

Avoid the Advice: *Trust Yourself to Make the Best Decisions*

By Angela C. Gonzalez

Over the course of your life, you probably have received an enormous amount of advice and much of it unsolicited. Even worse is the paradoxical advice, “an unexamined life is not worth living” or “too much information is a dangerous thing.” Life is full of these experiences; you get advice from the latest bestselling author, your mother, your friend, etc. With this advice come expectations, and often, demands on how you should live, work, think and feel. With all this input, how do you best decide what’s right for your life?

Step One – Recognize that the opinions and advice of others—is merely information for making your own decisions. For some people, that fact is understood and they don’t worry about what others think or feel—so they charge ahead. Then there are the rest of us, who do care and it can be difficult to ignore the well-meaning advice from those that we respect, fear or love. The essential thing is to remember is that while others love to give advice—it’s not their life—it’s yours. Accepting this requires clear thought; a mindset that cuts through the competing voices so that you can listen to your own.

Step Two – Know that you have within you everything you need to make the best decision for yourself. It starts with an integrated approach. Examine the options through your three centers of intelligence: Head, Heart and Gut, with each center furnishing you with unique perspectives. Using this approach enables you to access to every bit of knowledge, experience and talent that you possess.

Think of a decision you want to make, big or small, and ask yourself the following questions. Write down your initial thoughts; don’t ponder too long on any one question, and note the different perspectives when you are finished:

- **Head (Intellect/Rational)** – What does the logical and analytical part of me think? Do I have enough facts, data, history, analysis, details or examples? What do I think after sifting through the information? How will this help the situation? How can I use these conclusions in conjunction with my Heart and Gut?
- **Heart (Feelings/Emotions)** – What emotions am I feeling, what does my heart say? Do I feel scared, exhilarated, worried, unconfident, sad or happy? Why do I feel this way? How does knowing how I feel help me make a better decision? How can I use these conclusions in conjunction with my Head and Gut?
- **Gut (Intuition/Wisdom)** – What does my body intuit; what is my gut sense? What do my instincts say? Do I sense the situation, idea or the person is right, wrong, dangerous or unclear? Why might I be having this instinctual reaction? What does this information tell me about what I need or should do? How can I use these conclusions in conjunction with my Head and Heart?

Step Three – Gain clarity; create a space to inspect and reflect on your choices before you take action. This interrupts your brain from its predictable drive for using the same old patterns for quick and comfortable decision-making. Instead reflect on the varied but connected answers from your three center of intelligence. While the answers may be different for each center, combined they serve 100% of your needs for making good choices. This enables you to fully articulate what you are experiencing within you and around you, and to synthesize what you find. Consider Ken, one of my coaching clients:

Ken was having trouble accessing his Gut and Heart perspectives in decision-making. He learned that his pattern was to make decisions only with his Head because that's what was rewarded in his family and work life; using logical and rational thought became his favorite criteria for making decisions. This meant that he learned to ignore his intuition that something was wrong or there was a different way to accomplish something, and he learned to stuff his emotions so far down that he didn't know what he was feeling or how he affected others. Ken has since learned that using all three intelligences gives him access to his intuition so he can rely on what he senses (from his Gut) and he is able to extend empathy and compassion to himself and others (from his Heart), in addition to using his exceptional rational thought.

Making your own decisions is very empowering. Knowing that you are making competent decisions helps you stand your ground in the face of opposition or the expectations of others. Your three centers of intelligence provide access to the wisdom that you possess, and having this information enables you to articulate why you are going to do what you do—with your eyes wide open. Having this access deepens your self-knowledge, increases your confidence and expands your decision-making comfort zone. If a decision doesn't work out, you have the experience of what to do the next time, and you can learn and grow into how you want to be in the world, and that is something you can trust.

Angela C. Gonzalez – She partners with experienced and emerging leaders; helping them to be the leader that people want to follow. Angela's clients call her the inner game coach, because she helps them lead from the inside out, cutting through the emotional and intellectual clutter and assumptions, to see difficult situations and potential opportunities with fresh eyes. What emerges is an inner confidence that enables them to translate their insights into productive action.

As your inner game coach, Angela can help you create a laser focus on what's most essential for your learning and growth to be the leader people naturally trust and want to follow. Ready to experience professional success and a deep personal satisfaction with your life? Contact her for a free 30-minute coaching session at: 925-528-9069.