possible if our heads, hearts and guts were in alignment? What if you didn't have to constantly be monitoring the internal battle between what your brain is saying you should do and your heart is telling you will be more satisfying? Your 3 brains can learn to trust each other and work together vs battling, ignoring and discrediting each other.

I think we humans might be better off if we developed a habit of hearing our hearts and guts.

In my work, I have the great privilege of being with people to look at situations in their leadership or life that they would like to be different, better, or more effective. I listen not just to what people are saying but also to what they aren't saying and to what “part of them” is talking.

In doing so I frequently notice the head brain doing A LOT of talking. And when I offer this observation in the form of a question: “It seems, like your head is tying itself in a tighter knot with every sentence...what does your heart have to say?” perspective often begins to shift.

Instantly, the person may begin to relax, breath more deeply and their words and thoughts take on a different, calmer, more grounded quality. Often once the heart gets the opportunity to “speak” it will share a different perspective. It offers new wisdom and clarity to the situation. For the individual, there is also usually a giant sense of relief as purpo-

se and meaning are revealed. The way forward becomes clear thanks to that smart heart.

I couldn't be more grateful to be doing work that “gets us out of our heads and into our hearts and guts” and I couldn't be more excited for the shifts that are and will flow out of those individual awarenesses — into a person's direct reports or teams, to their entire organizations, their family, loved ones - and the world.

So, with whatever it is that you're currently stuck with, flipping around and analyzing in your brain I suggest taking a deep breath, tune in and listen to your heart and your gut.

What do they have to offer you? What do they want? What do they say about the way forward?

Here's to listening to the intelligence of our heads, hearts and guts and to a collective existence that is better because we do. ■

Illustration by the talented, and lovely Alizée Castel. For a great in depth resource on the topic of your head heart and gut brains check out [this book](#). If you'd like some assistance freeing up the struggle currently happening in your head, let's chat.

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Inclui um detalhado plano de negócio de turismo comunitário.

Uma obra de interesse para profissionais, alunos e professores que visa dar a conhecer e compreender o Empreendedorismo Social.

Autores Ana João Reis e Orlando Lima Rua

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