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Listening to the Inner Nudge: Recognizing When It's Time to Change

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There's a moment, often quiet, often inconvenient, when something inside you whispers that your current path no longer fits. It's not dramatic. It's not a breakdown. It's a subtle shift, a gentle tug, a sense that the work you're doing or the way you're living is slightly out of rhythm with who you now are.

Most people don't talk about this moment because it feels ambiguous. You can't always explain it. You can't justify it with data. You can't present it in a slide deck. But you *feel* it.

And if you're honest, you've probably felt it long before you were willing to admit it. I certainly did.

For months – maybe even years – before I made a major career shift, I felt restless. Nothing was “wrong” on the surface. I was performing well. I had built something solid. But underneath, there was a growing sense

that I was no longer aligned with what that role required. I kept brushing it aside because acknowledging it felt terrifying. Change meant uncertainty. Change meant identity disruption. Change meant letting go of something that once defined me.

So I ignored the nudge. I rationalized it. I told myself to be grateful. I told myself it was just a phase. And I probably would have kept going like that, hovering between discomfort and denial, if redundancy hadn't forced the question I'd been avoiding.

Redundancy didn't create the nudge, but it amplified it. It made that quiet truth impossible to ignore. This article is about that moment, the early signal that something in your work or life is shifting, and how to recognize it with clarity, compassion, and a holistic lens.

The Inner Nudge: What It Actually Feels

Like. The inner nudge rarely arrives as a bold declaration. It's more like a subtle internal shift that becomes harder to ignore over time.

Here's what it often looks like:

- A growing restlessness: A sense that you've outgrown your current chapter, even if nothing is "wrong."
- A mismatch between your values and your daily work: The work still makes sense on paper, but something feels misaligned.
- A desire for more meaning or impact: A pull toward work that feels more "you."
- A loss of energy where there used to be spark: Not burnout, more like a quiet fading.
- A recurring thought you keep brushing aside: A whisper that returns at inconvenient moments.

Each of these is an early signal of inner change. Not a crisis, but a shift in identity, purpose, or direction.

For me, the restlessness came first. It showed up as a subtle heaviness on Sunday evenings, a sense of going through the motions, a feeling that I was performing a

version of myself rather than inhabiting who I truly was. I kept telling myself it was temporary. But deep down, I knew something was shifting.

Why We Ignore the Nudge:

If the nudge is so persistent, why do we resist it?

Because acknowledging it often threatens the identity we've built.

Here are the most common reasons people ignore their inner signal:

- Fear of losing a familiar identity: When your role has become part of who you are, change feels like erasing yourself.
- Loyalty to a path that once made sense: You don't want to disappoint others (or your past self!).
- External expectations: Success, stability, and recognition can make staying feel easier than questioning.
- Uncertainty about what comes next: The unknown feels riskier than the discomfort you already understand.
- A belief that you "should" be satisfied: You tell yourself others would be grateful to have what you have.
- Each of these is a protective mechanism – your mind trying to keep you safe.
- In my case, fear was the loudest barrier. I had already started imagining a different kind of work, a different rhythm, a different way of showing up. But the idea of stepping away from what I had built felt irresponsible. I worried about what people would think. I worried about losing stability. I worried about starting over.
- So I stayed. Longer than I needed to. And yet, the nudge kept returning.

A Holistic Way to Hear the Signal

One of the most powerful ways to recognize the inner nudge is to listen through a holistic lens, not just mentally, but emotionally and physically.

1. Mental Clarity: The Thoughts That Keep Returning

Your mind often gives you the first clues:

- “I don’t think this is right for me anymore.”
- “I want something different.”
- “I can’t imagine doing this for another five years.”
- “There’s something more I’m meant to explore.”

These thoughts may feel inconvenient, but they’re invitations to pay attention.

2. Emotional Awareness: What Expands You vs. What Drains You

Your emotions offer another layer of truth:

- What work lights you up?
- What consistently drains you?
- Where do you feel resentment?
- Where do you feel possibility?

Emotions are data. They reveal alignment or misalignment long before your mind catches up.

3. Physical Cues: The Body Speaks First Your body often knows before you do:

- Tightness in your chest before meetings
- A sinking feeling on Sunday nights
- A sense of heaviness when you think about the future
- A feeling of lightness when you imagine something new These are somatic signals: your body’s way of telling the truth.

When all three – mind, emotions, body – point in the same direction, the nudge becomes unmistakable.

When the Nudge Becomes a Turning Point

There’s a moment when the inner nudge shifts from a whisper to a quiet certainty. It doesn’t mean you’re ready to leap. It simply means you’re ready to listen.

Here are signs you’re entering that turning point:

- You feel more pulled toward possibility than anchored to the familiar.
- Your curiosity grows louder than your fear.
- You start imagining a different version of your work or life.
- You crave alignment more than certainty.
- You begin exploring, even privately, what change might look like.

This is the phase I found myself in long before I admitted it to anyone else. I started reading about different paths. I started journaling about what I wanted. I started noticing what lit me up. I started imagining a life that felt more aligned.

I wasn’t ready to act, but I was ready to acknowledge the truth. And that was the beginning.

Trusting the Whisper

Change rarely begins with clarity. It begins with a whisper, a quiet inner nudge that says, “Pay attention.”

You don’t have to leap. You don’t have to decide today. You don’t have to burn anything down. You simply have to listen.

Because the nudge isn’t trying to disrupt your life. It’s trying to guide you toward a version of yourself that feels more honest, more aligned, and more alive.

And when you listen to what’s shifting, things don’t fall apart. They make more sense.

If you’re feeling your own inner nudge, you don’t have to navigate it alone. Book a clarity session with me and we’ll explore what your next chapter might look like with honesty and intention.

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