

# Four Voices Within

This writing on the Four Voices Within attempts to address a topic faced by many who are new to BDSM and kink or are re-evaluating their relationships. The essence of the most common question is this: *how do I know I'm ready, I'm doing it right, and is this really right for me?* Asking that kind of question is a good thing – it shows you are honest enough with yourself to take responsibility for your actions potential mistakes. It's a huge first step in owning your choices, respecting not only yourself but the health and well-being of your partner(s), be that in relationships which are monogamous, poly, or casual play oriented. To get to answers we need to listen to ourselves better, not just the big emotions, but some of the quieter sources of wisdom within us.



As is par for the course, what follows below is not definitive or absolute. I offer these viewpoints through experience and research, and while this article may capture the truths of many, it does not assert itself as being “The One Right Way”. My hope is that the experience and research shared within will give you additional assistance in your own journey.

# External vs Internal Sources

In a previous article, I wrote about "[whole listening](#)" and attuning yourself to all the means we have to perceive external inputs and information. The focus of that writing is learning to actively listen using all of our senses in order to connect to the other in a more complete and profound way. By listening with the whole self, we improve our sense of connection, gain greater depth and insight, and expand our awareness in the shared experience of being within the present moment. However, these are all focused on External information.

In this instance, however, I am speaking of sources of "internal" information – the voices within us. These are our **Thoughts**, **Feelings** or emotions, the gut or heart wrenching messages of **Instinct**, and the quiet whisper that is **Intuition**. These are our internal sources of information, fonts of knowledge and potential wisdom constantly trying to communicate with us. At times they scream and are completely clear – but usually it's a jumble of chaos. Rarely do all these voices agree, more likely they are seemingly contradictory. Like anything else in life, understanding these requires more than a quick read or video. It takes practice and effort – as anything worthwhile, any mastery of any skill, requires an investment of time and effort.

The purpose of our internal voices are as sources of information is to help us make better decisions. These sources do not necessarily have the same goals. Each has its own purpose, and as a result its own message. They act as drivers, forces within you that are trying to influence actions to satisfy certain needs, or clue you in to something you may be overlooking (or actively ignoring). Let's examine these sources more closely:

# Examining the Four Voices

## Emotions & Feelings (Pre-Cognitive)

Our feelings are the most tangible and relatable to most people. They are largely responsible for producing the urge or drive to act. As such, they are often base or even primitive in their nature, and more often than not can be found rooted in the most simple and [primal](#) motives such as Fight, Flight, Freeze, Feed, and Fuck. Most of our more powerful emotions nearly always seem as immediate needs that Must Be Done Right Now. Our feelings, however powerful or “loud” that message may be, are not very sophisticated.

*Examples: Vulnerability, Fear, Run, Hide, Freeze, Avoid, Hate, Anger, Fight, Hunger, Lust, Revulsion, etc.*

## Instinct (Sub-Cognitive)

Closely related to our emotions, our Instincts are typically less tangible or definite. Possessed by all living complex organisms, they exist on a deeper level than cognition or awareness. For the most part, they produce our early warning signs (red/yellow/green) which are often physically experienced, but well before we have a loud and clear signal as to why. Instinct originates from earliest species development for survival – typically reduced to drives that satisfy basic survival needs. Because instinct is for most a far more ephemeral signal, instinct is often drowned out by the tendency to be rationalized or “talked over” by the chattering thinking mind. For example, it can be sensed in stomach (e.g. getting a gut feeling); in the heart (flutter or tight); in our neck and back (stiffness, tension), and extremities (jittery legs or busy hands/fingers).

*Examples: Doubtful Hesitation, Tension, Nervous Energy, Anticipation, Unspecific Anxiety, etc.*

## Thinking (Cognitive)

Most folks typically identify this as thought, consideration, logic, etc. Our cognitive voice originates from need to recognize and solve problems, as well as anticipate causal relationships (cause & effect). Our waking state of cognitive awareness produces answers to questions such as When, Where, Why, How, and Under What Circumstances. As advanced as it is, and as much as it differentiates Humans from other animals on the planet, the voice from cognition often has more complex concerns as it evaluates solutions, means or resources, risks and benefits. However, its primary effort is to attempt to make sense of what does not have a complete picture or what disagrees with a belief (rationalization).

*Examples: Problems & Solutions, Causality, Visualization, Rationalization, Self-Awareness*

## Intuition (Super-Cognitive)



*Intuition allows patterns emerge from disparate clusters of data*

Perhaps the most evasive of our internal sources of information is our Intuition. Contrary to popular belief, intuition is not a magical phenomenon but rather is identifying trends and commonalities to seemingly unrelated

and unstructured information. When advice given asks that we “sleep on it” or “give it a day or two” it is often for the reason that we wish to (A) quiet the louder voice of emotion, and (B) give some time for the pattern to emerge and answers to resolve more clearly. Intuition as an ability, originates from need to process incomplete information and to use conjecture in order to give us an advantage in survival. We are effectively anticipating the hints of what’s to come, without knowing why we feel so certain. As such, intuition is often less recognizable to us than direct causal logic (If, Then) because of its non-linear methodology and various patterns of outcomes. This gives rise to sudden realization without being able to account for all the pieces of the puzzle or even knowing how you figured it out (Knowing without knowing). Elements of this mode of thought are being researched, sometimes known as logarithmic and recursive thinking.

*Examples: Inspiration, Epiphany, Sudden Clarity, Satori, Deja Vu, Just Knowing, etc.*

## **Integration**

Any single message or signal from one of these voices is only part of the picture, part of the story. To appreciate all that you are experiencing and processing, we need to become more aware of each voice, and consider the totality of their messages. There are ways of becoming more distinctly aware of these inputs. Doing so increases your ability to clearly identify your messages and their sources. The value of such a practice is that you will understand your own motives and drivers better, and therefore develop the means to better decision making and outcomes.

- **Accept that these voices are all valid:** emotions, though, instinct, and intuition all have their place. You have to learn how to be okay with ALL of these messages, especially when they are conflicting, chaotic,

or overwhelmingly powerful.

- **Spot the unique characteristics** of your various voices. This is often done by noting the qualities of their signal (location, tone, feel, etc). You must develop means to identify them and know them by developing a type of internal dialog and rapport:
  - **Emotions** – Where do your feelings reside, does it have a color or texture or shape, what is its size and weight, does it move around?
  - **Cognition** – Without judgment or evaluation, what are your thoughts put into their briefest forms, can you list them?
  - **Instinct** – Reduce it two choices, if you were to flip a coin between the two, what is that sudden message you get when you see its face? (Yes!/No!!)
  - **Intuition** – Have you gotten a sudden clue, vision, or quiet impulse you rather wish didn't arise? Was there something so clear, yet seemed to have no "real reason"?
- **Learn to see the whole chain of messages.** These voices are trying to tell you a story – much like a comic strip or storyboard within you. Since 2/3rds or more of the mind is based on a sort of storytelling, it can help to see it in those terms. You need to see how each is contributing to the story, and how their parts fit together.
- **Learn to understand the lesson or message of the story.** Learn to accept the story and heed the message (since it's about *You*). When you see or listen to the message, it should provoke a response, to feel about it in some way. This experience of listening to your own story may not have answers per se, but rather may focus on the unresolved and resulting confusion, which is a story itself that is asking for resolution or closure.

# Reconciling the Voices

The resolution of any story, any assemblage of all the pieces which you have brought together and tried to reconcile, is in the Choice and the Cost. This is an accounting of possible choices and actions – given all that you feel, sense, know, and presuppose. It's the attempt to recognize it all into an over-arching picture from which you can step back and appreciate with a little perspective. It may be that the picture is not perfect or may seem incomplete, and that's okay. Rarely is something completely conclusive or comprehensive, unless it's gone on for too long and is now viewed in hindsight.

## Closing

To summarize, developing a better sense of personal impact and overall readiness comes from constant learning, practice, exploration, experimentation, along with lots and lots of Listening. This includes listening to your partner(s), friends, and family (external sources) just as much as it is listening to different parts within yourself (internal sources). The art of listening to your internal sources is developed through practice, honing the skills in recognizing the various characteristics of our senses, and learning their significance. In this way we can see the whole picture, not just the parts we want or the parts we fear.

-Sir Vice

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