

Head, Heart, and Body

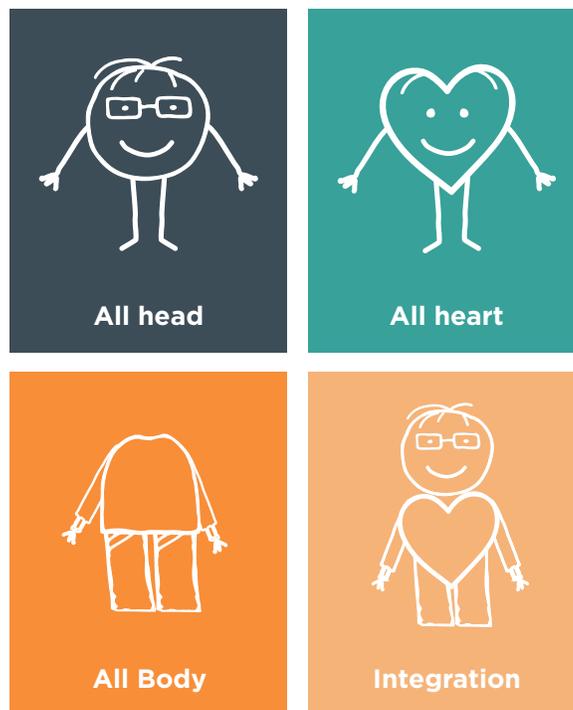
The Power of Integration

It's always better together. The sum is greater than the parts. It takes two to see one.

These are all mantras we know and love, and yet ones that we often struggle to put into practice. There is also a reason why.

Many of us live in cultures dominated by the head. We believe we can't go wrong if we rely on logic, science, and rationality. There is also an assumption that if we think long and hard enough, we can figure anything out and make anything work.

Unfortunately, when we over-index on cognition, we sometimes ignore wisdom, intuition, and experience.



Great Leaders Balance the Head and Heart

- There is a strong correlation between high-empathy and high-earning companies.
- The Empathy Index found a correlation as high as 80% between departments with higher empathy and those with high performers.
- In 2015, the top 10 companies on the Global Empathy Index increased in value more than twice as much as the bottom 10, generating 50% more earnings on average.*

* Belinda Palmer, "The Most Empathetic Companies, 2016," Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2016/12/the-most- and-least-empathetic-companies-2016>

Head, Heart, and Body Integration

What integration provides

We're at our best when we act and make decisions based on all available data, including:

- Head/mind
- Heart/emotions
- Body/actions

Why it matters

Integration matters because:

- Science can't explain everything;
- There is a lot we don't know and can't explain;
- With increasing VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity), it can be challenging to process everything encountered daily using just one point of reference (e.g., the head).

Why we often don't integrate

Integration is challenging because:

- We live in a society that venerates a mind/body split and tends to categorize emotions as a counterpoint to reason and rationality;
- Integration is a new muscle, and to use it;
- For many people, over-indexing on the head feels safer/more familiar than integration;
- Integration requires stillness, which is difficult in a society with a bias toward action;
- Listening to our hearts and bodies can sometimes be frightening (e.g., it might draw our attention to problems we don't want to face).

How to integrate

The best way to move toward integration is to:

- Build healthy habits and routines (e.g., ensure your day includes activities that activate your head, heart, and body);
- Notice what types of information you have available versus what types of information you're relying upon;
- Stay curious—don't discount what you can't immediately rationalize.

Activation

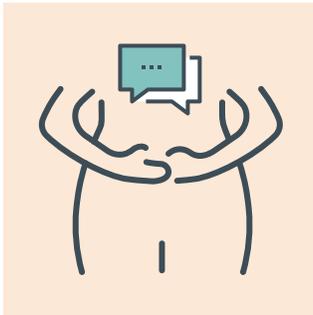
To move toward integration:

- Create a list of what you want to integrate;
- Make finding stillness (e.g., meditation) a daily practice, so you always have time to reconnect with your body and heart.
- Check in with your head, heart, and body before making key decisions.

“Gut Feelings”? More Accurate Than You Might Think

We sometimes make decisions based on “gut feelings,” and yet doing so is usually dismissed as irrational. Recent neuroscience research has found that gut feelings may be more rational than once thought.

Dr. Emeran A. Mayer, Director, G. Oppenheimer Center for Neurobiology of Stress and Resilience at UCLA, has found that decisions based on gut feelings may have a neurobiological basis rooted in “brain-gut interactions” and their associated memories. Using neuroimaging, he has found that certain regions of the brain (specifically the fronto-insular cortical regions and subregions of the aINS) are activated during intuitive (i.e., gut) decision-making processes.



The takeaway: Knowing something in your gut may be just as valid as knowing something in your head. As a result, in some cases, ignoring gut feeling may be a deficit rather than an advantage.

** Mayer E. A. (2011). Gut feelings: the emerging biology of gut-brain communication. Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 12(8), 453-466. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3071>*

The Risk of Getting Out of Balance

Too much time in...	What Happens	Why It Happens/ Potential Risks	How to Regulate Imbalances
 Head	Filter everything through thinking Over-index on data, logic, and what is or can be “known”	While it may feel safer, easier, and more rational (i.e., in your comfort zone), when fully in your head, you risk isolating yourself, putting your physical wellbeing at risk, and ignoring others’ needs.	Check-in with your heart and body before making critical decisions. Don’t assume that the best way to fly is as a solo pilot.
 Heart	Assess situations only through emotions	When fully in your heart (not grounded in your body or thinking), you risk becoming overly reactive and even volatile.	Monitor your emotions. Check in to make sure you’re not being led by emotions alone.
 Body	Seek sensations with stimulus and gratification	When fully in your body (not feeling and thinking), your ability to reflect on past experiences, patterns, and outcomes may be compromised.	Keep tabs on your adrenaline levels; running only on adrenaline for extended periods can put you at risk.

Ideas Into Action

Step 1: Integrate

Structure your days and times to ensure you're nurturing your head, heart, and body. These are muscles, habits, and practices best nurtured over time and not simply when you need them most.

Also, regularly check in with yourself to ask:

- What do I know in my head?
- What do I feel in my heart?
- What do I do in my body?



Step 2: Activate

Take a moment to draw a map of how you are living. Be certain to include your head, heart, and body. Then, draw a map of how you want to be living.

A large empty rectangular box with a teal border, intended for drawing a map of current living.

How I am living...

A large empty rectangular box with an orange border, intended for drawing a map of desired living.

How I want to be living...

- Where might your maps be misaligned / out of balance?
- What small shifts can bring things into balance?
- What can you learn from where you are? What habits/systems could you shift to retain better alignment?

Step 3: Level up

If steps 1 and 2 feel basic to you, raise the bar. Actively note what guides your decisions: Track where and how you know things:

- Do you indeed know these things? Are they habits?
- Did you choose them or were they "chosen" by your environment?

The more we tune in with a curious mind, the more open doors and ideas we'll encounter.

Achieving a balance between the head, heart, and body is a powerful way to amplify your impact at work and in life. Let us help you and your team start this conversation.

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