

Body signals

Traffic lights

Much like a traffic light, your body gives you signals to go, stop, wait awhile longer, or drive through with caution.

More often than not you possibly override these signals – running the red light or blindly ignoring the signs, stopping when you actually could be covering some ground or waiting forever at the intersection for some other directional tip. To keep the traffic flowing well – and in this analogy your body and your life functioning well - you need to pay attention to road signals whether they be stop signs, the green light, a detour sign, a drive with caution or even an open road sign.

Stop sign and the red traffic light

Visualise a stop sign. What have been your personal stop signs that have stopped you in your tracks and made you have a good look at your life from the roadside? That could have been an illness, accident, disability, or some kind of change and transition, for example. What learning and growth has come out of your experience of “stopping”? What stop signs or warning signs could you have paid attention to earlier that may have alleviated or even prevented you from being stopped in your tracks? How could you apply that insight into managing your health, happiness and life better?

In addition to such life changes and transitions, body signs and symptoms also may be reminding you to pay attention to the red stop sign ahead of possible breakdown, malfunction or even death. Body signals can also be the stop sign themselves. Aches, pain, hunger, lethargy, cravings, tiredness, insomnia, discomfort, lack of libido, low mood...are all signals that may be telling you to stop and take notice of what that is telling you. Perhaps your tank has run out of petrol and needs refilling!

Running the red light – ignoring the signal

I clearly remember the days when I was breastfeeding my young baby while I had mastitis, split nipples, a very fatigued body and far too many responsibilities on my plate. Instead of listening to my body's signals to slow down and rest, not be so hard on myself and to not only give nourishment to my baby but to nourish myself better, I gave my body no other chance but to “crack” under the pressure – literally and figuratively.

How many people do you know whose body said “rest” but they continued on and burned themselves out? Who do you know whose red light was to quit smoking or drinking and then drove themselves to their early grave because they ignored the red light?

- What body signals are you experiencing in your body right now? Speak to the pain, discomfort or other body signal and ask it, “What is this signalling to me?”
- How often do you ignore your body signals? What has overriding your personal body signals cost you? What are the payoffs for denying your body's signals, being in pain, having ill-health, being over/underweight or being depressed....? Yes there will be pay-offs! Is the pay-off perhaps bigger than the costs?

- How do you attempt to ignore or dull pain? Alcohol, drugs, eating, not eating, being busy, medications...? What other strategies could you use to replace these harmful habits and means of dealing with pain?

Detour signs / Turning points

Traffic lights ideally should be taken notice of and are there to create good traffic flow and are for the general safety and wellbeing of everyone. Sometimes however in life, it can be best to follow your gut, rather than stick to the rules. Your logic might tell you one thing about what your “signals” tell you. Your gut might tell you something else. Don’t be afraid to take a detour every now and then. Case in point might be you feel a little depressed. Your friend reckons you should see a doctor and get some sleeping pills. Your gut says you don’t want medication and you would rather find natural ways to deal with your depression, anxiety or insomnia or you are keen to sort out the underlying things that are making you feel sad. What might help is to meditate before you medicate. Find the source and significance of your signals, and medicate if and when that feels right for you and in conjunction with your health professional’s advice.

Detours, in the form of difficult life experiences, can often feel like they are taking you off your life path. Unexpected events, illness and the likes can feel like cumbersome road works or a long, unexpected and uninvited wait in the traffic. In my experience, this “waiting” or negotiating the road block(s) is there in its perfection – taking your perhaps on a different road completely with a new destination or just allowing you time and a slightly different scenic route to get to your original destination.

Annual or regular traffic lights

Just as traffic lights and traffic signs will need regular maintenance and overhauls, so too does your body. Remember to have regular check-ups. eg. smear tests, sexual health checks, breast checks, mole-maps, health checks and/or whatever check-ups are most appropriate to you. These checks may give you further signals to be aware of and more importantly help you be proactive in your approach to your health and happiness. It is like foreseeing what could occur down the street and perhaps help you either detour completely around it or even prevent it. Having regular check-ups is one way of making a smoother run for yourself giving you more green lights in your life.

The Green light – the go ahead

Sometimes you can wait too long at the red light or stop sign. Momentum gets lost, depression can set in and lethargy creates its own physical manifestations. Body signals however don’t just tell you to take heed, stop or have a check-up. They could be giving you the go ahead and often you may fail to even recognise these signals. Improving energy, happiness, feeling calm and at peace are all great examples of signs that what you are doing and who you are being is working well. Take note of what gives you these feelings and benefits. Keep following that green light as long as you notice positive benefits, and continue to notice synchronicity signposts that leave you in no doubt that you should be following a certain trail of people, events, activities and opportunities. When you flow with these synchronicities you know that you are on the right road.