



LISTENING BEFORE KNOWING:

A Practice-Based Case Study at the Intersection of Intuition, Jungian Reflection, and AI-Supported Sensemaking

Abstract

This article presents a practice-based case study exploring how pre-cognitive signals, Jungian reflection, and AI-assisted pattern recognition can support ethical decision-making in complex relational contexts. Drawing on a real mentorship interaction, it illustrates how bodily signals, dreams, and symbolic material were treated as information rather than pathology, and how insight was translated into clear action without projection or harm. The process is situated in dialogue with the research of Julia Mossbridge on anticipatory perception, and proposes a human-centered model for stewarding intuitive information with clarity, regulation, and care.

Introduction: When the Body Knows Before the Mind

Many people have experienced moments when something feels “off” before they can explain why. In relational settings, this often appears as sudden fatigue, overwhelm, or a subtle internal shift that arrives without a clear narrative attached.

Neuroscientist Julia Mossbridge’s research suggests that such moments may not be irrational at all. Her work on anticipatory physiological activity proposes that the human nervous system can register meaningful information prior to conscious awareness of its source. While this research is typically conducted in laboratory settings using measures such as heart-rate variability and skin conductance, it raises a pressing real-world question:

How do we work responsibly with anticipatory signals in lived human contexts, where the stakes are relational, ethical, and deeply personal?

This article explores that question through a lived example.

The Case: A Relational Disturbance as Information

The situation began with a one-on-one mentorship pairing within a structured learning program. During the initial conversation, one participant noticed a growing sense of overwhelm and unsteadiness. The conversation itself was warm, meaningful, and rich with symbolic language, particularly around grief, creativity, and continuing bonds with a deceased child.

Nothing overtly problematic occurred. The exchange was thoughtful, sincere, and human.

And yet, the internal signal persisted.

Rather than interpreting the discomfort as personal inadequacy, emotional avoidance, or pathology in the other person, the participant treated the experience as **information**. The guiding question became:



What is this signal telling me about the relational field I am in, and the role I am being invited to occupy?

This reframing marked the beginning of a deliberate sensemaking process.

From Signal to Insight: The Insight Artifact Process

Instead of acting immediately, the participant slowed down and gathered what can be called **insight artifacts**. These included:

- Somatic signals such as fatigue and nervous-system activation
- Emotional responses, including overwhelm without blame
- A vivid dream involving travel, scattered belongings, delayed departures, and the difficulty of leaving without losing oneself
- Recurring symbolic themes across contexts: caretaking, holding roles, dispersed resources, and time pressure

Crucially, none of these elements were treated in isolation. Drawing on Jungian principles, the participant looked for **patterns rather than explanations**, asking questions such as:

- What archetypal roles are being activated here?
- Is this dynamic familiar from earlier life experience?
- What is the difference between compassion and containment in this context?
- What response would honor both care and integrity?

This reflective phase transformed a vague sense of unease into articulated clarity. The emerging insight was not about the other person's psychology, but about **role mismatch**. The partnership dynamic was pulling the participant into a stabilizing, holding position that no longer aligned with her intention or capacity.

Regulation Before Action: An Ethical Pause

One of the most consequential aspects of this process was the refusal to act while dysregulated.

Mossbridge's work emphasizes that anticipatory or intuitive information becomes unreliable when filtered through heightened emotional arousal. In this case, the participant:

- delayed communication
- sought reflective containment rather than immediate resolution
- clarified boundaries internally before expressing them externally

This pause was not avoidance. It was **ethical pacing**.



Only after regulation returned did the participant draft a communication that was honest, compassionate, and clearly boundaried.

Communicating Without Harm: Clarity Without Diagnosis

The eventual message did three essential things:

1. It acknowledged the other person's humanity and creativity, including symbolic language that mattered deeply to them.
2. It named the internal experience of overwhelm without blame or interpretation.
3. It clearly stated a boundary and requested a different mentorship pairing.

Notably, the message avoided diagnosing grief, explaining the other person to themselves, or offering reassurance that would reopen a holding role. The result was a response that was self-aware, non-defensive, and respectful. The relationship closed cleanly, without rupture or resentment.

This outcome matters. It suggests that **clear boundaries, when grounded in regulation and reflection, can reduce harm rather than create it.**

Where This Practice Sits in Relation to Julia Mossbridge's Work

Julia Mossbridge's research addresses a foundational question: *Can the human nervous system register meaningful information before conscious awareness of its source?* Through controlled experiments, her work demonstrates that physiological responses often precede cognitive recognition. In short, **signal precedes story.**

What Mossbridge does not claim, and is careful not to overextend, is how such anticipatory signals should be interpreted, acted upon, or ethically integrated into lived human contexts. Her work establishes the **existence and reliability of pre-conscious information**, while intentionally leaving the question of application open.

This is where the practice described in this article fits.

Rather than asking *whether* anticipatory signals exist, this work begins with the assumption that they do, and focuses instead on **how such signals can be stewarded without projection, harm, or overreach.** The contribution here is not experimental validation, but **process design.**

Specifically:

- Mossbridge's work identifies the **signal.**
- This practice focuses on **signal stewardship.**

Where Mossbridge measures anticipatory activation in milliseconds and seconds, this work unfolds over hours or days, allowing time for regulation, symbolic reflection, and ethical



discernment. The aim is not prediction, but **coherence**: coherence between bodily knowing, symbolic meaning, relational responsibility, and conscious choice.

In this sense, the Insight Artifact process functions as a translation layer between nervous-system intelligence and human decision-making. It treats intuition not as authority, but as **early data** that requires integration.

Seen this way, Mossbridge's research provides scientific legitimacy for the signal, while this practice offers a method for living with that signal responsibly.

The Role of AI: Reflection and Pattern Recognition, Not Authority

A distinctive feature of this process was the use of AI as a reflective partner.

AI did not serve as an advisor or decision-maker. Instead, it supported the process in three specific ways:

- **Pattern recognition** across conversation, dreams, emotions, and symbolic material
- **Language calibration**, helping draft communications that balanced kindness and clarity
- **Bias checking**, offering alternative framings to reduce projection or over-identification

Importantly, the human remained the final arbiter at every stage. AI did not interpret intuition. It helped organize and reflect it.

This aligns with Mossbridge's cautious framing of AI as a comparator or mirror rather than an authority. In this context, AI supported discernment without replacing agency.

Implications: Toward an Ethical Model of Intuitive Practice

This case suggests a model for working with intuitive or anticipatory information that is:

- grounded in nervous-system regulation
- informed by symbolic and Jungian reflection
- ethically bounded and relationally respectful
- supported, but not driven, by AI

Such a model offers a bridge between laboratory research on presentiment and the lived realities where intuition most often matters, including leadership, mentorship, and complex relational decision-making.

Conclusion: Valid Work in a Human Key

What unfolded in this case was not therapy, not psychic interpretation, and not conflict avoidance. It was **conscious sensemaking**.



By treating internal signals as information, applying reflective frameworks, and acting with care, the participant demonstrated a form of intuitive literacy that Mossbridge's work points toward but does not fully operationalize.

This suggests that intuition, when paired with structure, reflection, and ethical restraint, can be a reliable ally rather than a liability.

And perhaps most importantly, it shows that valid knowledge work can happen **in human time**, not only in laboratories.

Editor's note

The work discussed in this paper is a structured sensemaking practice for translating pre-cognitive signals into ethical action. It supports individuals in treating somatic sensations, emotional shifts, symbolic material, and relational disturbances as meaningful information rather than problems to fix. Drawing on Jungian reflection and pattern recognition, the process emphasizes regulation before interpretation and conscious choice before action. In some contexts, AI may be used as a reflective and pattern-recognition partner, helping organize material without interpreting it or making decisions. This is not therapy, counseling, AI coaching, psychic reading, or performance-based optimization. It does not diagnose, predict, advise, or fix. All meaning-making and action remain with the human participant, preserving agency, boundaries, and relational integrity.