



Reading Body Language

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The end of the year is fast approaching, so I will deal with something a bit less intense in this newsletter, although also important. And that is – body language. Most of us know or have read that body language makes up a huge part of our communication. In fact, more than 50% of our communication is from the use of our body, facial expressions, arm and hand movements etc. Throughout our day, we are communicating more with our gestures and posture and body movements than with our words. Other people are also sending us information about themselves and their attitudes and feelings with their body language. So, learning to read and understand your own and others' body language can make a difference to people interactions. Learning to read the body language of another can influence your friendships, your work relationships, interactions with clients and bosses, and any other person you deal with. If you can understand the body language of someone else, you can see if they are bored or irritated or not interested in what you are saying, and you can use your body language to get them to be more engaged and positive to what you are saying.

Below are some common examples of body language meanings:

- Someone looking you directly in the eyes indicates they are interested and paying attention to you.
- Breaking eye contact frequently or avoiding eye contact usually means someone is distracted, uncomfortable, or trying to conceal their feelings.
- Someone who blinks more rapidly than normal is usually feeling distressed or uncomfortable.
- Dilation of the pupils can indicate excitement, attraction, or desire.
- Constricted pupils could indicate fear, anger, or a negative mood.
- Raising of the eyebrows usually indicates interest.
- A fake smile does not reach the eyes. A genuine smile usually results in the eyes crinkling to some extent as a genuine smile involves the eyes as well.
- Arms held close to the body may indicate someone who does not want to draw attention to themselves.

- Arms expanded and spread out when standing or sitting can mean someone wants to take command of a situation, be larger than life, be noticed, or it may even be a threatening gesture.
- Crossing of the arms may indicate self-protection, defensiveness, or being closed off.
- Standing with hands on hip may indicate someone in control of themselves, or it could be an aggressive posture.
- Rapidly tapping fingers indicates boredom, impatience, and frustration.
- Steepling of the fingers can indicate authority and control.
- A seated or standing stance where someone has the hands open and palms up facing others indicates someone who is honest with nothing to hide.
- Rubbing of the hands together usually indicates excitement.
- Placing of the hand on the cheek can indicate someone is seriously considering information.
- Someone standing with their hands in their pockets usually means disinterest or discomfort in revealing one's thoughts and feelings.
- When the hands and body are facing in the direction of the other person, it indicates interest in listening to what is being said.
- When the feet and legs are pointed towards a person it indicates interest in what the person is saying.
- Leaning in towards someone also means you are interested and engaged.
- If someone is tugging at their ear, they may be trying to make a decision.
- Too much scratching and rubbing of the ears is an indication of anxiety.
- Rubbing of the neck can mean feeling insecure or stressed.
- An erect posture means confidence, assertiveness and attentiveness.
- Removing physical boundaries between you and someone else, for example phones, bags, files, glasses, shows you are giving them your full attention.
- Mirroring someone – i.e. doing the same as they are doing with their legs or arms, usually means you are trying to build rapport.

When you are attempting to interpret body language (and you will do this unconsciously as well as consciously) remember to look at all aspects of body language to get a more correct interpretation. Look at their body language as a whole and integrate your understanding of all their gestures to get a more accurate picture of their current thoughts and feelings.

By paying attention to the body language of others you have a better idea of what they are feeling and thinking, and so get cues on how to alter your body language and verbal language to get the result you want. By paying attention to your own body language you can work on building better relationships, gaining more trust with people, and getting your point across in just the right way to make a good impression. Knowledge of body language enables you to be proactive in encounters with others and able to achieve more of what you want from a situation.