



UK Extension's
**Universe of
Possibilities™**

SKILLS FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND BLESSING OTHERS

Heart Intelligence

Throughout the ages and across cultures, the heart has been considered a primary source of emotion, courage, and wisdom. In the scriptures of all religions, the word “heart” appears consistently and extensively. Not only is heart a central concept in the world’s great cultural and spiritual traditions, physiologically our hearts are in the center of our bodies. The beat of the heart is synonymous with life itself, and heart “dis-ease” is our nation’s number one killer.

With its own complex network of neurons and neurotransmitters, the heart has at least a basic ability to learn, remember, sense, and feel. Far more than most of us realize, the heart and brain work in tandem, each communicating with and influencing the other.

From a mechanical viewpoint alone, the human heart is a miracle, beating 2.5 billion times in an average life. In just one year, your heart pumps approximately a half-million gallons of blood through some 60,000 miles of blood vessels in your body.

In addition to being a world-class pump, the heart is the body’s central electrical power station, generating an electromagnetic field that is far more powerful than that of any other organ and can be measured several feet away from the body. In fact, if you are within a few feet of another person, the electromagnetic signals generated from his or her heart can actually influence your brain rhythms.



7 Core Principles



- 1 As science is helping us discover, the physical heart is truly amazing; and still more wondrous is the closely associated intuitive or spiritual heart, which gives us a wealth of subtle information and guides us in making optimal decisions.
- 2 A keen intuitive sense is at the very heart of creativity, inner strength, spiritual attunement, and both personal and interpersonal effectiveness.
- 3 Tuning into your heartfelt intuitive guidance demands a degree of inner calmness and attention as well as sensitivity and openness.
- 4 Gathering important factual information and seeking wise advice plays a vital role in helping you intelligently follow your heart's guidance.
- 5 A powerful step in becoming attuned to your heart's intelligence is simply to be aware of the entire area in the center of your chest—called the heart area—where you may gradually begin to sense a gentle and soothing warmth.
- 6 By keeping a portion of your awareness in your heart area, and by sensing your inner guidance in all that you do, you will gradually become skilled in following the steadfast wisdom of your heart's intelligence.
- 7 Remember, the more centered you are on the Target of Life, the greater your well-being, the wiser your choices, and the more effective you are in everything you do.

Put yourself in the center of the heart of the Target of Life. **Notice that the heart of the Target is clear, unobstructed, full of light.** From there, you see clearly and make choices that are good for you and those around you. You are attuned to your inner guidance and best judgment. You feel at peace, strong, compassionate, joyful, energetic, and creative. Your reflexes are sharp, your immune system strong. You stumble and fall less often, and you handle life's inevitable challenges with more confidence and skill. Your ability to endure prolonged hardship increases. You are naturally more sensitive to others—more patient, generous, and understanding. You more easily express the richness of your authentic self. The more deeply centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more love you feel and share. **You are at your best—physically, mentally, and spiritually.**



Target of Life

Although you undoubtedly have experienced being relatively centered, often little and big things happen that go against your desires and expectations, and you are likely to find yourself thrown off center and pulled out of your heart's wisdom into the surrounding web of minor frustrations and energy-drainers. Your vitality, peace, and sensitivity begin to fade, and little tensions, doubts, and fears start to emerge. Stress creeps in and things bother you more easily. You are more critical of yourself and edgier with the people in your life. Your effectiveness, spiritual attunement, and physical health start to slip.

All of this can pull you even further away from the center of the Target of Life into the area of increased darkness and sharp edges. When you are in this portion of the Target, you have strayed still further away from your center—your heart of hearts, your home of love, wisdom, and joy. Stress levels are high, and it's much more difficult to sense your inner guidance. You're far more likely to become irritable with co-workers and friends, to yell at family members, and to make poor decisions in every area of life. Tension, disharmony, and fatigue take their toll on your creativity and physical well-being. You and everyone around you are affected negatively.

Beyond this portion of the Target of Life is the outer darkness. Here you can't see well at all; it's a terrible place to be. Insecurity, doubt, confusion, and selfishness are rampant. Stress soars to dangerous levels, and good judgment plummets to an all-time low. You feel heavy and burdened and make decisions that hurt yourself and others. You are driven by fear, blindness, and anger. In this outer darkness your health suffers tremendously, and all kinds of abuse, destruction, and violence flourish. Despite your inherent goodness, you may find yourself saying and doing horrendous things. Truly, it's a living hell.

Every individual has a Target of Life as does every relationship, organization, city, and nation. Even the world as a whole has a Target of Life, and when the world moves too far from its center of love, an array of major problems erupt, including disease, poverty, environmental disasters, international strife, and war.

It is our individual and collective choices that move us away from our intuitive wisdom at the center of the Target of Life into varying degrees of stress, confusion, frustration, and conflict. **Fortunately, by making wise choices at any time, we can move back toward the center of the Target into greater levels of peace, vitality, kindness, and opportunity.**

In the gift of choice lies our greatest power—a power that can be used to uplift or destroy. The Target of Life is a helpful way to understand our individual and collective well-being. **With awareness and practice, we can become highly skilled at detecting and creatively responding to the early signs of harmful stress.** We can gradually learn to stay more deeply centered with increasing frequency, saving ourselves all kinds of trouble and our society billions of dollars in unnecessary health care costs.

If you have a strong spiritual orientation, you may find it helpful to think of being centered as being in the heart of the Divine Presence—the source of all goodness, harmony, abundance, and creativity. As temptations confront you and you allow yourself to be lured into making less than optimal decisions, you stray from the center of Divine Love into varying degrees of fear, pain, and self-defeating behaviors. To move toward the center of Divine Presence or toward a self-created hell of outer darkness, to go more deeply into love and joy or to separate yourself from the Divine and become lost in fear and confusion—these are decisions that you face each day. By staying centered and honoring your intuitive guidance, by remaining alert and choosing wisely, you can be at your best more frequently and help to create a world of marvelous possibilities.



During recent years, the term, “Heart Intelligence,” has been used frequently by the Institute of HeartMath, whose research articles and books undergird portions of this publication and are referenced on the last page. Understanding the importance of being attuned to the wisdom of our hearts, however, is far from new. For example, around 500 B.C.E., the Chinese sage Confucius explained, “To put the world in right order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right.”

In a nutshell, that’s the premise of this publication: By taking greater individual responsibility for intelligently saying yes to the promptings of our heartfelt intuitive guidance, we can make major progress in creating a healthier and more loving world.

FOLLOW YOUR HEART’S WISDOM

Think how often we hear expressions such as, “Listen to your heart” or “In your heart you’ll know what to do.” Such advice, when used in a balanced and wise way, helps us reduce confusion and make good decisions. Although this intelligence of the heart obviously refers to an intuitive or spiritual type of understanding, it is often connected with sensations felt in the center of the chest, in the general area around the physical heart.

While it only happens in a small percentage of cases, and the effect is not long-lasting, sometimes a person who receives a heart transplant will experience, for example, the dietary preferences, emotions, and thoughts of the donor. Such examples seem to support what scientists have discovered—that in its own way, the human heart indeed has the capacity to think, learn, remember, sense, and feel.

Psychoneuroimmunologist Paul Pearsall, Ph.D., tells a striking story that lends credence to the heart’s ability to remember and communicate: After an 8-year-old girl received the heart of a murdered 10-year-old girl, she started having nightmares about the man who had murdered her donor, including visions of the weapon, the place, the

time, and the clothes he wore. Using the information provided by the little girl, the police were able to apprehend and convict the murderer.

HEART INTELLIGENCE DEFINED

Not only does Heart Intelligence respond to information from our bodies, it also functions seamlessly with our minds and tunes in with our emotions and helpful advice from others. If you are a person of religious faith, you may find it helpful to think of Heart Intelligence as the guidance of God or a higher power consistent with your beliefs.

*Go into thy bosom, knock there, and
ask what your heart doth know.*

Shakespeare

Heart Intelligence is astonishing: It draws simultaneously on a wide range of information sources and instantly synthesizes this complex data into a simple and reliable form of inner guidance that is specifically tailored to your moment-to-moment needs.

Heart Intelligence is your intuitive sense of what is true or what is best to do. It’s a universal force of loving guidance. It’s a type of knowing, often instantaneous, that represents an instinctual and harmonious interplay of body, mind, and spirit. Heart Intelligence cuts through needless complexity and confusion, like a flashlight beam that illuminates the darkness, allowing you to see what’s really important.

According to Webster, intuition is an immediate knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. Sometimes intuitive insights into problems or pictures of future events come in the form of dreams. Heart Intelligence often shows up as a direct perception of truth, an instinctive feeling, a hunch, a flash, an innate knowing.

Your intuition functions best when you remain open-minded and receptive, even when you are involved in intense activity. *The more centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more keenly attuned you will be to your intuition.*

Heart Intelligence is no kin to impulsive responses triggered by whim or by our hopes and fears. We must learn to tell the difference. This is a trial-and-error process that involves making mistakes and learning from them. A fledgling intuition can fool you, so proceed with caution as you strengthen your attunement to your Heart Intelligence and learn to respond to its signals.

HARMONY AND WISE DECISION-MAKING

Scientists at the Institute of HeartMath have discovered that when an individual is deeply attuned to his or her Heart Intelligence, that person experiences heightened psychophysiological coherence—a state associated with reduced stress, increased emotional stability, high performance, and a range of health benefits.

Far from producing chaos, as we each more astutely begin tuning into our own Heart Intelligence, a harmony emerges. This synergistic harmony may be seen most easily in small groups, but it also manifests itself in larger units of society.

Every time you don't follow your inner guidance, you feel a loss of energy, a loss of power, a sense of spiritual deadness.

Shakti Gawain

Too often we look for answers outside ourselves. Too often we ignore, repress, or treat lightly those intuitive recognitions we have about a person, a situation, or an idea. We ignore that inner sense of certainty that keeps nudging us. If we are going to be in charge of our lives, we have to stop smothering our Heart Intelligence! In major decisions, intelligently gather information and seek the advice of those you respect, but **don't give away your power of choice to anyone.** Be true to your heart and be willing to take intelligent risks.

THE LOVE CONNECTION

Scientists have discovered that the heart secretes oxytocin, which is known as the “love” or “bonding” hormone. In addition to its well-known

role in childbirth and lactation, recent evidence suggests that this hormone also influences cognition, social adaptation, and the creation of enduring bonds between individuals.

When our hearts feel love, all kinds of good things happen. For example, in Topeka, Kansas, at the Menninger Clinic, tests have shown that people who are romantically in love are more euphoric, more energetic, and less subject to pain. In addition, they suffer fewer colds and have white blood cells that more actively fight infection. Personal feelings of love also positively affect those around us. For instance, psychologist David McClelland of Harvard University has shown that simply seeing a movie about a loving person, such as Mother Teresa, temporarily strengthens one's immune systems. McClelland found that this was true even for those who disliked Mother Teresa.

LOVE DISSOLVES FEAR

Love is the sacred, silent call of one heart to another. Love is sweet, tender, kind, patient, strong like steel. Love is feeling for others as we feel for ourselves. Love is simple, open, childlike. Love spreads rays of hope in the hearts of the poor and forsaken. Love is the light that dissolves all walls among individuals, families, and nations.

Love is the deepest longing of every human being, including those people we find threatening or unlikable. To be loved is to feel unconditionally accepted and cherished.

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, or even touched; they must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller

Love cannot thrive in the presence of fear. Not the quick, healthy fear that alerts us and compels us to action, but the damaging fear that lingers and drains our life energy. Fear takes many forms: fear of not getting our way (anger), fear of what other people might think (insecurity), fear of not getting enough (overconsumption), fear of something we don't understand (hatred), and so on.

Fear comes primarily from our thinking. Discipline yourself to think constructive, loving thoughts. **Remember, when you look fear in the face, it will lose its power over you.** Stay fully in the present moment, and your fear will dissolve. Think about this: *Now* is enough; *now* is all you have; and *now* is just what you need. **In the now there is no fear, for fear only exists when you step away from the now into the past or future.**

As fear dissipates and love grows, we gradually awaken to the fact that we are not separate from our brothers and sisters. We realize that whatever we do to others we also do to ourselves.

As love wells up within our hearts, it is impossible to contain. By its nature it expands and has to express itself. **Love must be put into action, and that action is service**—service to family and friends, service through your work, service to your community and environment, service to all who appreciate what you have to give.

The more we follow our Heart Intelligence, the greater the love we feel and can share.

Physician Gerald Jampolsky and corporate trainer Diane Cirincione said it well: “No matter what the question, love is the answer. No matter what the pain or illness, love is the answer. No matter what the loss, love is the answer. No matter what the fear, love is the answer.”



QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

One good question can be worth a shelf full of books. **Think about the broad topic of Heart Intelligence; then write down several related questions that come to mind.** Ponder your questions and discuss your responses with a friend or with a small group. Here are two queries that may trigger further questions:

- ✦ What do you think happens to a person who doesn't follow the wisdom, callings, and dreams of his or her heart?

Your Heart's Way

*Whether you are responding to a stressful situation, seeking creative inspiration, or wondering how best to use your free time, this simple four-step skill builder can guide you in making optimal choices. You can apply **Your Heart's Way** in almost any place at any time, in only a minute or less.*

- 1. Pause with Confidence.** *Mentally say to yourself, "I am calm, I am confident." If you are spiritually inclined, you may instead wish to mentally utter a very short prayer and/or visualize yourself surrounded by radiant light.*
- 2. Breathe Slowly.** *Allow your breath to become deep, quiet, and regular as your belly expands with each in-breath and contracts with each out-breath. Imagine that you are breathing in and out through the heart area in the center of your chest.*
- 3. Feel Your Heart.** *Take about seven seconds (perhaps longer when possible) and gently focus on your heart area—the central portion of your chest. While you do this, be inwardly quiet and receptive.*
- 4. Sense Your Guidance.** *As you concentrate on the sensations in your heart area, intuit what your heart is communicating. Your heart's guidance may be subtle—perhaps very subtle—showing itself in a feeling, thought, image, or inner knowing.*

*As you practice, you will sense your heart's guidance more easily and quickly. With continued practice, **Your Heart's Way** will become habitual. You may even become so attuned to your heart and its guidance that you will live almost every aspect of your life from that beautiful place of love. Keeping a portion of your consciousness constantly attuned to the gentle warmth in your heart area will not interfere with the performance of your daily activities. In fact, it will increase your effectiveness, creativity, and kindness.*

- ✧ What seems to help you most in attuning to and following your Heart Intelligence?



SKILL BUILDERS

Skill builders help you exercise your creative muscles to give you the strength you need for success. *In addition to the skill builders below, create some of your own on the topic of Heart Intelligence.* As with physical fitness workouts, the benefits come from actually *doing* the exercises.

- ◆ Sit quietly in a comfortably erect position and close your eyes. For five minutes, softly focus your attention on the heart area in the center of your chest. When your attention wanders, gently bring it back to your heart.
- ◆ Remember and learn from a time when you intuitively sensed you should act in a certain way and your intuition was correct.



A NEW POSSIBILITY

Bringing a dream to life is a journey. It begins and continues one step at a time. Think about all that you have learned from this publication and how you might use it. Then choose one small goal that you want to accomplish in the next few days. Move toward a new possibility that is really important to you—one that you are enthusiastic about and are confident you can achieve.

Take a card or a piece of paper and at the top, write "A New Possibility." Under this heading, briefly state what you will do and by when. Sign this action plan and put it where you will see it often. Tell a supportive friend or family member about your goal, and frequently visualize yourself following through. Be prepared just in case doubts or roadblocks crop up. Know that you can always draw upon faith, firm resolve, and creativity to overcome any obstacles that may arise.

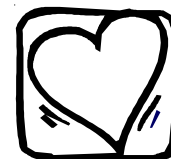
When you put the deepest desires of your heart into action, it naturally benefits others, either directly or indirectly. Have fun with your action plan; make a difference; inspire others. Dare to envision new possibilities and then create your dreams one step at a time.



POSITIVE THOUGHTS

You may find the following brief thoughts (or similar ones that you create) to be simple yet powerful inspirational tools. You might, for example, memorize and, with deep feeling and concentration, mentally repeat one of these seed thoughts or write it on a card and place it where you'll see it often.

- ♥ I think problems through, seek helpful information, and stay open to respected advice; but I unfailingly place my greatest reliance on the soul-guided promptings of my heart.
- ♥ I always keep a portion of my awareness in my heart area in the center of my chest. Thus, the wisdom and love of my heart softly inform all that I think, say, and do.
- ♥ Through example and friendly encouragement, I help others to tune into and respect their heartfelt intuitive guidance.



LOVE MADE VISIBLE

Together, let us envision and build a world where all people enjoy optimal well-being. Let us strive to awaken fresh thinking, new enthusiasm, and abundant love. Let us create a world of unimagined possibilities. It can be done!

10 Educational Modules

UK Extension's Universe of Possibilities™: Skills for Creating Happiness and Blessing Others is an educational series containing 10 modules. Each module is accompanied by a Macromedia Flash® movie, a PowerPoint® presentation, and other teaching tools. All these resources, along with a Facilitator's Guide, are available free-of-charge in camera-ready format at the following website: www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your Vision Map 2. Making the Growth Choice 3. The Way of Peace 4. Heart Intelligence 5. The Freedom of Self-Discipline |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Embracing This Present Moment 7. Accepting and Loving Your Body 8. Healthy Relationships 9. Unleashing Your Creativity 10. Gifts of Gratitude and Blessing |
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