

Yoon-Sung-Nam: So, I'm here today to talk about a topic that has the power to significantly change our lives and the lives of others, Our gut feeling. So many of us heard the phrase trust your gut, but how often do you actually listen to it or even feel it? Or more importantly, should we even trust this wordless sensation that originates in the abdominal region? Well, I think for most of us, we probably thought of a time where something wasn't quite right. Like like sneaking into your kitchen late at night, opening in that freezer and grabbing your favorite pint of vanilla ice cream and you realize something was off by the weight of it in your hand and you come to find out, yeah. Something was off. I show this as an illustration of how our gut feeling is actually rooted in our experience of reflecting our deeper understanding than we first initially realized. You know, we all live in a world where we leverage data, statistics, expert opinions to make informed decisions, and even more so in public health, where we use data to identify potential health risk for a wide variety of topics. But So what? Why? Why am I even telling you all this? Well, you see, our gut feeling can be quite invaluable in situations where it's dealing with complex or novel situations where either the data doesn't exist or maybe the data doesn't pay the complete picture. Now some of you are probably thinking so, but what does the data actually say?

Well, according to one study in the 2011 Journal of General Internal Medicine, the authors found that physicians who evaluated patients based off of asymptomatic or nonspecific illnesses were more likely to identify serious sentences than physicians who relied on another reason alone. And the authors further concluded that gut feeling has this unmistakable role in our decision making process, highlighting that our gut feeling can very much complement scientific evidence. See, your gut feeling isn't some mysterious magical power bestowed on the select few individuals who are deemed worthy. The good news is we all have gut feeling. It's a natural ability that we all possess and if something that we can actually build upon and further develop through practice and experience. OK, cool, cool, cool, cool. So what does this actually look like in practice? This all sounds great in theory, so imagine, if you will, if you were a public health official in New York City and in that there's a hidden danger which is lead in consumer products. So we know that lead can be found in a variety of products. We know the consequences of lead are both irreversible and devastating. At this point, we very much know that lead poisoning and cognitive damage in children and a wide variety of adverse health effects among adults. Now I bring this up because lead poisoning is completely preventable.

So up on the screen is a variety of kajal or eyeliners. And if I were to ask you which one of these has led, well, the proper CDC response as well? That depends. If your Delta Airlines and you're asking me, are you bringing anything hazardous items on your carry on, Well, the answer is no. Of course not. I'm a title of 42 civilian employee of the federal government. Why would I intentionally bring contaminated products to a conference like this for a show and tell? Which technically I'm right because it's not on the hazardous item list, but for everyone else here, yes, all of them do. You could actually find this on Amazon and if you Scroll down, there's a person that goes "is there lead in it?" And then in another review goes "Yes. And if you use it, you're going to look like a panda." Two stars. Up on the screen we got religious powders, we got a dietary supplement and herbal remedies. And this one in my hand particular is used to control X's body sugar levels, has lead in it and honestly maybe lead does, I don't know, activate certain enzymes in our bodies or regular sugar levels. And honestly, I don't know. And the point is I hope we don't know because we know that there's no safe level of lead exposure. And I think when we think of lead poisoning, we often think about paint chips and this here is a Morocca and it's hard to see, but there's actually paint chips that have fallen off and ohh, it's all over my hand. Ohh that. That's why my carry on bag is a little red flakes everywhere. But the point is so these are particularly hazardous for children, right? Because we know that they have this habit of putting everything in their mouths and products like these, it's easy for the paint chips to fall off. And now I want to show you some ceramics. So As for ceramics in particular, it's the glaze that has the lead poisoning. It's it's in the situations where if you don't bake it for long enough at a hot enough temperature, the lead poisoning can actually seep into your food. And this, in my hand is something that I think is the most dangerous product that New York City has. And it's probably something that you may have come across like dipping your favorite, you know, spicy tuna roll in a, you know, little soy dish. And but it's a product like this that we found that had 10 times the amount

of the limit table lead exposure. So this is perhaps the most dangerous thing that I have in my possession that I brought with me. Now. All of everything that I brought up here, you know, I brought with me because A they had light in it and B, it exceeded the federal limits of lead. And if you haven't noticed by now, all of these products aren't coming from. You know crate&barrel or World Market or or Tarjay boutique, you know most of these items are coming from the local bodegas these mom and pop shops and the reason why I say this is because lead poisoning is really a health disparity and HealthEquity issue and I'm pausing to say again is that lead poisoning has been a long standing threat to communities of color and communities of low income. And we've seen this play out before. You know, the Flint, MI water crisis is really stark reminder how lead poisoning disproportionately impacted a very specific population. And if it wasn't for Doctor Mona, who actually uncovered the lead poisoning in inflamed Michigan through a chance conversation with an old high school friend in a backyard at a BBQ showed us the real value of when someone actually listens to their gut feeling. But how do we actually find lead in a city as diverse and big as New York? And when you do find something, how do you know if it actually has lead in it? It's a really monumental task, but it's a task that has to be done. And this is what the reality of what Wall Street Journal calls the New York City lead detectives. Now, to be completely honest, I actually haven't read this article. Hey. Because, as you know, EIS doesn't pay us enough. So I I went out myself. So this is me. Going undercover and I'm holding up two different spice packets and it's really hard to tell, but I'm actually grinning underneath my mask because I honestly have no idea what I'm doing right. And so the moral dilemma is this. I'm using taxpayer dollars to go into a store undercover for a made-up story to a nonexistent potluck where these two spices that don't have any business being put together wouldn't blow my cover when I go to the store, to purchase it, which has happened once. But if you're asking yourself, ohh, why are you showing us pictures of spices? Well here's the thing. So lead can actually be added to spices as a coloring agent. It's what gives it that bright orange or bright red color and folks like me, I perceive that as flavor. Hence that's why I picked it up. But if you're wondering if I got it right, it's no one. I was wrong and very wrong, and the answer is why. It's because I didn't have that logical reasoning or the experience is to know which products to test and pick up. You see from New York State lead detectives, they spend about 15 to 20 hours of prep break researching environmental reports, demographic data, academic journals, poison control calls and case investigations. And I say this because they use it to build up that inner voice in the absence of personal experience. OK, cool, cool, cool. What does this all mean for me? Well, someone once said knowledge can be borrowed, but you can't borrow understanding. And like understanding your gut feeling isn't something that you can borrow. More importantly, your gut feeling doesn't come from nothing. It comes from our experiential experiences. It's a skill that can be cultivated and refined through a cell phones airs of the world around us. And So what are some practical things you can do today to kind of build that inner voice? Well, there's three key takeaways. One is seeking out field experiences like this fellowship. Just observing someone in action or gaining that hands on experience can help build that inner voice to the point where it's almost audible. Two engaging in self reflective practices. You know, I thought about this a lot because there's something really fascinating when we take an idea and we bring it out into the physical world. It's it can help kind of clarify your gut feeling to the point where our decision process can be more fluid and reliable when we make these in real time decisions. And then three, at the last point, validation, I just felt that uncomfortableness like ohh, you know, sometimes we do need validation because it it's hard to trust this wordless sensation, right? And having that validation from another mentor or peer can be so important when it comes to understanding this gut feeling because like I said before, it's wordless, it's hard to quantify. So do you really want to trust it? And the point is, it's not being right the first time you get gut feeling, it's just trying to get that much closer to the truth. So that should put some pressure off of us. Now if you're asking, well, how effective was New York City lead detectives using their gut feelings? Well, from 2010 to 2022, New York City surveyed about 1800 businesses and removed over 30,000 hazardous products from circulation. And mind you, this is 30,000 products, not items. We know the number of items are much, much higher than 30,000, which has resulted in thousands and thousands and thousands of individuals being protected from lead poisoning. You know, this is important. This is significant

because these consumer products that I have up here weren't discovered through data alone. It was actually driven by someone's actual gut feeling. In our gut feeling shouldn't be overlooked or making decisions of significant health consequences. And and I'm arguing that combining our gut feeling with action and advocacy can lead to more accurate and effective decisions. So, let's start trusting our gut, one decision at a time. Thank you.