

# **Twelve Keys to Understanding Your Gut Instincts and Overcoming Emotional Stress**

The following information is taken from chapter nine of the new book *What's Behind Your Belly Button: A Psychological Perspective of the Intelligence of Human Nature and Gut Instinct* by Martha Char Love and Robert W. Sterling. If you find these keys begin to help you understand your inner feelings, you will find this book both engaging and a self-help to understanding who you truly are and how to listen to the voice of your gut to have a healthier and more beneficial life experience with a relief of stress. If you do not understand these keys as presented, then that is totally understandable as these ideas on gut instincts are new in psychology and many are being presented for the very first time in this book. You may wish to read the book as it presents these keys in depth and will certainly give you much more information to help you understand these concepts and apply them to your own inner awareness of yourself.

1. The gut is the instinctual response center and we feel either empty or full or somewhere in the middle (imagine a gas gauge) in our gut at all times.
2. We feel full when our instinctual needs are met and empty when they are not. We are talking not just about food intake (although the feeling of emptiness and fullness in relation to food intake and psychological instinctual needs are interestingly similar and we do get them confused and thus may over eat to try to fill the emptiness we feel psychologically). We are talking about psychological instinctual needs—psychological not in the use of logic but in our needs as human beings.
3. We have two instinctual needs that the gut gauges—the need to feel accepted and the need to be in control of our own responses to life. These two needs must be constantly in balance. Too much of one without the other leaves us empty.
4. When we have both of these instinctive needs met, we feel full and thus energized; and when we have neither met, we feel empty and often experience some symptoms of stress in the body like feeling lethargic, anxious, overwhelmed, disconnected and alone.
5. The gut response does not depend on the thinking brain as

the gut is an independent brain of its own (see Dr. Michael Gershon's research), but of course it can be greatly affected by the thinking brain, and vice-versa.

6. We work both consciously and unconsciously to keep these two instinctual needs in balance at all times.

7. At best, we need to have a balanced and conscious dialog between our gut responses and head response so we can use our thinking brain to make the appropriate responses in the external world and try to fill these two important instinctual needs in appropriate and successful ways.

8. When we are unconscious of our gut responses, our thinking brain will often use a system of thought it has picked up (perhaps from an authority like a parent, teacher or even a religious interpretation) and applies it as a judgment about the feeling in our gut. This is what happens when we have an emotion like guilt or depression. We feel empty because our needs are not met and our thinking brain attaches a thought to the emptiness and lack of our fulfillment like "It is all my fault for being too stupid or too small or too incompetent, etc." or "I am not capable of doing anything to make this work or be better" or "I am not worthy or deserving", thus we have guilt and or depression feelings.

9. The emotional feelings are not pure feelings of emptiness or fullness anymore, as they now have the thinking component mixed in them. And these thinking-feelings or emotions are mostly felt in other parts of our bodies above our hara, between our head brain and gut brain. If you look into your emotional feelings, you can always find a thinking element to them. And if you trace the feeling aspect only, it goes directly and purely to the gut. For as we have said, the gut is the source of all feeling.

10. Generally, the only way we can unravel this tightly woven thread of inaccurate thinking judgment and resulting emotional stress, is to reflect back to the source of when the thinking head first applied this very same judgment and find the actual source or as close to it as possible. And the key to finding this first experience is through reflection on the gut feeling of emptiness

and fullness, not through thinking back on the details of our lives.

11. Once we find this original experience in which we started the "tape" that plays over and over in our heads that we are all at fault, powerless, too needy, unlovable, etc., then we can lift the sentence we have placed on ourselves and our feelings and begin to see ourselves clearer and make healthy decisions—begin to use our thinking head to follow our instinctual needs and fulfill our true human nature.

12. Reflection on the gut voice helps us to be more mindful of our caring nature and thus be more caring for others. And with the new awareness of our gut responses and needs that we acquire through reflection on our instinctual gut responses, we are able to live a more caring and healthy life with the thinking head finally conscious and listening more clearly to the responses of our most reliable and authentic self—our gut instinctual feelings in our body.