



and you came back home and wrote down the first thing you felt when you saw them, when they spoke to you, when they touched your shoulder—you may not realize it, but you'd find that you'd already built a subconscious profile of the person. We all have that capability, but we don't use it.

I'LL TELL YOU A GROUP who uses intuition: people who do martial arts. They have to anticipate what their opponent's going to do. Remember Bruce Lee? Even people coming from behind, he could see. It's like he had eyes in the back of his head.

THERE ARE TIMES when you get a feeling about something—say, *I don't want to get on this flight—and you wonder: is it my anxiety, or is it real?* It's difficult to know what's fact or fiction. You can only judge over a period of time. You have to gain confidence in your ability to listen.

NUMBER ONE, you can build up to 15 minutes a day of sitting and focusing on your breathing. So that you have quiet time to connect with your inner self.

NUMBER TWO, every day, live the day and enjoy the day. Don't be anxious about, *is this gonna happen or is that gonna happen?* Walk through your day—don't run. Get a little notebook, a tiny thing that fits in your pocket. When you have a feeling about something, write it down. That way, when

your feeling later turns out to have been correct, you can go back and see that your instincts were working. And that builds your confidence.

INTUITION IS LIKE A MUSCLE. You develop it the more you use it.

ONE OF THE WORST THINGS IN LIFE is indecision and confusion. It plagues everybody. But confusion is sometimes a blessing when it stops you from making a move, because sometimes you're not supposed to make a move.

I SAY TO PEOPLE, "You don't walk down stairs blindfolded, you don't drive a car blindfolded—why would you want to make massive life-changing decisions when you can't see what you're doing? You have to wait for clarity." So to me, confusion can be a kind of intuition: your body's way of saying, don't do anything right now—just go with the flow and the answer will come.

I'VE GIVEN LOTS OF TALKS, to all kinds of groups, and sometimes you'll get people—usually men—who will say, "I think it's a load of old rubbish." And I'll say, "Well, that's your belief. I'm not here to change your belief."

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING is just to trust it. Trust in your gut. Trust that first feeling you feel about something. Because that very first feeling is usually the right one. —As told to Susan Casey

Calculating Danger

The scariest thing about intuition? Realizing too late that you were right.

TO DO RESEARCH for a magazine story, I once spent a few days at a lodge in a remote part of Chile, on Lago General Carrera. After leaving the lodge, I was scheduled to take a puddle jumper to Balmaceda, a town near the lake's opposite shore. When high winds forced the pilot to cancel the flight, the lodge owner patched together a plan B: His wife would drop me off in the closest village, where an acquaintance would pick me up and shuttle me the final four-hour stretch to Balmaceda. The route would pass through a few towns and two military checkpoints. The rest: empty wilderness.

After the woman introduced me to the driver in Chile Chico and waved goodbye, three stocky, good-looking men appeared out of nowhere and jumped into the backseat of the Toyota Hilux. They were bomberos, or firemen, they told me, on their way to a conference in Balmaceda. Interesting timing, I thought, since it was Good Friday in a Catholic country where all business had ground to a halt for the next few days.

We started driving and the buddies started joking, first about my wedding ring—"I didn't know she was married," one said—then about my

height (I'm 5'10"), then about my hair (I'm blonde). My heart started to beat faster. To distract myself, I flipped open my Lonely Planet guide and landed by chance on the "Women Travelers" section. The first sentence I read: "If you hitchhike, exercise caution and especially avoid getting into a vehicle with more than one man."

A dozen ugly scenarios reeled through my brain. Most of them ended with me in a ditch. My heart was racing and my chest felt tight. I opened my window; I couldn't get enough air. And that's how it went for the next hour, the men joking while I tried to breathe and wondered if today was going to be my last day on Earth.

As we rolled into the first town, I said I had to go to the bathroom, but after I hopped out of the truck, I told the driver I'd decided to stay in Los Antiguos for the night.

"¡Buen viaje!" I said, backing away as the bomberos hurled a tirade of unflattering Spanish, cursing me, the ungrateful gringa. The truck idled there for a few minutes, as if the men were deliberating what to do, then squealed off.

After spending the night with a local family, I made it to Balmaceda the next day. Maybe the delay was silly. Maybe I'd caved in to an irrational fear and offended four harmless men for nothing. I'll never know. All I could do at the time was act on my internal SOS signals. Had I ignored them and wound up in trouble, my prescient notions would have proved true. But by then it would have been too late.

—STEPHANIE PEARSON

