



How Do I Know That I Know?

Integrating the Three Centers of Intelligence

By Renée Siegel

Through my study of the Enneagram, I have learned about the importance of integrating the three centers of intelligence. These three centers are *the head*, *the heart* and *the body*. We have access to and do use each of these centers in our day-to-day activities. However, when we grow our conscious awareness of all three, we have the potential to create a fuller experience. And sometimes a more meaningful experience as well.

We generally operate out of one and sometimes two of these centers, but generally not all three. In fact, most of us associate being intelligent with how book smart we are, how smart our thinking is or how we can feed back to another person information that has been passed on to us. In fact, the latter is how most intelligence is rated or tested.

I remember being very young and my mother telling me that she and my father had different types of being smart. She described her type of intelligence as “common sense intelligence” and my father’s as “book smart intelligence”. My father could converse easily on many subjects from an academic perspective, and she would sit in awe of him and comment to all of us kids, “Your dad is so smart!” My father was a very accomplished professional man and was able to speak with ease, conveying information easily. He graduated with high honors from college.

He did, however, stumble in other areas of his life. He counted on my mother to develop relationships with others because of her “common sense” or her ability to socialize and be relational in spite of her lack of a formal college education. She was functioning from her heart center of intelligence. She spoke from her feelings and made friends easily. She had the gift of gab and was curious about how others were feeling. She displayed empathy, sympathy and compassion for others, and they were drawn to her. She had many friends. She certainly learned how to make friends, but probably not from any book or from a purely academic experience.

My mom would also use the expression that “she just had a feeling”, (really meaning a sensate experience in her gut) when something wasn’t right. On her own, she knew to



trust it, but it was often trumped if anyone brought up a fact to challenge it or if they even asked her how she knew something wasn't right.

Although we may not be aware that we being informed from all three centers, we are doing so all the time. If we turn our attention to what feelings are emerging, we grow the intelligence in our heart center. We may feel sad or mad or glad or even move from one of these emotions to another. When we have a sense in our bodies, guts or belly, we may be in touch with our intuition or sensate intelligence.

These three centers of intelligence, the head, heart and gut all serve us and are important. When we ignore one or more of these, we deprive ourselves off accessing part of our "smarts".

Try the following brief experience:

- Think of a concern you would like to resolve. If you'd like, you can choose a concern that has recently been resolved.
- Focus your attention on the facts about the situation. Place your attention on your head. Stay there for a minute or two. Do you have a strategy to resolve this solution?
- Now, move your attention to your heart. You might want to place one or both of your hands over your heart. Consider the same situation. Turning your attention to your heart, what do you notice about the emotions that may arise? Just stay with these emotions, knowing they offer you valuable information too.
- Next, move your attention to your belly. You may want to place a hand or both hands on your belly. Consider the same concern with your attention on your belly. Does anything new occur to you? What may come up is an instant or sensate knowing about how you want to move forward or resolve this dilemma.
- Appreciate all of what you've noticed.
- Now, with all the information you have gathered from all three centers of intelligence, your head, your heart and your belly, just allow them to coexist. See if anything shifts from your initial way of seeing this dilemma.

As a result of completing this brief exercise, you may notice that you've given more attention to one of the three centers of intelligence, but now you are able to also practice integrating the other two. It is often uncomfortable to access one of the centers. If you are aware of the center that is most difficult to access, you have a clue that this is the one that needs the most attention to be developed.



Therefore, by integrating more than one center of intelligence you have allowed yourself a more expansive way of knowing.

When we are seeing the world and our experiences through all three centers, it feels different. It feels more embodied.

If you are willing to continue to practice in this way, you will notice how much more you actually know through your head, heart and gut intelligence than you thought you did.

With compassion and caring notice any ways you were not present in a particular center. Take some time to consider how your experience might have been more full-bodied and vibrant, connected or wise had you been present in all three centers. With kind curiosity, continue this practice.