

Body Language

7 Ways to Enhance Your Message



Coaching Institutes

Speech Communications Training

Introduction

The logical place to begin is what constitutes body language. It's everything and every way you communicate to someone else that does not involve your voice. And it's a critically important part of your overall communication. In fact, more than half of your total message is conveyed by your body.

Remember what they say about first impressions? You never get a second chance. But, did you realize that as much as 70% of what you convey in that first impression is done through your body language? That's big enough so you want to make sure that your first impressions are exactly what you want them to be.

How you communicate is a large part of your personal brand. And, your body language is a very significant part of your communication style. Yes, you do have a brand. Your brand is the embodiment of everything connected to you and serves to create a sense of expectation. Your brand is what people expect to see and hear when you show up, much in the same way you know what to expect when you go to a MacDonald's restaurant. Since your brand is essentially the definition of you in the marketplace, would it not be a good idea to manage this in a conscious way?

When you open your mouth to speak to someone, and it does not matter whether it's to a group or just a friend, more than

half of your total message is coming through your body language. Too often we are sending mixed messages to our audiences. When the words we speak do not match our vocal tone, or our body language conflicts with our message, the brain struggles to understand what we mean. When that happens, our message is unreadable by the brain, and we lose credibility with the person to whom we are speaking.

Since body language is such an important part of our message, let's explore the components.

Component	Message
Height	Whether it's fair or not, height matters, and the taller, the better
Gender	Different expectations are set in place depending on the context
Culture	It's more or less important depending on the context
Age	It establishes a baseline for a person's expectations of your behavior
Hair style	Your hair style will place you in a broad group of people who have established behaviors
Style of dress	Your style speaks volumes about you and how you see yourself in society

Component	Message
Way of walking	It tells people your energy level
Posture	It demonstrates your energy and confidence, or lack thereof. Fatigue shows first in your posture
Mood	Your mood will attract or repel people to your message
Your face	It is said that you have over 30 muscles in your face to express emotion
Legs / Feet	The position of your legs sends a message about confidence.
Arms	They can be inviting and open, expressing confidence, or blocking like a barrier
Hands	They can be open in greeting or closed, hidden, or threatening
Groin / Sexual areas	They can be shown (displayed) or hidden (protected)

So, here are the seven ways you can improve your message using body language.

1. Congruent Communication

Speak more powerfully by making your language congruent. When your communication is congruent, you are sending the same message with your words, vocal tone and body language. Nowhere is this more important than in the sales environment. If your potential customer receives conflicting messages from your body language and words (or vocal tone), their brain will not be able to resolve the inconsistency, and your sales message will likely be dismissed. So, how do you make sure that your message is congruent? Depending on your resources, you can approach this from one of three different levels.

- a. **Your practice will be good** if you write down your complete sales message and practice it in front of a mirror to see your body language and gestures.
- b. **Your practice will be better** if you write out your complete sales message, and practice your message and body language in front of a mirror, taping your talk with a microphone. Your spoken voice is distorted to you since you hear it without transmission through the air. Your voice is transmitted directly to your inner ear from your larynx. Recording your voice is essential to be able to hear problems in tone or timbre.

- c. **Your practice will be best** if you write out your complete message and deliver it repeatedly in front of a video recorder. That way you can hear your own spoken voice and see your body language in action. This way you will be able to see small aspects of your body language that you might miss when practicing in front of a mirror. Repeated practices will drive the desired body language into your muscle memory much in the same way a golfer practices a golf swing.

2. Your Regal Bearing



Make yourself appear to be more powerful. Studies have shown that people who make the fewest gestures appear to be more powerful and authoritative.

When consultants are trained to make presentations before Boards of Directors, their posture is erect, but not rigid, their hands are straight down at their sides, palms open, gesturing only when necessary to make or emphasize a point. The talk is tight, to the point with no extraneous words, and because your message is congruent, it is much more powerful.

Here is a way to enhance your appearance before any group. The posture of most people is terrible. Slouching takes inches off your height. Imagine that someone has attached an invisible string to the top of your head. Now imagine that string being pulled up taut. Your head should now be properly aligned right over your spinal column and very likely an inch or two taller. When you are comfortable with your new found height, you can call it your regal bearing. Remember to wear that regal bearing every time you speak and you will appear more authoritative.

3. The Honest Look



Show someone you are being open and honest. When we speak our body sends out dozens of signals through our autonomic nervous system. Professional poker players call them tells, and it's one reason they wear dark glasses with their "poker face". These unconscious signals cause our pupils to dilate or constrict, perspiration to form, and muscles to move involuntarily. They are picked up by the person we are communicating with either consciously, or unconsciously. If they are skilled in reading body language, they can quickly judge our openness and sincerity. If they receive these signals on an unconscious basis, they will be left with a feeling of either comfort or unease. So, what do you do to show your honesty?

- a. **Don't touch your face.** This type of gesture tends to signal uncertainty or untruthfulness.
- b. **Keep your hands open.** Don't stuff your hands into your pockets. Keep your hands out and palms

open, showing you have nothing to hide. Keep the nervous gestures to a minimum.

- c. **Don't cross your arms.** Just keep a relaxed and open posture without creating any barriers across your body, especially in your heart area.

Smile and make easy eye contact. It's the best thing to do for almost all occasions.

4. The Look of the Liar



Tell when someone is trying to deceive. The vast majority of our communication is categorized as persuasive. We are trying to persuade someone to do something we want, see an issue our way or to buy things we are selling. In every case it becomes important to evaluate the authenticity and credibility of the other person. As we have been discussing, our bodies will give us away in many different ways, most of them unconsciously. Veteran police officers know that when a suspect is lying to them, they give off a constellation of signs. These include:

- a. **Nervous behavior.** This can include pinching of the skin or ear, fidgeting, clearing the throat, hands covering or stroking the face, running fingers through their hair, wringing of their hands, bouncing their leg while seated, and many more. While there may be many reasons to be nervous in the presence of a police officer, taken in context, these signs can be very telling.

- b. **Failure to make or maintain eye contact.** This is a deep seated behavior pattern. People attempting to deceive are largely unable to look you in the eye. Some people who are skilled and practiced in body language can override this indicator, but many other signs cannot be controlled. Such as,
- c. **Constricted pupils and perspiration.** From your autonomic nervous system which is out of conscious control, the pupils of your eye will constrict when you are attempting to deceive. Professional gamblers who are MASTER body language readers never let their opponents see their eyes for this reason. You also will begin to perspire, even though this may be slight and perhaps unnoticeable to most.

5. Gaining Rapport

Get into closer rapport by mirroring. Let's say you have worked weeks to get an appointment with this prospect. You know this may be your only opportunity to exert influence. Developing a sense of trust is critical to the success of your meeting. So, what to do? At a very deep level, people like those people who are like them. Of course, the best way is to find something in common with this person. It could be a friend, a school or fraternity/sorority, or shared interests.

But, in a quick business meeting this may not be possible. The quickest path to trust and rapport is to mirror your prospects body language. This technique does require practice, but the payoffs are large.

Many different aspects of your prospect can be mirrored including their posture, mannerisms, energy level, rate of speech, gestures, but the most powerful aspect to mirror is their breathing rate. Some words of warning first. Only mirror your prospect in a close approximation of their style. If you mirror too closely, you may be perceived as mimicking or mocking them. So keep it loose, and never mirror negative body language or moods. The best thing to do is practice mirroring breathing patterns with a partner. When you can effectively synchronize your breathing with your prospect, the results can be quite impressive and must be experienced to be believed.

6. Attracting the Opposite Sex

How come the important stuff is so far down the list, you might ask? Remember where we talked about first impressions? Here is where it pays off. Regardless of whether this is simply lust or genuine attraction it usually proceeds in three distinct phases including:

Signal	Women	Men
The gaze - Nothing happens until you catch their eye.	Tends to look just a bit longer than normal, then smile and drop their eyes	The gaze may be anywhere from a longer than necessary look to a complete "undressing with the eyes" look
Preening	Checking their make-up Twirling the hair Rearrange the clothes	Pat down their hair Straighten their clothes Pull up their pants / socks
Moving in	Usually the pursued, she encourages by continuing to preen and / or mirroring his behavior to put him at ease	Usually the pursuer, the man starts to close distance between him and the pursued.

In her book, *Reading People*, Jo-Ellen Dimitrius has compiled a list of body language cues that typically indicate sexual interest across both genders. These cues include:

- Intense eye contact (may shift to sexual organs).
- An exaggerated or coy smile.
- Pretend laughter
- Winking
- Licking the lips.
- Touching oneself in a flirtatious manner.
- Overtly touching one's target.
- Pushing out of the chest or hips.
- Walking with a swagger (men) or swaying of the hips (women).
- Wearing of revealing clothing or excessive makeup, perfume or cologne.

It is interesting to note that none of the above contains any spoken words but they do convey considerable amounts of information.

7. Make Yourself Charismatic

Make your energy level contagious. If you have ever been around a charismatic person, then you understand the power and influence that charisma can bring. Dr. Tony Alessandra defines charisma as "the ability to influence others positively by connecting with them physically, emotionally, and intellectually."

While some people may be born charismatic, I am of the firm belief that it can be learned. One of the best ways to increase your charismatic potential is to learn to radiate your enthusiasm.

Whenever two people communicate, their energy levels become shared at a common level. But if the energy level of one of the parties is at an extreme, either high or low, the other party will tend to copy it. Have you ever seen the gloomy person who can suck the oxygen out of a room just by their presence? The opposite is real as well. You will need to practice this before you are good at it.

Just imagine your energy level going higher and higher. You are getting more and more excited and enthusiastic. When you feel you are as energized as possible, close your eyes and remember every aspect of that feeling. Then, anchor that feeling with a specific gesture, perhaps pumping your fists into the air and say "Oh, yes!!!" Then every time you repeat that gesture, you are much closer to being able to reproduce that energetic feeling.

When you are able to maintain that state you will be able to transfer that feeling to everyone around you. Your energy level will be contagious, and you will be one step closer to a charismatic individual.

Conclusion

The way you dress and move your body speaks volumes about you, and how you feel about yourself. But I must insert a word of caution here. If you are attempting to read someone else's body language, do not attempt to read anything into just one or two elements. When reading body language you must take into account the total picture, including the context in which the person finds themselves. When in doubt, you must give the other person the benefit of doubt. Until you are proficient at mind reading, you can never be sure exactly what someone's body language means.

But you sure can get some good hints.

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