

INTUITION OR IMAGINATION?

How to Stop Second-Guessing What You Receive

A gentle guide to recognizing first impressions, quieting overthinking, and building trust in your intuitive language.

Healing Hearts Medium

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Sometimes the hardest part of developing intuition is not receiving an impression - it is trusting it before your thinking mind talks you out of it.

Welcome

If you have ever received a random picture, word, feeling, name, object, or thought and immediately wondered, *Did I just make that up?* you are not alone. Intuitive impressions can feel surprisingly ordinary. They may arrive through the same mind you use to imagine, remember, and think.

The goal of this guide is not to convince you that every thought is intuitive. It is to help you slow down, notice how information arrives, record your first impressions, and learn your own patterns over time.

Receive first. Interpret second.

Before You Begin

Ground yourself before practicing. Put both feet on the floor, take three slow breaths, and bring your attention into the present moment. You do not need to force an answer. Curiosity works better than pressure.

1. Why Intuition Can Feel Like Imagination

Intuition does not always arrive with a dramatic feeling or unmistakable sign. Sometimes it appears as a quick mental image, a word that pops into your mind, a sudden knowing, or a feeling that seems almost too simple to matter.

Because intuitive impressions can use familiar mental pathways, beginners often dismiss them as imagination. The question is not always, *Was that intuition or imagination?* A more useful question can be:

How did it arrive?

- Did it appear quickly, before you started searching for an answer?
- Was it simple rather than complicated?
- Did it seem random or unrelated to what you were thinking about?
- Did you feel tempted to dismiss it because it made no sense?
- Did your mind begin explaining or changing it afterward?

These questions do not prove an impression is intuitive. They help you become more aware of your personal receiving process.

2. The First Impression

One of the most useful habits in intuitive development is learning to notice what arrives **first**. The first impression may be a picture, word, feeling, memory, symbol, name, or simply a knowing.

Then the thinking mind often steps in:

- "That makes no sense."
- "That is too random."
- "I must be making this up."
- "Maybe it means something else."
- "I should wait for something better."

When practicing, write down the first impression before editing it. You can decide what it means later.

First does not automatically mean correct. The purpose is to preserve what you actually received so you can compare it with what happens next instead of unconsciously changing your answer.

3. Theresa's Experience: The Chocolate Ice Cream

When I was fairly new to mediumship, I was giving a reading to a woman whose father was coming through. I had already received a couple of messages from him when suddenly, completely out of nowhere, **I saw chocolate ice cream.**

My immediate reaction was, *I don't want to say that.*

It seemed completely unrelated to everything he had been showing me. In my mind, I was almost arguing with Spirit: *Chocolate ice cream? Really? I'm not saying that!*

But the image would not go away.

Finally, I took a deep breath and trusted what I was receiving. I said, **"Your dad wants to talk about the chocolate ice cream."**

Her reaction was immediate. She was overjoyed.

She explained that toward the end of her parents' lives, both her mother and father were on hospice. During that time, they would feed each other **chocolate ice cream** - and make an absolute mess with it.

It was a funny, tender memory that meant something deeply personal to their family. It was not something I could have known.

And suddenly I understood why her dad had shown it to me.

He wanted her to laugh. He wanted to bring back a happy memory.

4. The Lesson: Don't Throw Away the Random

That experience taught me something I still share with developing intuitives: **do not throw away information simply because it does not make sense to you.**

Sometimes the impression that seems the most random is the one that means the most to the person receiving it.

Had I analyzed the chocolate ice cream, I probably would have talked myself out of saying it. Instead, I learned to receive first and interpret second.

When something arrives unexpectedly - a picture, word, name, song, object, or feeling - write it down before your logical mind has time to explain it away.

Your job is not always to understand the message. Sometimes your job is simply to trust what you received.

5. Intuition vs. Overthinking

There is no perfect formula, but you can begin noticing differences in how your experiences feel.

- **An intuitive impression may:** arrive quickly, feel simple, seem neutral or matter-of-fact, and appear before you have time to reason through it.
- **Overthinking may:** loop, debate, add details, search for certainty, or keep changing the original impression.
- **Imagination used intentionally:** often begins because you deliberately choose to picture or create something.
- **An unexpected mental image:** may simply pop in without you intentionally constructing it.

None of these signs alone proves the source of an impression. Use them as observations, then look for patterns over time.

6. The 'Did I Imagine That?' Check-In

When you catch yourself second-guessing, pause and ask:

- What was the very first thing I received?
- Did it arrive before I started analyzing?
- Was I intentionally trying to invent this, or did it simply appear?
- Am I changing the original impression because it seems too ordinary or strange?
- Can I write it down without needing to prove it right now?
- If this involves another person, can I share it simply without forcing it to fit?

Try saying: *This is what I received. I don't need to make it bigger, better, or more impressive.*

7. Exercise: The First-Impression Journal

For seven days, practice recording one low-stakes first impression each day. Keep it simple. You might guess which friend will text, what color you will notice first on a walk, which song will play, or what image comes to mind when you become quiet.

Step 1: Ground and ask one simple question.

Step 2: Record the first impression immediately.

Step 3: Do not change your answer.

Step 4: Later, record what actually happened.

Step 5: Notice patterns without judging yourself.

My first impression was:

What happened afterward:

What did I notice about how the impression arrived?

8. Exercise: Say the Random Thing

This exercise is especially useful during development practice with a willing partner. Keep the practice light and low-stakes.

Ask your partner to think of a neutral person, place, object, or memory. Ground yourself and notice the first simple impression that appears. If you see a red balloon, hear the word 'garden,' feel warmth, or suddenly think of a dog, write it down or say it exactly as it came.

Do not embellish. If you received 'red balloon,' do not turn it into a birthday party unless that additional information actually arrived.

The purpose is not to be right every time. The purpose is to practice recognizing the difference between **receiving** and **constructing**.

9. Building Trust Without Forcing Certainty

Trust develops through experience. You do not have to label every thought as intuitive, and you do not need to prove every impression immediately.

- Keep a journal so memory does not rewrite the original impression.
- Practice with harmless, low-stakes questions.
- Notice which types of impressions tend to be clearest for you.
- Allow misses to be part of learning instead of treating them as failure.
- Stay grounded and use ordinary judgment alongside intuition.
- Do not make major medical, legal, financial, or safety decisions based only on an intuitive exercise.

Confidence grows when you become familiar with *your* patterns - not when you pressure yourself to be certain.

10. Your 7-Day Trust Challenge

Day 1 - Record the first image that comes to mind.

What I noticed: _____

Day 2 - Record the first word or phrase that appears.

What I noticed: _____

Day 3 - Notice your first body response to a harmless choice.

What I noticed: _____

Day 4 - Ask a low-stakes question and record the first answer.

What I noticed: _____

Day 5 - Notice one impression you almost dismiss as 'too random.'

What I noticed: _____

Day 6 - Practice with a willing friend and share only what you actually receive.

What I noticed: _____

Day 7 - Review the week and look for patterns.

What I noticed: _____

Final Reflection

What kind of impression do I second-guess most often?

What does my first impression usually feel like?

When did I notice myself adding to or changing an impression?

What helped me trust myself without forcing certainty?

A Final Reminder

You do not need every impression to make sense immediately. Stay grounded, stay curious, and give yourself permission to record what arrives before deciding what it means.

Receive first. Interpret second. Let experience teach you what your intuitive language feels like.

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For educational and personal-reflection purposes only. Intuitive exercises should not replace professional medical, mental-health, legal, financial, or safety advice.