



Aaron Wallis

Career Success Masterclass

Day Nine - Improve Your Reading of Body Language

Free Interview Preparation Advice – The easy way to prepare and ‘WOW’ at interviews

Day Nine – Improve your Reading of Body Language for Sales Success

What is Body Language?

Astonishingly, body language is the most important factor in human communication. Numerous studies have been undertaken in how Western society communicates and the figures do vary slightly though commonly it is stated that a whopping 55% of communication is down to physiology, or body language, 38% to tonality - the way it is said and just 7% down to the words that are actually used! I would guess that great orators like Stephen Fry and Churchill may disagree but we can all relate to going to a party and for some reason really liking someone and for another reason really not liking someone else, based on nothing but intuitive reasons. Body language, physiology, unspoken or non-verbal communication (it goes under many guises) plays a fundamentally important part of the way that we interact with every other person. It is like a mirror that tells us what the other person thinks and feels in response to our words or actions. Body language involves gestures, mannerisms, and other bodily signs.

Our ability to use body language in a positive way can be a powerful tool to our overall personality development. It is the unspoken tool to a successful life.

Reading the Signs - Suggesting Interest

- It is important to know if people are interested in what you are saying; particularly in a sales environment, otherwise, you are just wasting your time.
- Just imagine you are in an important pitch. You are passionate about our products so you assume that your potential client feels the same way. But are they really interested?
- Here are some of the movements exhibited by people who are interested in what you are saying:
- They maintain eye contact more than 60% of the time. The more wide-opened the eyes are, the more interested the person is. In fact, a person maintains eye contact more when listening than when talking.
- Their heads are inclined forward.
- They are nodding their heads. Such action means that they're agreeing with you. That means they're attentive and listening.
- Their feet are pointing towards you.
- They smile frequently. But take note, not all smiles convey the same feeling. An oblong smile is not genuine. It is used to show courtesy, but not necessarily happiness or friendliness. The lips are withheld completely back from the upper and lower teeth, forming the oblong shape. This is usually the smile that many people exhibit when they feign to enjoy a lame joke.



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Reading the Signs - Indications That They're More Open to Agree with You

- There are certain hints to indicate if people are more receptive in accepting your ideas. Some of these are:
- Their hands are flat on the table.
- Their palms are open.
- If they're stroking their chin, they're thinking. They may agree with you after careful evaluation.
- Their heads are inclined forward.
- They are nodding their heads.
- Their legs are spaced out from each other.
- They smile frequently.
- They unbutton their jackets. This indicates friendliness and willingness to collaborate with you.
- Their hands are open. This also indicates genuineness.

Reading the Signs - Indications That They are Thinking

People think all the time. But different individuals make different body movements based on the type and intensity of their thinking. Some of their actions are written below:

- They're stroking their chin. This means they are assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal/idea being presented.
- They take their glasses off, after which they may either (1) clean them, or (2) put the tip of the frame in their mouth. They are buying themselves some time to think things over. A frame in the mouth would also likely indicate that they need more details and they are willing to listen.
- They are pinching the bridge of the nose most likely with eyes closed. People doing this are engaged in very deep thought. They may be involved in a difficult situation, where they are aware of the consequences that may occur as a result of making crucial decisions.
- They put a palm below the chin, index finger pointed and extended along the cheek, while other fingers placed beneath the mouth. This gesture more likely indicates thoughts that are criticizing or antagonizing other people.
- They walk with the head down and hands behind the back. People who walk this way are probably worried about their problems, and they are thinking of ways to solve them.

Reading the Signs - Indications That They Are Defensive

The mouth might keep a secret, but certain gestures could indicate that people are hiding something they don't want others to find out, such as:

- They walk with their hands in their pockets.
- They cross their arms.
- They hide their hands any way they can.



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Reading the Signs - Indications Of Boredom

We've all been there! The long, dry, detailed presentation at the end of the long business meeting going into excruciating detail in all of the 117 slides! You notice others are clicking their pen, tapping their feet, and drumming their fingers.

After the meeting, you hear the presenter ask, "Did you enjoy the presentation?" They would say "Definitely!" But you know better. Their actions indicate just how bored they are!

Some signals conveyed by people who are bored and disinterested include:

- Head supported by the palm, often accompanied by drooping eyes.
- They show inattentiveness by staring at a blank space (eyes not blinking) or by looking around frequently.
- They are pulling their ears. This may also signify that they want to interrupt while another person is talking.
- They are clicking a pen non-stop.
- They are tapping their hands or feet.
- They yawn incessantly.
- Their feet or other body parts are pointing to the exit, as if they are very eager to leave.
- They move restlessly in their seats. This could also mean that they are not cozy or at ease, or they might just be exhausted.
- They cross their legs and constantly kick their foot in a very slight motion (particularly done by females).

If you're the one making the presentation and you discerned that your audience are displaying signs of boredom, don't start talking faster or louder. Restrain from such act even if your instinct tells you to do so. Instead, address it and say,

"I'm going to take a pause here. I feel that I'm losing your attention. What's up?"

Hear what they have to say.

You may discover what's actually preventing them from keeping up with you.

Reading the Signs - Signals Conveying Excitement or Interest

You know that you're about to secure the deal when you start to recognize the signs of excitement or interest. Some of the movements made by excited people include:

- They rub their palms against each other.
- They clap their hands.
- Their heads are tilted forward.
- They cross their fingers (usually comes with the hope that something big or special will happen).

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Reading the Signs - Signals Exhibiting Confidence/Authority/Power

Hugely successful people have an aura; an air of unyielding self-confidence. What gives them this air of total confidence?

- They speak with a low-pitched, slow-paced, downward-inflected voice.
- Chin tilted upwards.
- Chest projected outwards.
- They maintain an erect posture, whether standing or sitting.
- When standing their hands are clenched behind the back or placed beside the hips.
- They have a firm handshake, palms pointing downwards.
- They walk solidly with forceful arm swings.
- They 'steeple' their hands by joining the fingertips of both hands together. The higher the hands are elevated, the more confident they are.

Reading the Signs - Signals Of Agitation or even Anger

- Their fists are clenched.
- Their hands or feet are tapping.
- Their arms are crossed over the chest.
- Their eyes are blinking constantly.
- Collar pulled away from the neck, like letting some air in during a hot day in the summer.

Reading the Signs - Signals Of Nervousness/Tension

Be aware of your body signals during interviews or business meetings that could convey nervousness

Your hands or feet are tapping.

You can feel yourself developing a high-pitched, fast-paced, stuttering voice.

You find yourself having to often clear their throat.

Your arms are crossed, gripping your biceps.

Your legs are crossed while standing.

Reading the Signs - Signals Made When They Are Doubting/Suspecting You

Here are some clues that may indicate suspicion or doubt in what you're selling:

They glimpse sideways from the corner of one eye.

They are rubbing or touching their eyes or ears.

Their hands are tucked in their pockets.

Their arms are crossed over the chest.

Their glasses are dropped to the lower bridge of the nose, with eyes peering over them. This movement may indicate that you are being examined closely (to the point that you get conscious).



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There's one act you usually do when you are the one doubting yourself - rubbing or touching your nose. This subconsciously occurs when you are uncertain of how to answer a critical question or when you are concerned of other people's reaction to your answer.

Reading the Signs - Signals Made When They Need Reassurance

This is particularly useful to look for when you are coming to the point of close. These are the signs that unwittingly say "Should I really buy this?", "Should I shop around a little longer to see if I can get a better deal?"

- They stick a pen in their mouth.
- They squeeze the chunky part of their hand.
- They rub the back of the chair (while sitting).
- They clamp their hands with thumbs touching against one another.
- They bite their nails (in some cases).
- They touch their throat (for women).
- They jiggle the coins in their pockets. (for those who are concerned about their riches).
- Here's what certain types of people would do when they want to reassure others:
 - A woman gives reassurance to another female by holding both of her hands and sometimes hugging her. The facial appearance of the consoling female matches the solemn mood of the other female.
 - A politician who would like to reassure you that he will be doing a good job when elected in public office would shake your hand with his right hand and cup it with his left hand.

Ready for the big one.....

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Reading the Signs - How To Know When They Are Lying

Here's the one that you've been waiting for! People lie for a variety of reasons. It may be to cover up a fault or embarrassment, to avoid upsetting other people, to encourage when no hope can be perceived, or to be spared from petty hassles. It may also be due to more serious psychological problems such as delusional imaging or extreme vanity.

- Here are some indications that are conveyed by people when lying:
- They speak in a high-pitched, fast-paced, stuttering voice.
- They are constantly swallowing and clearing their throat.
- They try their best to avoid having eye contact. This applies particularly to people who want to avoid discussing a certain topic.
- They look somewhere else and glimpse from the corner of their eye.
- They stick their tongue out to moist their lips.
- They are blinking rapidly.
- They rub their throat.
- Their arms are crossed over the chest.
- They are constantly touching parts of their face, especially the mouth, ear, and nose as if covering them.
- They scratch their head or the back of the neck.
- Their poses are closed, descending, and insecure.
- Their hands or feet are tapping.
- They always look down with shrugged shoulders.
- They are constantly moving from one place to another or changing their poses.
- They are projecting parts of their body (feet) to an escape route (door).

WARNING!

It is important that you don't jump to conclusions. Someone who rubs their nose may simply have an itch! It is important that you look for combinations, or clusters of signals to confirm your intuition. Judgment based on one or two gestures only may not be accurate enough, although they can be dependable. Be aware of the body language, but also combine your observations with the spoken words and in particular facial expressions to get more hints regarding the inner feelings of another.

Mirroring

Important to the sales professional is the art of mirroring. The example that was presented earlier of going to a party and really liking someone was probably largely due to mirroring. The simple fact is that human beings are a tribal pack animal and 'birds of the same feather flock together!' We like people who are like us, people that display the same behaviours, attitudes, and values as ourselves.

If you really want someone to like and trust you, you've got to exhibit the same qualities as that person. And there's no better way to do this than by using mirroring.

Match their facial expressions, gestures, posture, speech, styles, actions, breathing patterns, values and beliefs. Put yourself in their shoes. In other words, BE THEM.



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One of the easiest ways in which to 'tune in' to the other person is to match their breathing patterns. You will then find that you start to speak in the same tone, at the same pace and in doing this, you could also start to match their way of thinking. You will find empathizing comes naturally.

Be genuinely interested and curious with everything you can find out about them. Discover their attitude. Know their life story.

This is what we call mirroring.

WARNING!

Mirroring should not be confused with mimicry. Don't be obvious or clumsy and never let the person you're mirroring be aware of what you're doing. Just imagine someone acting out shamelessly what you're doing - every time you stand, he stands. When you scratch your head, he scratches his!

Your main objective should be to influence the subconscious. Even if a person is not aware that you're mirroring him, his subconscious mind realizes it.

The person will subconsciously be at ease when you duplicate his manners indirectly.

Developing Rapport

The ultimate goal of mirroring is to build rapport. It's the time when you and the people you're mirroring feel so close and in synch with each other that you feel like you've known each other for years.

So how would you know if you've built rapport?

Mirror them. Match whatever characteristic, value, or behaviour they possess that you would like to copy.

After some time, touch your nose or cross your legs. If they do the same thing, mission accomplished! You've already lowered their defences to the point where they are more receptive to your suggestions.

Body Language in Negotiations

In terms of the actual business negotiation, body language is a very important aspect. Reading body movements of your counterparts and making the right gestures may spell the difference between success and failure in the negotiation process.

Early Signs

The first step in using body language in a negotiation begins the moment you walk into the negotiation room. Be keen in observing their body language by focusing on the whole body - the head, arms, hands, chest, tummy, legs and feet. If you achieve this, you will be able to listen better. You will also be more perceptive in reading their body language.

First Impressions Last

Begin with a positive body language, radiate your enthusiasm! In a meeting for example, look in the other person's eyes with sincerity. Look into their eyes to register their eye colour - that'll also help you to remember them in the future. Give a solid handshake (see separate section on handshaking). Hold the hand firmly, but don't squeeze it, whilst maintaining eye contact.

Put Your Body Language Know-how to Use

During the negotiation process, observe their gestures. Read if people are interested in what you are saying, if they are casting doubts on you, if they are more open to accept your proposal, and even when they are lying.

Be alert in recognizing these signals. Moreover, also be aware of your own actions. You might be exhibiting signs of nervousness without you knowing it.

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Body Language in Selling

In the real world, we sell tangible items and ideas. When you sell, you can use postures, facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, and your physical appearance to close the sale successfully. Most customers tend to buy when triggered by their senses. The key here is to do everything you can to positively affect their senses.

In selling, the instant you meet a target client, he is already examining you based on your image and perception in a span of ten seconds or less. This is a crucial moment in selling, as his first impression of you will definitely make a permanent mark. It is said that a poor first impression takes over twenty minutes of positives for someone to change their initial opinion.

Whether you make or break a sale can literally depend on the non-verbal signals that you send during this crucial first contact. Women are generally considered to be more adept to body language than men because of their natural built-in instincts. Women are also more likely to act upon their instincts or intuition than a typical logical thinking man.

Written below are some body language techniques to help make your sales improve:

1. You can immediately analyze a person's personality by studying his style in shaking hands. An assertive person holds your hand firmly when you shake his hand. On the other hand, an individual with little or no confidence often gives a frail handshake. Adopt a handshake that is firm, yet not crushing (see handshake section). Convey confidence and professionalism, not dominance.
2. Posture is another aspect of body language. A slouching shoulder with your eyes looking on the ground can indicate lack of interest. Standing straight with your weight balanced on each foot gives you a more assured and relaxed look. Always maintain a straight body, whether you're standing or sitting.
3. Be sure to use sincere and open movements all the time. Do not cross your arms, as this can ruin the trust of your potential customer. Use outward and upward gestures of your hands to convey your sincerity.
4. "Don't point." Pointing at a client is equivalent to death wish in selling. Pointing is an aggressive act that can be interpreted as hostility.

Recognising Openness and Objections

You, as the seller, may also use body language as a tool to recognize and counteract any potential objections by the client. The usual scenarios include the following:

1. If the client's arms are crossed, it means he is disinterested. Use counter measures like positive movements to cause them to uncross their arms, perhaps even giving them some sales documentation to read before you begin the sales approach.
2. The best scenario is when his arms and legs are uncrossed, and his hands are open. This indicates that they are open to your ideas...and a sale is more likely to happen.
3. Another good sales scenario is when the client mimics your gestures. It shows he is very receptive to your ideas and open to buy your idea or product. If this is the case, throw all your barrage of features and benefits, and close the sale!
4. If the client covers his mouth, touches his nose, or the part near the eye, there's a probability that you are losing the sale. Something you said or did might have discouraged him. But don't despair. Do the selling process again; but this time, do it differently. Reassure the client that he is getting a great deal and encourage him to open up and share ideas. Open your palms and unconsciously let him see you occasionally putting your palm to your chest (this signifies honesty). Then try to reach that positive sales atmosphere again and close the sale.
5. Always be alert to the signs the client is exhibiting. If the client shows interest through his body movements, give the final sales blow and close the sale. The client's body language may change from positive to suspecting. In this case, take it easy, gather your wits, read your client's moods, and try to win him back. Always exhibit openness and sincerity. When the client crosses his legs and arms, this is a warning signal. Use mirroring techniques.



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6. In worse cases where you are unable to close the sale, try to be professional and diplomatic at all times. Thank the client for listening and shake his hand with sincerity. Sales cannot be achieved overnight and you generally 'win some and lose some'. Closing the presentation on a positive note will leave a good impression of you and who knows - he may be a deal of the future.

Use your body every way you can in the selling process. Always be enthusiastic. If you truly believe in the high quality of your product or service, other people will be positively affected by your enthusiasm. Body movements can convince prospects to become believers in what you are offering.

Body Language in Job Interviews

Based on your body language, an interviewer may know whether you are confident or not, if you are the shy or the friendly type, if you are a loner or a team player, or even if you are telling the truth or not. They can tell if you are capable of handling the job, if you are devoted, or if you're someone who can get along with other employees. Based on their questions, the interviewer will not only pay attention to what you say, but also on how you say it. The interviewer generally will find responses from you that match their qualifications. How you can decode the body language of your interviewer in relation to your own body language will determine the thin line if you get that job or not.

Proper Body Posture

Body posture is important during job interviews and you can adopt the following stance. At the beginning of the interview, sit up straight in your chair, with your back leaning against the back of the chair. Do not slouch or move sideways in your chair because it might be perceived by the interviewer as a lack of interest or boredom. On the other hand, sitting on the edge of your chair can impart a message that you are a little nervous and that you feel uneasy with the situation.

When the interviewer says something, it is advisable to lean forward a little. This shows interest and attention in what the interviewer is saying. You can tilt your head a little to show that you are listening closely.

Proper Gestures

Do not cross your arms because this might be perceived as a defensive move. Just place your hands loosely on your lap or just put them on the armrest of your chair. By doing this, you will also be able to make hand movements to support what you are saying.

While speaking, you may nod your head occasionally to give more meaning to what you are saying, and if the interviewer nods back it is generally a good sign. Hand movements can also help to spice up the conversation. The interviewer would think that you are comfortable with the interview process if you make hand gestures.

Too much hand movements at the beginning of the interview may not be a good idea. The proper way is to add them gradually throughout the interview.

Be aware of your interviewer's hand movements as well. If they use their hands a lot to make a point or to clarify something, mirror by doing the same thing as well. It is important to adjust your gestures to that of the interviewer to establish rapport.



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Be alert to unintentional gestures that you may make sometimes due to tension. Some of the acts that may irritate the interviewer could include:

- Tapping your fingers across the desk.
- Shuffling your feet.
- Biting your nails.
- Toying with a pen.

The Panel Interview

Being interviewed by one person could be a piece of cake for many. But being interviewed by a group, or even two interviewers at a second interview, could be a confusing ordeal, especially when it comes to who you should look at during the interview.

It is important to maintain eye contact with all the interviewers at an equal extent. By looking uniformly at them, and scanning from person to person whilst talking you will establish their trust and you will gain composure throughout the interview process.

When one of the interview partners asks or says something, maintain eye contact with him until he ceases speaking. This will indicate that you're listening attentively. While he is speaking, he may also look at the other interviewers. When he looks at you again, you can nod your head to encourage him to continue speaking.

When you answer a question, look first at the one who asked. But while you are answering, you should take turns looking at each of the other interviewers as well. You should direct yourself again to the person who asked the question when you want to prove a point, when you want to emphasize something, and when you are done answering.

It's Okay to be Nervous!

Knowing how to act confidently using body language can increase your chances of passing the interview. You can utilize this knowledge to conceal your anxiety a little, but this is something you shouldn't worry about too much. Many candidates are tensed during an interview, and they would not want to let the interviewer know about their inner feelings. However, it is completely understandable to be nervous at this stage. It is completely normal.

Your nervousness may even indicate how valuable getting this job is to you. If you weren't nervous, and you act like a happy-go-lucky person, you might be perceived as someone who is not very interested in the job.

The interview not only functions as a way of determining who among the applicants is most capable of performing the job well, but it is also a means of allowing the interviewer to get to know more about the applicants. It's a first encounter with an individual that you might soon work together with. If that's the case, then the interviewer (who could be your boss) should actually feel the same way as you are. Nervousness often accompanies excitement.

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Conclusion

Undeniably, communication is as important as life itself. There are varied forms of communication. Each form is valuable, non-verbal communication being one of them. The most profound form is body language. It is probably the least known, not because it is the least effective but because it is the least noticed; yet it is one of the most practiced, subconsciously. We are all using it but we hardly notice that we're doing it. It's one of the most reliable sources of truthful information.

Action speaks louder than words and body language is the literal translation to this statement. If time is a factor in the delivery of a meaning, body language may be the way to communicate. This is another essence of action speaking louder than words.

Body language is made available to us naturally. It comes spontaneously. All you need to do is to know how to interpret and develop it to its full potential. Don't deny yourself this skill. Yes, this is a skill.

Practice, practice, practice! Spend fifteen minutes per day consciously honing your skill. When waiting for trains, buses and planes observe those around you. In meetings, observe the power play. In the pub, in clubs, at a football match, observe the signals that the majority is unwittingly conveying. Be aware of your own body language but at the same time don't become an automaton.

Learning body language does not stop here. Experience is the key factor. Experience will sharpen your body language skills to greater heights and consistency. Body language may not be absolute but your degree of efficiency will certainly be higher than most.

Good luck in developing your new skill and awareness and good luck in taking this new skill to your sales interview

Tomorrow we shall be looking at psychometric profiling and ability tests