

Mercury Retrograde Cycles and the Astrology of Intuition

by Rebecca M. Farrar

With 2023 beginning and ending with Mercury in retrograde motion, this year offers a prime opportunity to more deeply examine our relationship to our own intuition and clairvoyance.

If forward motion Mercury focuses on details and day-to-day thinking, retrograde motion Mercury loves the big picture and intuitive perception. Every Mercury retrograde cycle gives us a chance to listen more and plan less. For those born with Mercury in retrograde motion this instinct towards intuition may come even more naturally.

However, intuition is more than just how we know things and relates to how we work with energy in us and around us. We all of us have a sixth sense--or more--it may not always be so obvious where or how to locate your insightful superpower. Often it may feel we have antennae pointed in many different directions and it may be difficult to know which one to tune into. Astrology can be a great tool for this intuitive exploration and understanding that we have many avenues for insight often revealed through our natal chart.

In fact, every zodiac sign or planet may have its own type of insightful awareness, though some may be easier to identify than others. Certain transpersonal planets help shape our collective sensitivity more than others such as with Chiron, Neptune, Uranus, or Pluto. While the personal planets and asteroids of perception such as Mercury or Pallas Athene create an instinct separate from others.

Traditionally psychic abilities were described through the four "clairs" of clairaudience (hearing things or messages), clairvoyance (seeing images or symbols), clairsentience (recognizing or feeling emotions), or claircognizance (knowing). How we move through the world has many layers of subtlety that some of us may feel more intensely than others. Acknowledging the myriad ways our intuition gets activated and communicates with us makes it much easier to align with ourselves. More likely we have 10 or more types of intuitive awareness that doesn't have clear divisions in how it moves through us, but the astrology chart can offer clues to what may be easier for us to tap into.

The intuitive trust muscle builds over time and at first fully listening to all the signals can be overwhelming. Many of us have had to shut down some of our second sight superpowers because we may have felt overpowered by them. Yet for empaths and Highly Sensitive People, discerning types of intuition and our unique combination can help us listen to ourselves more clearly and make relating much easier. I tend to orient to a few major buckets of intuition with mental knowing, somatic knowing, emotional knowing, and creative knowing. Below are examples of each and how they may show up in the natal chart:

Mental Knowing (Air element)

To understand something or receive a hit of insight relates to how we perceive information. Mental knowing has an airy quality to it and relates to clairaudience of hearing sounds or unspoken words as well as telepathy as communication without speaking. Claircognizance also fits this category as an ability to have an answer or information without knowing how or why. It may defy logical understanding or an "aha" out of nowhere. Precognition and future perception also comes as a message or knowing something was going to happen before it does whether it be an image, a dream, or a voice.

Archetypally, Mercury leans us more into mental processes or communication through "downloads" or knowing something and not understanding how or why. It helps us perceive things beyond what is in front of us and along with Uranus can help us "see" the future. Uranus, often described as higher octave of Mercury, loves to ponder what's next and novelty, but it also has a precognitive ability often seen with diviners of all sorts such as in tarot or astrology.

With conversations about communication including the asteroid Pallas Athene is a must. Pallas bridges intuition and intellect through pattern recognition, I see it as a balancing of two sides of the brain that requires big picture thinking and keen observation. Below are the archetypal and zodiacal combinations correlating to the more mental knowing mode of intuition:

- Mercury in aspect to Neptune or in Pisces
- Mercury in retrograde motion
- Mercury in aspect to Uranus or in Aquarius
- Mercury in aspect to Pallas Athene
- Pallas Athene in aspect to Neptune or in Pisces
- Pallas Athene in aspect to Sun
- Pallas Athene in retrograde motion
- Pallas Athene in aspect to Uranus
- Mercury, Uranus, or Pallas Athene within 10 degrees of ascendant
- Gemini, Virgo, or Aquarius rising

Connecting with mental knowing processes can be greater heightened through clearing out mental junk and allowing times of your mind to wander. This may include meditation, writing down dreams, or journaling.

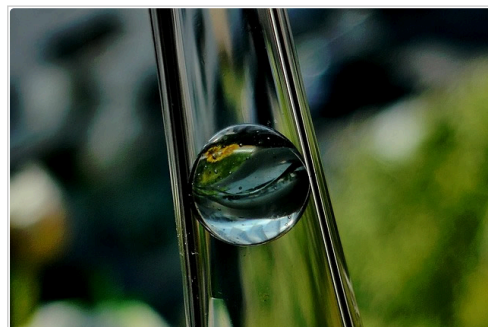
Somatic or Physical Knowing (Earth element)

With this form of intuition our body becomes the tool for understanding as a knowing in our bones or gut instinct. This could be called clairsentience like having a stomach ache and then the person you are talking to mentions they are nauseated. Or getting the chills when someone says something that resonates as true, or a gut punch when you have a clear dissonance to something someone says. I also use my hands in this way, called psychometry or telemetry...I can use them as a divining rod in front of me or over my body to feel where something feels off. You can use your hands to feel pulses, gauge energy, and auric fields. When I'm around something and my gut hurts it is a sense of power or I suddenly feel out of myself or disassociated. In this way of knowing the body becomes the antennae for truth--how it communicates with us...so we know when something is off.

Planets related to physical knowing could be the Moon, Sun, Chiron, Ceres. Even Saturn or Virgo can know when things are off based on tuning into bodily experience. The Sun and our life force may feel changed around certain people, our sense of self feeling different than before. Ceres and Moon can be physical and also emotionally give us clues that something is wrong. The hands as knowing wisdom relates to Chiron, connected to the energy centers of the hand and useful for psychometry--intuition through touching something/someone or reading energy with the hands.

Here are combinations in the natal chart I look for with somatic intuiting:

- Moon and Sun in aspect



Intuition
Source: [günter](#), [Pixabay](#)



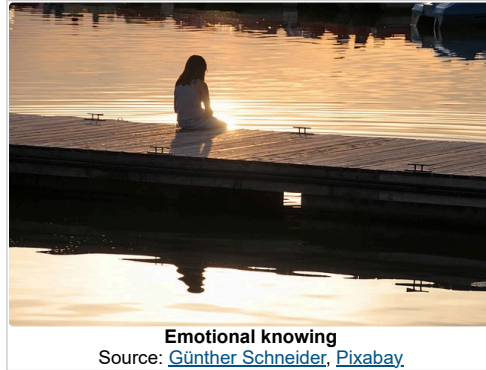
Mental knowing
Source: [ExpreArt](#), [Pixabay](#)

- Moon in Pisces or in aspect to Neptune
- Sun in Pisces or in aspect to Neptune
- Sun in aspect to Chiron
- Moon in aspect to Chiron
- Moon, Chiron, Sun, Neptune, Ceres with a few degrees of ascendant
- Taurus, Capricorn, or Virgo ascendant

We can enhance the wisdom of the body knowing through touching body, walking meditation, Reiki, Qi Gong, acupuncture, etc. Breathing into body parts or focused breathing can also help us calibrate more to our somatic knowing. I also use Chinese Baoding Balls to keep my hand chakras activated and attuned.

Emotional and Psychological Knowing (Water)

This may show up as clairsentience, feeling sad around someone who is depressed. Or someone is saying something but you may feel the dissonance between what they say and the feeling you are getting from them. Classically empath descriptions tend to fit this more watery way of knowing or highly sensitive person. This can be experienced as overwhelming or as anxiety and a permeability of self. It can show up similarly to Somatic knowing but may be noticed more as an emotional sense rather than body sense or both. Understanding psychological intuition can be helpful for discerning when and how to pick up on things that are unconscious in others and ourselves.



Emotional knowing

Source: [Günther Schneider, Pixabay](#).



Somatic knowing

Source: [kirsten sandefur, Pixabay](#).

As a Cancer rising this has been the one that has taken me the longest to identify...I meet someone new and immediately know how they feel and then get confused how I feel. Scorpio energies fit this modality as the ability to intuit layers under the surface not being named or discussed. The asteroid Ceres I also see falling into this category as it connects us to attachment and emotional tending. Pluto, as modern ruler of Scorpio, may also be a helpful planetary placements for this sort of knowing as they can enhance the ability to be more empathetic and attuned with others. With Neptune as a key channel for tapping into unity consciousness I have seen placements helpful here for animal or plant communication.

Planet or zodiac:

- Cancer Sun or Moon
- Scorpio Sun or Moon
- Pisces Sun or Moon
- Ceres in aspect to Sun or Moon
- Ceres in Pisces or aspect to Neptune
- Pluto in aspect to Sun or Moon
- Neptune in aspect to Sun or Moon
- Neptune, Pluto, or Moon on ascendant
- Scorpio, Cancer, or Pisces rising

Work with this superpower through tapping into yourself and baseline feeling by yourself and then after being around someone. This element also does better avoiding sensory overload unless very well resourced internally. It may also be helpful for empaths and highly sensitive people to make extra space for down time and move more slowly.

Creative or Intention Knowing (Fire)

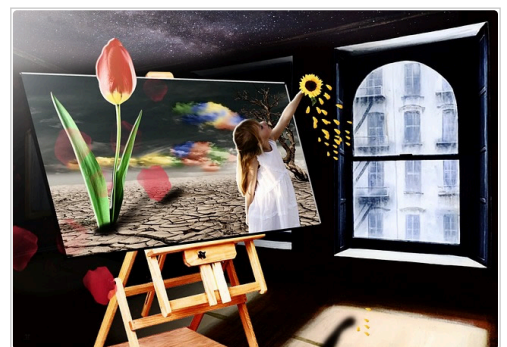
Creative knowing may not be one often discussed but it provides powerful intuitive information on how to bring goals or dreams into reality. This combines noticing synchronicity and the intention required to move forward as aligned intuitive action can be the difference between going with the flow or working against it. Knowing which intentions or creative actions to take has its own form of magic and intuition. Someone may not even realize how much their actions have been informed by this mode of perception, perhaps making it even more difficult to spot. Easily reading trends in the collective and being able to predict them by understanding the creative zeitgeist is a rare skill I see related to a form of intuition.

The planet Uranus, while very air-like and mental, also helps us tap into the future and what is ahead personally and collectively, and can align people with future energies. While Mars is our energy and when that is impacted or we suddenly feel sleepy this can be potent information for how to move forward--or not. Jupiter's ability to expand can cultivate a pathway to cultural ideas that help us take action. All these planets align us with momentum and creativity.

Planet or zodiac:

- Aquarius Sun or Moon
- Sagittarius Sun or Moon
- Aries Sun or Moon
- Jupiter in Pisces or in aspect to Uranus
- Mars in aspect to Sun or Moon
- Mars in aspect to Neptune or Uranus
- Mars or Uranus on ascendant
- Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius rising

Setting intentions and learning about the world around us feeds this type of intuitive super power of creative motion. Working with this may also mean moving the body to get things going. It is often found in entrepreneurs and athletes so following their lead can definitely help align with intentional intuition.



Creative knowing

Source: [ExpreArt, Pixabay](#).

Conclusion

I strongly believe everyone is intuitive, and understanding how different forms of awareness move through us can be strengthened through astrology and the cycles of Mercury retrograde. We may have all forms of perception or focus on some more than others, or perhaps open ourselves to one we didn't know we had. Leaning into our intuitive inklings and expanding our idea of how they play out in our lives can allow for a more aligned life through learning to trust ourselves more and more.

Author:



Rebecca M. Farrar, M.A. offers astrology sessions for individuals, couples, and groups. Before studying archetypal astrology, she was a huge skeptic of astrology. Though now sees it as an incredible tool for enchantment and appreciating complexity. In 2013, she completed her M.A. at the California Institute of Integral Studies in the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness (PCC) program. She studied with archetypal astrologer Rick Tarnas, cosmologist Brian Swimme, activist Joanna Macy, and psychotherapist Stan Grof. Other influences include C.G. Jung, Owen Barfield, Bill Plotkin, Marianne Woodman, Thomas Berry, and Clarissa Pinkola Estes. Her website is: <https://www.wildwitchwest.com/>