



Using an Intuition Journal: Dimensions of Intuitive Experience

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The College of Business at Florida International University offers an Intuition in Management course for undergraduate, M.B.A., and Ph.D. students. As of the 1997 Spring term, 77 students have taken part in this offering. Since the school is a commuter campus, many of our students, especially at the M.B.A. level, work full-time in career positions. This course is designed to help students recognize and use their intuitive potential. Among their assignments for this 14-week offering, students prepare a weekly journal reporting an intuitive experience they had during the preceding week. In addition to journaling, students share their experiences with fellow classmates. The journaling and sharing work hand-in-hand to help each student discover and nurture their intuitive selves.

The Intuition Journal uses a structured format. This may seem counterintuitive, given the ephemeral nature of intuition. But detailed study of and reflection on intuitive experiences proves invaluable in the discovery process. In particular, the students are encouraged to include experiences where the accuracy is low. However, we have found they are reluctant to do so even though we emphasize they are likely to learn more from their "mistakes" than their "bull's-eyes." A typical journal entry exceeds 1,000 words while some are over 2,000. This suggests the level of detail used to fully explore an intuitive experience. Near the end of the term, the journal work is integrated through an Intuitive Self Profile that summarizes an individual's intuitive experience patterns. For all phases of the process, students are provided with detailed guidelines and examples to illustrate the approach. These guidelines are now in their 8th edition based on feedback from students and critical review by a panel of experts in anomalous phenomena (Julie Milton, Marilyn Schlitz, and Rhea White).

Our approach takes a broad view of the meaning of

intuition. From a study of the variety of definitions found in the literature, we concluded they can be grouped into five perspectives: Process, Names, Levels, Contrasts, and Attributes. These views suggest the breadth of intuitive meaning we intend for our students. Process definitions *describe* the intuitive experience by inferring how it takes place. Name approaches *identify* the designations of intuitive people or of intuition, while Level definitions *classify* the grades of intuitive experience. Contrast definitions *distinguish* how intuition differs from complementary processes, and Attribute views of intuition *characterize* the qualities of intuitive information. These five perspectives suggest seven sections for a comprehensive intuition journal format: Experience, Context, Distractions, Message, Source, Information, and Evaluation, with each including three or four entries. The 25 entries represent the *dimensions* of

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intuitive experience. An overview of the seven sections and 25 dimensions appears in the accompanying diagram. They are arranged with the Experience section in the center and the remaining sections surrounding. This highlights the “at the moment” dimension of Experience as the center around which the other sections focus.

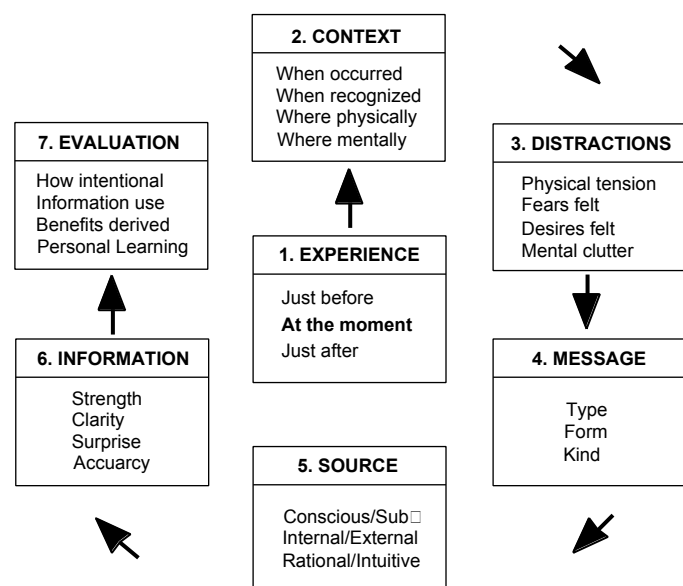


Fig. 1. Dimensions of Intuitive Experience

Experience. These three entries describe the essence of the intuitive experience: just before, at the moment, and just after. We journal “at the moment” by thoroughly describing what actually happened when the intuitive experience occurred as the first entry. The essence of an experience resides in its momentary happening. The “just before” dimension helps us discover trigger sensations or behaviors that typically precede our intuitive experiences. We learn the personal signs that indicate we are in a receptive state. Then from “just after,” we learn how to amplify and sustain intuitive awareness. Intuitive insights, like dream imagery, quickly slip away unless we actively bring them to conscious awareness.

Context. The four entries in this section describe the setting in which the experience took place. By tracking “when occurred” and “when recognized,” we discover how quickly we notice our intuitive experiences. At first most students do not recognize experiences until sometime later. Gradually the time lapse between happening and recognizing closes until experiences are noted as they occur. By describing “where physically” and “where mentally,” we discover what locations and states of mind are conducive to our intuitive experience. We are more likely to have intuitive experiences in certain surroundings rather than others, and our state of mind significantly influences our intuitions. With this

understanding, we can intentionally evoke intuitive experiences.

Distractions. This section distinguishes how stress distorts our intuitive insights. These Distractions come in the form of physical tension, fears felt, desires felt, and mental clutter. Unnecessary “physical tension” interferes with all vital processes. As we recognize its presence, we have the opportunity to release its grip on our inner knowing. Bringing “fears felt” to conscious awareness enables us to deal with them directly and to minimize their influence on our intuition. Similarly, bringing “desires felt” to awareness enables us to set aside their influence on intuitive experience. The more aware we are of the “mental clutter” that absorbs our minds, the less it distracts from the still small voices within.

Message. The dimensions of this section identify and classify the intuitive message. There are three message “types”: personal, professional, and school. Some find their personal lives and others their professional lives as the place where they more readily recognize intuitive experiences. By knowing our own patterns, we can look for intuitions where we least expect them. Message “form” has five categories: sensation, emotion, thought, image, and epiphany. If we find that we rely primarily on one or two sources, we have an opportunity to develop less preferred forms. “Kind,” of message has six categories: decision, solution, suggestion, impulse, ESP, and understanding. We learn the different ways we discover things through our intuitive sense. This helps us open to intuition in all areas of our life in addition to the obvious area of decision.

Source. The conscious/subconscious, internal/external, and rational/intuitive dimensions represent the most challenging part of the journal. These dimensions overlap to distinguish the aspects of mind that give rise to intuitive experience. On the “conscious/subconscious” spectrum, we judge the degree our intuition is based on readily available information versus information hidden in the subconscious mind. The “internal/external” spectrum distinguishes connections we have with our deeper selves from those we have with experiences beyond our selves. Intuitive awareness comes when we resonate with “our truths” and more deeply when we resonate with “the truth,” outside ourselves. Then the “rational/intuitive” spectrum helps us appreciate how these complementary styles work together for our personal benefit.

Information. These four dimensions characterize the information in an intuitive message in terms of strength, clarity, surprise, and accuracy. We listen carefully so that we can detect subtle “strength” insights that we have been missing. We learn to notice intuitive impressions and to pay more attention to enhance their “clarity.” We

discover “surprise” in intuitive information when it comes from sources within the subconscious mind or external sources rather than our conscious minds. By monitoring “accuracy,” we learn how physical tension, fears felt, desires felt, and mental clutter diminish our insights.

Evaluation. The final section describes four dimensions: how intentional, information use, benefits (losses) derived, and personal learning. “How intentional” highlights the degree of personal intent in the frequency of our intuitive experiences. We learn to evoke our intuition when the situation calls for it. “Information use” depends on our comfort with intuition and its accuracy. Journaling enhances both comfort and accuracy. “Benefits (losses) derived” are tangible economic gain as well as intangible insights into our life process. Business focuses on economic gains, but deeper intuitive insights often have a non-economic character. As our “personal learning” deepens, we access our Intuitive Selves more easily, and we learn to appreciate the role of intuition in the dynamics of our life process. Intuitive experiences are the doorway to discovering who we really are behind the many masks we wear.

So far in this research, we have made interesting discoveries in five areas: (1) dimensions of intuitive experience, (2) the journaling process, (3) sharing experiences with others, (4) preparing an Intuitive Self-Profile, and (5) presence of EHEs. First, through student feedback and critical expert review, we have identified a comprehensive set of dimensions to capture the significant aspects of an intuitive experience. The naming, description, and grouping of these dimensions have been refined through several editions of the journal protocol to yield a “logic” that students find valuable in helping them recover the intuitive side of their lives.

Second, our research demonstrates that the journaling process provides students with a systematic method for discovering and trusting their intuition. Anyone who has ever kept a diary has experienced the value of the process to self-discovery. For the Intuition Journal, we have found that four or five entries are usually required for a student to feel comfortable with the vocabulary and structure of the journal. After the familiarization, four or five more entries are usually needed before a student begins to really appreciate the presence and power of his/her Intuitive Self. The journaling process has a cumulative effect, with each successive entry building on the previous ones to deepen insight and build acceptance.

Third, as our users are practical-minded business students, they begin the exploration of their Intuitive Selves with hesitation, even trepidation, and in some cases outright skepticism. We have found that keeping a journal may not be enough to win a person back to their

intuitive side. Supplementing the journaling procedure with detailed sharing of intuitive experiences with other students significantly enhances the learning process. Anyone who has taken part in therapeutic group work knows the value of this approach at first hand. The outcome is no less powerful in this intuition journal setting. The process of hearing others share their intuitive experiences and sharing your own seems to give permission for the Intuitive Self to express itself, especially for students who are more rationally oriented.

Fourth, by the time they have completed nine entries, students have enough data to prepare an Intuitive Self-Profile. We have found that reflection on the content of several journal entries provides a window into the character of a person’s unique way of being intuitive. As a brief and simple example, consider the “where physically” dimension in the Context section. Some find their intuitive experiences occur more frequently in the kitchen, others when they are driving in the car, and so on in endless variety. The particulars of the “where” are not as important as recognizing them. Armed with this understanding, students can choose to place themselves in settings that support their intuitive knowing.

Fifth, life-changing intuitive experiences, or EHEs, are rare among our students. There are a couple of reasons for this. One, with few exceptions, our business students are very naive about their intuitive capabilities. They would not be the kind of people who would follow a group like the EHE Network. My sense is that the individuals who submit experiences to the EHE database would in general be more sophisticated about the intuitive side of their lives, hence the possibility of more frequent life-changing experiences. Two, with the business students, we emphasize connecting with their everyday garden variety of intuitive experience. As we work in a “grade giving” environment, we don’t want them to feel that their grade depends on coming up with a “significant” intuition each week. Our experience has been that when they have that mind set, access to everyday happenings is blocked, and as a result they miss any intuitive experience at all. So we want them to start small and gradually become aware of the larger potential of intuitive knowing in their lives.

There are exceptions. One man had recently left his wife and three children to live on his own. He reported a dream experience that had several potent symbols concerning his immediate situation. Of course what he does with this awareness remains to be seen. He may or may not have sufficient will (in Assagioli’s psychosynthesis sense) to carry through on the life-changing potential that the symbols have offered. A woman reconnected with a near-death experience that she had

four years before with the birth of her second child, She seemed to be gaining a deeper understanding of the message that experience sought to convey to her. She reexamined the direction and meaning of her career in terms of “living in the moment” and moving more towards a “service orientation” in her life’s work. Another woman recognized the importance of a disregarded intuitive experience that she had had some years before about the health and safety of her children. She now realizes that was the turning point for the journey of recovering her Intuitive Self. So the weekly work of everyday experiences has a deeper meaning for her than the simple instances suggest. Cumulatively they represent a slow reorientation to a more intuitive way of being in her daily life.

We hope this overview provides a sense of our on-

going research with discovering and nurturing the Intuitive Self in a business school setting. The work is profoundly rewarding for me and deeply enriching for students who make a genuine investment in the assignments. In their end-of-term feedback, it is not unusual for students to report that the course was one of the most important they have ever taken for both the success of their careers and the well-being of their lives. To continue the process of improvement, we would appreciate critical feedback as we prepare the 9th edition of the journal guidelines. If you are willing to review our work, request a complete set of the guidelines and examples. Please contact Bill Taggart at P.O. Box 1259, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1259.