FROM MAINSTREAM TO MYSTICAL

EMBRACING THE POWER OF INTUITION AND SYNCHRONICITY IN A NEW PARADIGM OF LEADERSHIP

ANN W. ELLIOTT

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From Mainstream to Mystical:
Embracing the Power of Intuition and Synchronicity
in a New Paradigm of Leadership

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This book is a recollection of actual events in the author's life. Names and identifying characteristics of individuals and places have been changed where appropriate to maintain anonymity and protect privacy.

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This book is dedicated to you and
all the brave leaders embracing the unknown
and allowing synchronicities to guide them.

May your journey be filled with awe
and may you inspire others to venture
from mainstream to mystical.

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, I've known I have access to information I did not learn from the news, the internet or from any traditional sources. These curious insights often arrive unbidden and their origin is undefined. With time and validation, I have learned this information is very reliable and mostly accurate, and I have grown to trust it and to treat it with great reverence.

During the past two decades, I chronicled hundreds of instances of unexplained knowingness and crazy serendipities in a Word document titled, *Stories of Intuition and Guidance*. Ten years ago, in all caps at the bottom of the page, I typed the words:

THIS WILL BECOME A BOOK

And, now it has.

I knew I had unusual and perhaps unbelievable stories to share, but I had no idea writing them would lead me on a journey of even deeper self-discovery and awareness, as if honoring my past provided an opportunity to gain more wisdom, clarity and direction.

In recent years, I have helped others who are interested in learning how to utilize their own intuitive gifts and cultivate metaphysical awareness. Having overcome my own hesitancy, I smile when skeptics experience an undeniable flash of insight, leading to some amazing and

useful revelation along with a new, more enlightened way of life. I love to witness disbelief melting, allowing trust and space for more divine insights to arrive.

Along with the mystical, I am fascinated by our one common denominator, our humanness.

I have always been curious about who a person really is behind their position, title, accomplishments and external appearance. When I know something about a person intuitively, that precious insight allows me to join them in their humanity.

As I have chosen to seek the unconventional and welcome the unexpected, the Universe has choreographed an unbelievable series of synchronicities, propelling me along an evolutionary trajectory through a series of winks and nudges. My path has definitely included some stumbles and mishaps, but eventually silver linings were revealed, allowing me to step into something even more enriching. Ultimately, these challenges enabled me to discover and embody a deeper truth and have always strengthened the foundation of my life and professional work.

In reading my experiences, I hope you delight in discovering the richness of your own and the interconnectedness of all life.

CHAPTER 1
Humanness and Beyond

As I sat in the lobby of the Buckhead Club, I fidgeted nervously, waiting for someone I knew only from a photograph in the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*. Two weeks earlier, I had been charmed by Martha's face smiling back at me as I read a profile piece called "Sixty Second Strategist." Martha coached executives using a variety of unconventional techniques from her background in acting and theater, and to Martha, a business presentation was a performance.

I underlined a quote that resonated with me, "Some speakers have such issues with perfectionism that they fail to exhibit the one thing that has been winning audiences over for centuries: Humanness."

Maybe that's what my presentations needed — Humanness.

In the 1990s, I had worked sixteen-hour days managing big distribution centers for global companies. Still in my twenties, I ran warehouses bigger than football fields stacked to the rafters with pallets of consumer products moved by dozens of forklifts whizzing back and forth across loading docks and in and out of eighteen wheelers 24/7. I soon tired of working in someone else's system where my long hours and commitment to operational excellence

were not rewarded. With naive optimism and a few ideas hatched in collaboration with a colleague, I founded my own company.

While working to get the first idea for a truckload transportation network off the ground, I fielded calls from executives I knew from past jobs in big corporations, and unexpectedly those calls turned into consulting projects.

A former colleague, Scott, sent a broadcast email to his network looking for support with an operational turnaround at a $4 billion subsidiary of a $20 billion company. Scott was staffed on a huge strategy project at one of the largest, most prestigious management consulting firms. During that project, his client's distribution network had massive operational failures, so strategy was put on hold while the crisis was addressed. The management consulting firm did not do tactical, boots-on-the-ground work, but it had a vested interest in solving the problem quickly so it could continue generating stratospheric fees.

Two days after Scott's email, I sat in the client's headquarters being interviewed by the CEO and the following week, I started what grew to become a grueling, yearlong operational turnaround. I hired staff, lived at a Hampton Inn for weeks at a time, and figured out how to stay warm while working in a sub-freezing warehouse filled with hot dogs and pepperoni pizza toppings. That operational turnaround grew to include a pink hard hat and collaboration on construction of a new, state-of-the-art, multi-million dollar distribution center.

My company, Solertis, went on to complete high-profile projects for several multi-billion-dollar behemoths, and we won industry attention for our work. I wrote a white paper called "The Distribution Death Spiral," showcasing our expertise in operations and logistics, and was invited to speak at conferences. While the case studies were compelling and my PowerPoint was filled with relevant metrics, I felt something was missing.

Conference surveys showed I was a top-ranked presenter, and my presentations were often standing-room-only, but I discounted these external reference points because I really craved something more. No matter how much applause I received, my sense of satisfaction and fulfillment waned quickly.

Reading Martha's profile piece and that word, *humanness*, I had felt a spark and a yearning. I sensed the pull of some odd inner-knowing. Now I felt nervous as I waited to meet her.

Ten minutes past our planned appointment time, a four-foot-ten redhead flew into the lobby of the Buckhead Club. Despite her small physical stature, Martha could command a room. She walked right over to me and apologized for her tardiness. We moved to a conference room with a long table, a dozen chairs and the smell of new carpet. Despite the privacy of frosted glass walls, I felt uncomfortably exposed and vulnerable.

I began by providing a summary of the last few years of my business life and what I wanted to get from working with her, or at least I explained what I thought I wanted. As I told my story of starting Solertis and achieving recent success, I felt Martha looking through me and listening beyond my words as if she had superpowers of perception. From behind her bright eyes and engaging smile, she quietly studied me.

I told her I felt something was missing in my presentations. I craved connection with an audience beyond just case studies, metrics, and factual information neatly packaged and presented in PowerPoint slides. The word "humanness" in the *Business Chronicle* interview had grabbed me like an expletive. Perhaps I needed to acknowledge my own humanness and use it to meaningfully connect with my audiences. I knew my desire for excellence often crossed into perfectionism. It also occurred to me this feeling of connection was something I was seeking in more than just presentations.

Perhaps sensing this desire, Martha casually asked, "Would you be open to coaching on other things besides business presentations?"

I paused and asked, "Like what?" And with that, Martha began to delicately scrape away layers of glossy veneer to help me discover what I wanted to feel and who I really was.

Martha set me on a path to acknowledging my humanity and weaving more of my unvarnished truth into my presentations and into my life. As a coach, she gave me insight into parts and pieces of myself I did not know existed. A seemingly innocent question from Martha sent ripples through my world as I explored my feelings and beliefs and discovered deeper levels of inner wisdom and new truths.

As I worked with Martha over several months, I also became more aware of subtle energies and how to better manage and direct my own energy. All my life I had convinced myself I could power through anything, and I took pride in demonstrating this capability. I would work until I was so exhausted I collapsed.

I once gave a presentation at a supply chain conference while having excruciating pain in my lower right torso and back. At that time, I lifted weights with a fury, so I figured I had just overworked a lower back muscle. Upon finishing the presentation and leaving the stage, I discovered I was running a fever. I had mistaken a severe kidney infection for a sports injury. My white blood cell count was high enough to require a short hospital stay.

I built my professional reputation on responsiveness and determination, and I was crazy busy traveling six days a week fueled by adrenaline and intensity. I hired a personal assistant, Wendy, who handled almost everything except my stress. Martha encouraged me to take time for myself. She herself participated in several unorthodox practices, including short periods of isolation without any other people or electronics.

I viewed white space on my calendar as a sign of a serious deficiency. If I were not accomplishing something, I was worthless. I was not good at sitting still, but with practice and patience, I turned off the electronic flow of information and temporarily reduced human interactions to experience a new kind of rest. Allowing my central

nervous system a respite slowly led me to deeper peace and a new kind of self-assuredness.

One week, Martha was flying to Florida for an appointment with a "medical intuitive" and invited me to join her. I had never heard those two words in the same sentence, but I love sunshine, the beach, and the ocean, so I decided to join her. After the short flight, we picked up a rental car and drove to the medical intuitive's office. Martha introduced me to Rebecca, who ushered us into separate treatment rooms. As I reclined on a table, Rebecca spoke with me while tapping acupuncture needles into my hands, feet, arms, and legs, and one directly into the center of my forehead. With the prick of each needle, I felt energy zooming around like electrical connections being made.

Rebecca paced back and forth in the room and asked me questions about my work, family, physical ailments, and life experiences. I could tell she sensed more than my verbal responses as I lay on a massage table, careful not to disrupt the acupuncture needles. I mentioned I still had chronic pain from a freak accident many years prior. After forty-five minutes of cardio at the gym, I had gone to a mat to stretch as I had done hundreds of times before. As I did my usual wide leg forward fold, I had heard an audible popping sound in the area deep inside my groin at the right hamstring attachment.

Immediately, I had felt excruciating pain and had needed to be helped to my car. I knew I had torn something, and once at home, I sat on an ice pack and took an anti-inflammatory. I did not seek medical treatment, figuring it was minor.

For several years after that event, I had ongoing, unexplained pain in my inner groin and hamstring. It would come and go without any direct correlation to physical activity. I saw a renowned chiropractor and would leave my appointments feeling great, but within forty-eight hours, I was back in the same pain. When I accepted a girlfriend's invitation to be a bridesmaid in her wedding, I

prayed it would be a small church so I could walk the full length of the aisle without any obvious sign of agony.

Upon hearing about my injury, visits to the chiropractor, and recurring discomfort, Rebecca asked what I was doing to address the emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of the injury. With that question, I began to explore metaphysics and the interconnectedness of my physical body with my energy field.

I thrived on being invincible and was so disconnected from parts of myself that my body's best means of communication was pain, and it took a lot of pain to get my attention. I began to examine random little accidents and injuries for deeper meaning rather than writing them off as inconsequential. As part of a new phase of self-discovery, I began to see these as messages that I should decipher.

My desire for presentation coaching serendipitously led me to energy work and started my exploration of metaphysical reality. That powerful pull of inner knowing sent me on a trajectory I never expected. I felt empowered to make shifts in areas of my life where I had been on autopilot chasing someone else's idea of success.

Martha was more than a presentation coach; she was a conduit to many expansive experiences and a bridge to other practitioners and traditions. I traveled to Florida regularly for acupuncture and intuitive sessions with Rebecca. Both women offered wider perspectives on reality and launched me on my path to study with dozens of practitioners.

I had often heard the adage, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears." In my case, it wasn't just one teacher. It was a pair.

CHAPTER 2
Trust Your Experience and Be Open to More

As I waded deeply into the inner realms of self-discovery, my life got even busier, with more consulting opportunities, more travel, and more invitations. I joined the board of a private company in New Jersey and other philanthropic and advisory boards. I hired staff and moved to a bigger, nicer office in The Biltmore, a stately historic building I had coveted for office space for many years.

A pivot of one of my first business ideas became a program for optimizing truckload freight. By pairing companies that shipped truckloads of Pop Tarts, Froot Loops, and SpaghettiOs with a carpet manufacturer and a snack food company, each of which owned fleets of eighteen-wheelers, we pocketed some of the savings and helped the environment by reducing the number of trucks running empty across the country. I called this our *Collaborative Transportation Network.* Once the shipping lanes were set, the carriers and shippers ran the day-to-day operations and we were paid a percentage.

In one instance, someone on my staff agreed to partner with a company called MHI. We each brought something to the table and agreed to split the commissions. MHI received the total commission and then passed along half to my company.

After two years, this arrangement was generating substantial revenue, and I asked Ed, my resident "spreadsheet jockey," to audit the payments. A week later, Ed came to me and said there might be

a problem. MHI had paid us accurately the first year, but the second year, our percentage of the total commission had dropped by half and the payments were coming more slowly.

I called Mike, the CEO of MHI, and in his slow Southern drawl, he told me an employee of my company had agreed to "sunset" our portion of the commissions so that by the fourth year of the deal we would get nothing. Zero. Mike was at least twenty years my senior and spoke to me like I was a school girl as he explained that our deal was done on a handshake and no contract was ever signed.

Mike knew that employee who negotiated this deal was no longer with my company but what he didn't know was that we had turned down other deals with "sunset" clauses. I started sifting through emails and found several to corroborate my assertion. Despite having no written contract, my attorney thought enough money was at stake to warrant legal action, so we filed a complaint and began the process.

In the meantime, consulting opportunities continued to expand and I crisscrossed the country visiting client sites. Tampa was a short hop from Atlanta making it possible for me to continue sessions with Rebecca. I left every session feeling stronger with greater clarity and certainty. As I questioned beliefs, dropped expectations and discovered new aspects of myself, I became more and more my own person and more in touch with my own humanness.

Rebecca thought I might enjoy learning meditation from two teachers of Ascension she had studied with. Their weekend-long introductory course, "First Sphere," was being offered in Tampa. I bought the book, Ascension, read it, and showed up for the course Friday evening where I met my next two teachers, Gomati and Vasistha Ishaya.

I thought meditation would be serious and solitary, but the camaraderie and light-heartedness were a welcome surprise. Two dozen people were packed into a small, garden style apartment and I spent

much of the weekend sitting on the plush carpet under the host's baby grand piano, befriended by two more experienced students.

First Sphere consisted of both instruction and practice, so Gomati and Vasistha would talk about the *Ascension Attitudes* of *Praise, Gratitude, and Love,* and then we *ascended* together as a group in silence. This meant getting comfortable, closing your eyes, and focusing your attention inward. Compared with other types of meditation I knew of, one key distinction was to be as physically relaxed as possible. The Ishayas said when the physical body feels comfortable, the mind is more likely to get quiet. Sitting stiffly upright and forcing your legs into lotus position was not required. I smiled thinking anyone observing us would assume 25 people were just taking naps.

Occasionally, I heard muffled snoring and expected someone would be reprimanded. I discovered the Ishayas philosophy was if you needed sleep more than meditation, there was no shame in that. On the other hand, there was also no shame in admitting you were completely distracted by thoughts and mind chatter. Every experience was accepted, and every sensation was embraced without being labeled as wrong or bad. At mealtime, the group assembled a huge potluck lunch covering every available inch of the kitchen countertop and table. I piled my plate with kale salad, quinoa with Bragg's Amino Acids, delicious raw veggies and sprouted grain bread.

Beyond learning to meditate, making new friends, and consuming copious quantities of delicious food, I felt something profound; I felt deeply accepted and valued just by being there. Acceptance was not based on performance, achievement, wealth, or status. Everyone was valued and loved regardless of circumstances, challenges, or successes.

I wondered if this was unconditional love I had read about.

I left this warm cocoon of *Ascension* and went straight into a courtroom in Georgia. Following months of depositions, court filings, and a pathetic settlement offer from MHI, our lawsuit finally

went to trial. My testimony as the plaintiff in the lawsuit required two long days of answering questions in front of a jury.

In depositions taken months prior to the trial, MHI's attorney had been personally confrontational and disrespectful. My attorney once stopped a deposition when opposing counsel hurled a pad of Post-It Notes at me in frustration.

Now in the courtroom in front of the judge and the jury, MHI's attorney continued his barrage of personal attacks. I used the *Ascension Attitudes* to pace my responses to questions and to avoid reacting to his provocations. The defense attorney for MHI would say something intentionally inflammatory, thinly veiled in the form of a question, and I would pause and choose an *Ascension Attitude* as my attorney shouted, "*Objection, your honor!*" This pattern went on for hours, and the opposing attorney's attacks finally got so ridiculous the judge had him removed from the courtroom and another was brought in to finish the trial.

Despite the plot twists and antics, I was always certain we would prevail. This process, from discovering the fraud through depositions and jury selection, witness testimony and courtroom theatrics, lasted two years. After six days in the courtroom, the jury found in our favor, and we were awarded the money we were owed. Along the way, I learned much about the judicial system, and most importantly, I learned how to incorporate my new spiritual practices into tense situations.

After the First Sphere course, I continued to develop my friendship with Gomati and Vasistha and often visited their Tampa home. The Intracoastal Waterway was right out their back door and the beach just a few blocks away. Staying with them for several days at a time, I basked in their love as they imparted their wisdom on organic food, energy work, physical movement to assist in releasing emotion, and how to hold compassion for anyone suffering without jumping into quicksand to try to save them.

I was still traveling extensively for work, and during some months, I spent more days at their home than in my own apartment in Atlanta. I relished their warmth, support, laughs, and long walks on the beach. I advanced my daily practice of *Ascension* and learned the *Attitudes of Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sphere*s over many months. I also traveled with Gomati and Vasistha to visit other *Ascension* teachers at centers in New Mexico and North Carolina. These experiences brought welcome reassurance during a time of intense self-questioning.

One afternoon, I was sitting on the dock in the Ishayas' backyard when I got a call from the chairman of the board of a $300 million company where I was a director. I had voiced concerns over the misconduct of the company's top salesperson; he was having an affair with a female employee in marketing who was married to a man who worked in finance. Some had filed complaints with Human Resources as they overheard sexually explicit conversations and believed the woman had been given an unmerited promotion. The situation had come to the attention of the Board.

Rather than address it directly, they simply hired a law firm to provide perfunctory sexual harassment training. Executives were afraid any direct disciplinary action would send their top salesperson and his book of business to another firm. When I was asked to destroy my notes from a meeting related to this situation, I knew this director position was no longer a fit.

I was grateful for four years of seeing the inner workings of a company from the perspective of a director, for interacting with very bright people, for one incredibly lavish party in Manhattan, and generous director fees. I loved the experience until it was no longer consistent with my values, ethics, and consciousness.

As I sat on the Ishayas' dock speaking to the chairman by phone, he and I mutually agreed I would step down. We parted amicably, and just as I disconnected the call, a dolphin surfaced off the end of the dock and exhaled audibly. It felt as if the dolphin echoed my

own sigh of relief. Minutes later, Vasistha was sitting beside me on the dock, ready to practice *Ascension*.

Gomati and Vasistha imparted much wisdom, and their most empowering advice was "*Trust your experience and be open to more.*" As spiritual teachers, they never allowed me to see them as gurus or to become reliant on them for direction. They were always smiling and supportive as they lovingly reminded me, "*Trust your experience and be open to more.*"

While learning to quiet my mind through *Ascension*, I began to recognize my ego's chatter. I caught voices in my head telling me how things should look, feel, or be. As I made more space for self-inquiry, I began to question my definitions of success. I realized those definitions were built on beliefs, expectations and values imparted by those around me. Simply questioning expanded my capacity to include new perspectives and possibilities.

It seemed an odd juxtaposition, but opening myself up to allow new ideas in required deepening my self-trust. To optimize one, I simultaneously needed the other. When this awareness registered viscerally inside me beyond just a mental thought, I had an "aha moment." I knew something inside me was stirring as I kinesthetically felt what it meant to "*Trust your experience and be open to more.*"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ann W. Elliott is an entrepreneur, author, coach, and trusted guide to hundreds of dedicated leaders, executives, and high-achievers. She is a traditionally educated graduate of Duke University and a trained practitioner of alternative healing modalities.

She founded a supply chain and logistics consulting firm in 1996, a wellness company in 2010, and a hands-on healing practice in 2019. Ann currently offers her unique blend of capabilities through leadership programs and 1:1 coaching.

She has lectured in business schools on "Lessons Learned" from two decades as an entrepreneur, sharing her perspectives on the role of curiosity, intuition and synchronicity in a new paradigm of leadership.

Ann is a recipient of distinguished service awards for volunteer leadership at multiple organizations including Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Council of Supply Chain Management, and Duke University. Ann is a longtime Yogi and began her daily meditation practice in 2003.

For more info, go to www.annelliottllc.com

What happens when you allow intuition and synchronicities to guide your path?

In her best-selling book, Ann W. Elliott shares the extraordinary series of serendipitous events that led her from a successful career in supply chain to corporate wellness, practicing holistic healing modalities and coaching leaders and business executives.

After graduating from Duke University, this self-described entrepreneur and empath chronicles the exploration of her intuitive gifts - studying with dozens of healers and metaphysical teachers across four continents over two decades.

From a surreal encounter with Sekhmet in Egypt to a transcendent experience inside the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Elliott shares stories of following her curiosity and surrendering to the unknown, all while navigating exciting twists and turns in both her personal and professional life.

She takes you into her day-to-day world, filled with synchronicities and prescience. She delights in the inexplicable and marvels at the interconnectedness of all life while finding the extraordinary within everyday experiences.

Elliott has spent much of her lifetime exploring the intersections of mainstream and mystical. What she has discovered will surprise and delight you, leaving you considering all that is possible.



ANN W. ELLIOTT is an entrepreneur, author and coach. During two decades as CEO of a supply chain consulting company, she discovered unique capabilities not widely valued in mainstream business. As she began to utilize these gifts, guidance and serendipity bent the arc of her evolutionary trajectory, leading to unexpected adventures and new professional opportunities. A Midwesterner at heart, she lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

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