

A person stands inside a wireframe cube on a dark surface. A glowing sphere with a blue and green gradient is positioned inside the cube, slightly above the person's head. The background is a textured, golden-brown gradient.

element one: PERCEIVING

PRACTICING THE 13 ELEMENTS OF ALCHEMY

1 PRACTICE THE PAUSE. The best noticing needs open space. When our thinking gets too congested, there isn't room for more subtle perceptions to take form. And we end up noticing the surface of something, but not its depth. *Practicing the pause* is simply letting go of thinking, responding, doing, and every form of busyness—even if for only an instant. And then enjoying the surprise of what shows up.

2 LISTEN WITHOUT AN INTENTION TO RESPOND. When the attention we usually invest in getting ready to respond is invested solely in listening, we hear more. Much of what people are really saying can't be expressed through their words—it can only be known by coming into relationship with what rest *behind their words*. When we listen as a preparation for response, we hear only the most overt—which is often not the most meaningful.

3 NOTICE YOUR IMMEDIATE IMPRESSION. The story we end up creating about people is always a mix of *who they are* and *who we are*. So our first sense of a person is highly accurate because we've not overlaid our *story about them* onto our *intuition about them*. This immediate impression is about what people feel like, what they remind us of, and how we shift around them—without the demand of knowing what it means.

4 ALWAYS ASK “WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON HERE?” However much you already know about a situation, there's always much more that you *don't know*. So it's important to continually ask, “What's really going on here?” Asking this simple question, even if we are unable to answer it, opens us to continuous new perception.

5 INCORPORATE THE PHRASE “I SENSE.” What you *think about a matter* is only a portion of what you *know about a matter*. And often what you *sense* is a quite different than what you *think*. Simply adding a “this is what I sense” sentence after every “this is what I think” sentence incorporates more of your perception.

6 NOTICE THE QUALITIES OF SPACE. When you have a strong sense of a house, office, or other place when first entering, you are perceiving the *qualities of space*. In the same way grains of sand are changed by the passing wind, all spaces are changed—if even just a bit—by everything passing through. Because of this, we can perceive what is happening now, and we can also perceive traces of what has happened before.

7 CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LOOK. Just as dreaming at night is a unique representation of what’s going on in our lives, visualizing while awake is a unique representation of significant events we encounter during the day. Visualizing an opportunity, issue, or problem frees us from the bonds of literal interpretation and helps us understand the issue from a fresh perspective. It also provides a direct experience of our preferred outcome.

8 MAKE UP A STORY ABOUT A STRANGER. Some of our most brilliant intuitive perceptions are hard to own because we don’t understand how they are possible. Making up a story about a stranger allows us to express intuitive perception in a way that transcends our demands for the *reasonable*. Often these stories are more right than wrong. And often these stories hold insights we would never gain by getting to know someone only in the more expected way.

9 EXPECT TO BE WRONG MUCH OF THE TIME. Our intuition is never wrong, but how we interpret intuitive information is often wrong. We tend to associate comfort or discomfort with what is desirable or undesirable. Safe or unsafe. On our side or against us. But intuition is simply the recognition that two things share like qualities. Something in the world is similar to something in us. So our first experience of the quality in the present elicits a re-experience of the quality in our past. Not confusing the essential quality of the intuitive hit with what happened in our history allows us to know more about any situation without the coloring of our past.

10 LANGUAGE YOUR INTUITIVE HIT IN THE BEST WAY. Sharing our intuitive hits may be uncomfortable for us and for others. And because we can’t explain how we know something, we may either withhold it, or proclaim it in a grandiose way to bolster its credibility. When we share an intuitive sense as simply another way to collectively understand an issue, we allow other people to entertain “our hit” without forcing a choice to accept or reject.