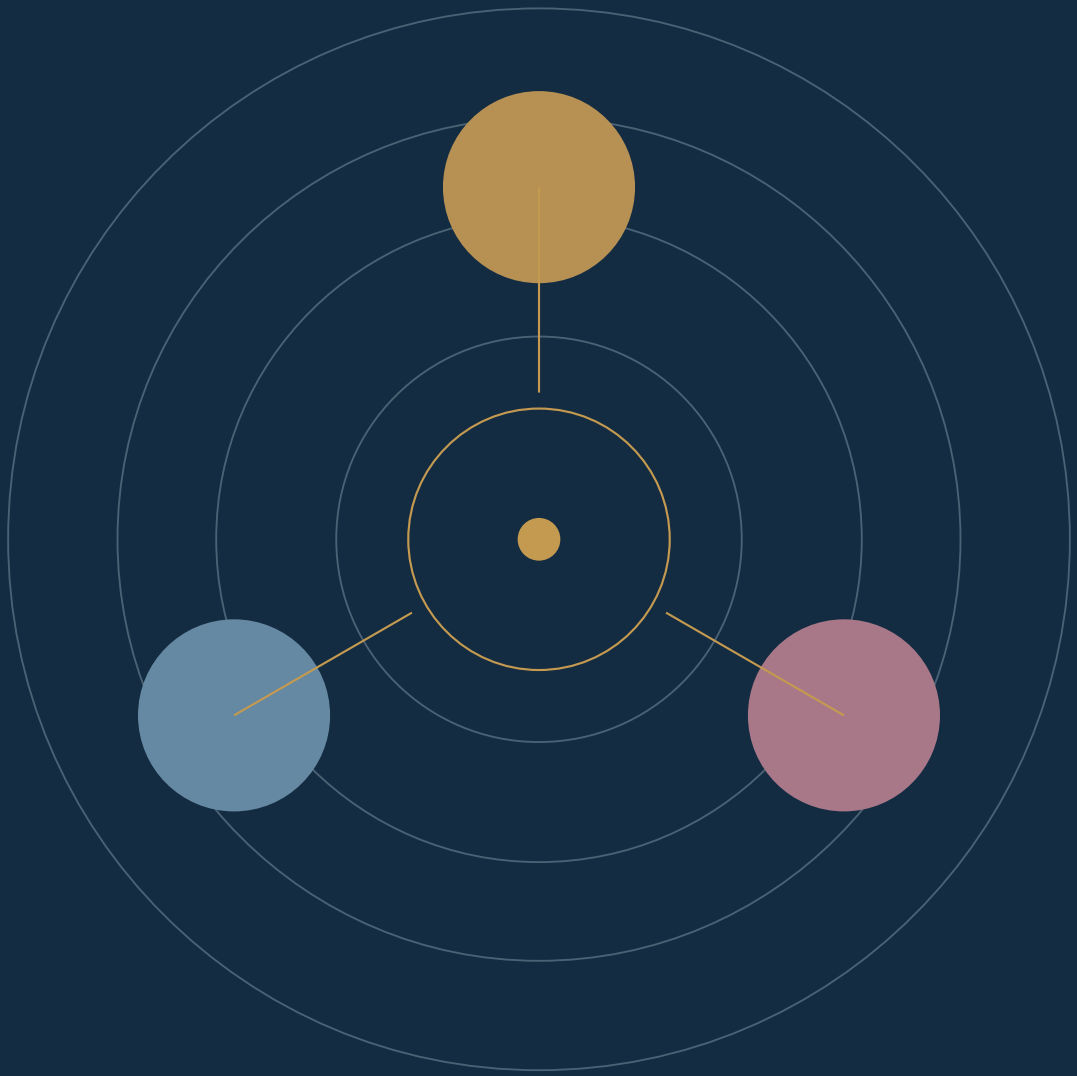
A PRACTICAL DISCERNMENT GUIDE

INTUITION, FEAR OR IMAGINATION?

Notice • Test • Discern • Choose



UNDERSTANDING YOUR INNER SIGNALS

An honest practice of self-trust

JAN MAYFIELD

BEFORE YOU DECIDE

Learn how your signals behave

One question I hear repeatedly is: How do I know whether this is intuition, fear or imagination? The answer is not to believe every inner signal. It is to learn how your own signals behave.

Intuition can be quiet. Fear can be convincing. Imagination can be useful. None needs to be treated as an enemy, and none should automatically be given authority.

THE WORK

Notice what arrived and how it arrived. Test it before you build a story around it.

REFLECT

Which inner signal do I most often trust too quickly? Which do I dismiss?

A WORKING MAP

The three inner signals

INTUITION

Often simple, steady or surprisingly neutral. It may arrive without an explanation.

FEAR

May bring urgency, tension and repetitive “what if?” thinking. It can also alert you to a real risk.

IMAGINATION

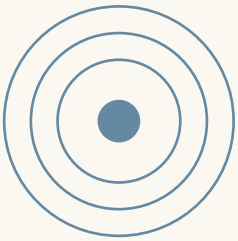
Creates possibilities. It can expand, change direction, add detail and explore what might be.

These are clues, not rigid rules. The purpose is to recognise your own patterns.

REFLECT

What happened first, before I began explaining it to myself?

Intuition: the quiet signal



WHAT TO NOTICE

Intuition may be a short sentence, image, physical knowing, hesitation or sense of yes or no. It can arrive without a long argument. The argument often begins afterwards.

DISCERNMENT

Calmness alone does not prove an impression is intuitive. A long-held belief can feel familiar and calm. Check whether the original signal remains clear when the reasoning settles.

TRY THIS

Write down the first signal from a recent moment when you “just knew” something.

REFLECT

Was it brief or elaborate? Did it arrive before reasoning?

SIGNAL 02 / 09

Fear: the protective signal



WHAT TO NOTICE

Fear is part of being human. It can alert you to danger, loss, rejection or uncertainty. It may bring urgent thinking, tension and repeated attempts to solve something that has not happened.

DISCERNMENT

Sometimes fear responds to a genuine risk; sometimes to an older experience. The task is to learn what it is protecting and what information you need.

TRY THIS

Write what fear predicts. Beside it, write what is happening now and what you can check.

REFLECT

What am I afraid will happen? Is it happening now?

Imagination: possibility



WHAT TO NOTICE

Imagination helps you rehearse, create, visualise, remember and explore. It can also be the place where fear builds a convincing future.

DISCERNMENT

A clue is movement: you can often alter the image, add detail or change the ending. That ability is useful, whether you are creating or testing a story.

TRY THIS

Take a mental image and deliberately change one detail. Notice how that feels.

REFLECT

When is imagination helping me explore, and when is it adding certainty?

SIGNAL 04 / 09

Your body is information



WHAT TO NOTICE

Breath, jaw, shoulders, chest, stomach, hands and overall energy may change before you have words for an experience. Pay attention without turning sensations into a universal code.

DISCERNMENT

A tight stomach is not automatically a no. Excitement and anxiety can feel similar. A sensation tells you something about your state; context still matters.

TRY THIS

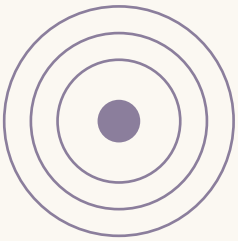
Record what changed in your body and what happened immediately beforehand.

REFLECT

What physical sensation did I notice, and what else could explain it?

SIGNAL 05 / 09

The time test



WHAT TO NOTICE

When there is no genuine urgency, write the signal down and revisit it later. Fear may soften; imagination may move to another possibility; a clear signal may remain.

DISCERNMENT

Time is one test, not a verdict. Persistent fear and long-held beliefs can also last. Pay attention to what changes as the emotional charge shifts.

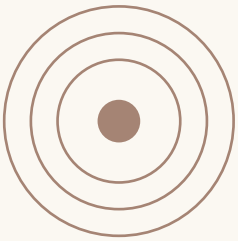
TRY THIS

Choose a non-urgent question. Record your first signal now and revisit it tomorrow.

REFLECT

What feels different when I am calmer?

The story test



WHAT TO NOTICE

A signal and the story built around it are different. “I do not want to go” may be the first signal. Predictions about being trapped, judged or regretting it arrive afterwards.

DISCERNMENT

The original signal deserves attention. The later story may include interpretation, prediction and escalation. Separate them before making a decision.

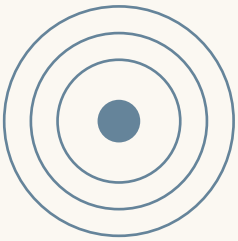
TRY THIS

Write a concern in full, then cross out every prediction and explanation. Read what remains.

REFLECT

What is the original signal beneath the story?

The evidence test



WHAT TO NOTICE

If an inner signal concerns something important, look at external information. What do you know? What are you assuming? What evidence supports or weakens the concern?

DISCERNMENT

Intuition and evidence can work together. An inner nudge may tell you where to look; checking still matters, especially when a decision has consequences.

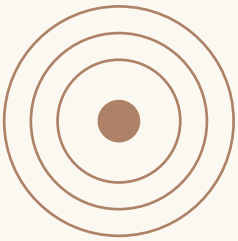
TRY THIS

List three facts, three assumptions and one practical check for a live decision.

REFLECT

What would I need to verify before acting?

When you want a yes



WHAT TO NOTICE

Desire is another voice. Wanting a relationship, opportunity or outcome can make you interpret each sign in its favour. Wanting a no can bias you too.

DISCERNMENT

Bias is human. Recognising your preferred result gives you more freedom to assess an impression honestly.

TRY THIS

Write the outcome you want, then argue fairly for the opposite interpretation.

REFLECT

Would I read this signal differently if I wanted a different outcome?

SIGNAL 09 / 09

When you cannot tell



WHAT TO NOTICE

Sometimes you will not know. You do not need to manufacture certainty because uncertainty feels uncomfortable. If a decision can wait, let it wait.

DISCERNMENT

If it cannot wait, use the best information available and make a conscious choice. Self-trust includes your ability to respond when you do not have a perfect answer.

TRY THIS

Write what you know, what remains uncertain and the next responsible choice.

REFLECT

What can I decide without pretending to know everything?

SEVEN DAYS

A discernment practice

01 Notice one inner signal without interpreting it.

02 Notice where fear appears in your body.

03 Deliberately use imagination and notice how it feels.

04 Record an immediate “knowing” without acting yet.

05 Use the time test on something non-urgent.

06 Separate one original signal from the story around it.

07 Review the week and look for your own recurring pattern.

AT THE END

How do intuition, fear and imagination each behave in me?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Inner signal record

Situation / decision

What was the first signal?

Where did I notice it in my body?

Was there urgency or emotional charge?

What story followed the signal?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Checks & decisions

What did I want the answer to be?

What external facts did I have?

What changed after time passed?

What did I eventually decide?

What did this teach me about my inner language?

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

My discernment map

My intuition often arrives as...

When fear takes over, I tend to...

My body usually shows fear by...

My imagination feels like...

I confuse fear with intuition when...

MAKE IT PRACTICAL

Building self-trust

I confuse desire with intuition when...

Waiting helps me when...

The external checks that help me most are...

One thing I no longer need to force myself to know...

One practice I will take forward is...

TAKE IT INTO LIFE

Then choose

Learn the language of your inner world.

You are not trying to become someone who never fears, never imagines and always knows the answer. You are learning to recognise each voice more clearly.

The more familiar you become with your own patterns, the less likely you are to hand a decision to whichever signal is loudest.

Notice. Test. Discern.
Then choose.

Jan Mayfield

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Jan Mayfield • 2026