

BODY LANGUAGE

DECODE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND HOW TO ANALYZE PEOPLE WITH
PERSUASION SKILLS, NLP, ACTIVE LISTENING, MANIPULATION, AND
MIND CONTROL TECHNIQUES TO READ PEOPLE LIKE A BOOK.



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Body Language

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Introduction

Do you struggle to communicate with other people? Maybe you can't get across what you're trying to say, even when you have great ideas. Perhaps you misinterpret what other people tell you more often than you like. Maybe you know someone who always seems to know what others are thinking and commands attention every time they walk into a room, and you wonder how they do it.

Fixing these problems, and becoming the excellent communicator you want to be, is more than possible when you know how to read and use body language. That's what you're going to learn in this book.

Would you like to form deeper connections with people? Learn how to influence others to get the results you want? Maybe you're interested in becoming a presenter or public speaker, or you simply want to be more assertive and memorable in your day-to-day life. Understanding more about body language and how to use it to read other people and improve your self-image can help you open doors to advantages you never knew were possible.

You may have noticed that people who have excellent communication skills and magnetic personalities draw attention wherever they go and seem to look a certain way. Many believe it's all about the clothes, that if you “dress for success,” you'll be noticed and successful. However, there's more to it than that. The good news is that you don't have to buy brand-new clothes to make this work for you because dressing for success is just as much about the body language you wear. When you're able to project confidence, you can accomplish so much more.

In this book, you will learn practical steps to improve your body language and your ability to read others. While we will talk briefly about the science behind body language, this information is presented as background knowledge to help you understand *why* these techniques work and use them more effectively. You won't find a lot of theoretical conjecture here—just easy-to-understand strategies that you can implement every day to improve your life.

The advantages of strong nonverbal communication skills are numerous. When you are better able to interpret and use body language cues, you can gain the ability to project success and confidence not only in your career but throughout all areas of your life. You'll not only help yourself, but you'll be able to help others around you through more precise communication and a drastic decrease in misunderstandings.

As you'll discover, the words you say are only part of what you're communicating to others—your body does the rest, and in significant proportions. When speaking with someone in person, much of the information conveyed and received happens through visual – rather than auditory – senses. Even if it's subconscious mainly, we “hear” what someone else is saying with our eyes.

Reading body language is a skill you can develop, like learning to ride a bike or play an instrument. The more you practice, the better you will become. This is also true for using your body language to communicate more effectively and influence people in your favor. Another benefit to using body language more actively in communication is the “fake it until you make it” principle. As you begin using your body more often to project confidence (even when you’re not confident), other people will notice and respond to your body language, which helps you feel the confidence you’re modeling. Even if you choose to put the information in this book only to improve your outlook, your results can be life-changing.

Our approach to learning about body language throughout this book is a process of building knowledge. First, you’ll learn about the science of body language and how chemicals like hormones and neurotransmitters are released in your brain in response to various triggers, which then cause a range of reactions in your body. Next, we’ll discuss body language “tells” that will help you read other people through body language and control your body reactions to convey what you want through more than just your words.

With this background in place, we’ll cover the specifics of developing deep, meaningful connections with other people and how to become the charismatic personality you aspire to be. You’ll understand how to command a room, read others to know what they’re thinking, and use various body language, active listening, and Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) techniques to accomplish your goals through persuasive conversation tactics to get results.

Words are important—especially the right words. But when you combine the right words with the right body language and the ability to read others,

you'll have a winning combination for success. Keep reading to learn the practical steps you can take today toward becoming a master communicator.

Chapter One

What Science Says About Body Language

So just what, exactly, is body language? You probably have a pretty good idea of what it means. Still, when learning to read body language and control what your body says, it's essential to understand everything that goes into expressing ourselves through our bodies.

Body language is perhaps more fully described by “nonverbal communication” since it consists of everything we do while communicating that does not involve speaking. Of course, physical gestures and facial expressions are body language, but there's more to it. Nonverbal communication also encompasses posture, eye contact, tone and volume of voice, how fast or slow someone is speaking, personal grooming habits, a person's dress, and more. It's a comprehensive package that works together to convey everything we're *not* saying aloud.

While body language is not an exact science, there are proven scientific principles behind many aspects of nonverbal communication. Our life experiences and individual preferences shape the rest. Every person's body language is unique, but there are enough commonalities to allow you to

read others and enough science-proven reactions to influence others' perceptions of you through the conscious use of body language.

Body language and neuroscience

So, what's the relationship between your brain and your body language? The human central nervous system, which includes the brain and spinal column, controls both voluntary and involuntary movements throughout the body. The peripheral nerves that run throughout the body feed into this system, which carries signals from contact points to the brain. The brain responds to stimulus from the nerves by releasing chemicals called neurotransmitters to relay either a voluntary or involuntary instruction to the motor neurons, which carries the message to the nerves and causes a reaction.

These chemical reactions involve a wide range of hormones and neurotransmitters, some stronger than others—for example, when you're anxious, your brain releases norepinephrine. This hormone-neurotransmitter prepares your body to react to stressors with a fight-or-flight response. The preparation happens whether or not you *want* to feel anxious. And perhaps the most challenging issue is that your fight-or-flight reflex can't tell the difference between high threats and low threats: it would react the same whether the threat you were facing was public speaking or a hungry lion.

While you can't stop yourself from having an ordinary chemical reaction, you can learn to control how you react outwardly during times of stress. You can help your brain consciously reduce the threat level, so you don't experience the feeling of facing down an apex predator when all you're doing is trying to speak up at a work meeting. We'll talk about how you can do that later in this book.

Why (and how) You Can Learn Body Language

Some people seem to have a natural aptitude for projecting all the right signals. Does this mean they simply lucked out on genetics, and you'll never be as charismatic as these influential individuals? Not at all—with practice, you can learn to speak and interpret body language in much the same way you would learn to speak and translate any foreign language.

One of the ways you'll do this is by training yourself to react differently to the chemical releases that occur in your brain during times of stress, anxiety, or high emotion. This conditioning—learning how to produce a specific reaction to a specific stimulus—is rooted in biology. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov's experiments with dogs and conditioning, published in 1897. In his experiments, Pavlov noticed dogs drooled due to being served meat. Through a series of conditioning exercises, Pavlov introduced a ringing bell to signify meal times and then reached a point where the dogs would drool in response to the sound of the bell, even when food was not present. This study is so iconic that a conditioned response is now often called a "Pavlovian response."

We are all conditioned – biologically trained throughout our lives – often without realizing it. One example is the color red. This color is often used to signify danger—on warning signs, stoplights, barriers, tail lights, and more. So, we learn to associate red with danger and become more alert when we see this color, even if we aren't aware of the feeling. This type of learning-from-experience behavior is known as operant conditioning.

By tapping into this biological propensity, you can teach yourself to reprogram the body reactions that you've taken on through life experiences,

change your habits, and consequently change your life for the better.

Which Body Parts Do the Talking?

When it comes to improving your body language to communicate persuasively with others, you have to make sure that you're in control of the "talking" aspects so they're getting across the message you want to send. While communicating, awareness of what your body does is the first step toward fully engaged and deliberate nonverbal communication that helps you achieve what you want. You need to understand both what your body language is saying and what you want it to say instead.

All body parts are used in nonverbal communication, but there are three main areas where body language is most concentrated: head and neck; hands, arms, and torso; and legs and feet.

Head and neck

You have probably talked to people who say they're fine or happy, but their facial expressions say otherwise. The face is often the most prominent aspect of body language that most people can interpret instinctively—things like wrinkled noses, raised eyebrows, and pursed lips have undeniable connotations. Even microexpressions – small movements that occur almost involuntarily around your mouth and eyes – can suggest anxiety or deceit that other people can pick up on.

But the face is not the only expressive area of your head. Eyebrows say a lot, even if we don't want them to. Your scalp can even convey unintentional meaning—for example, you'll seem frazzled or anxious if you don't have time to brush your hair before leaving the house. And, of course, eye contact is one of the most critical components of body language. You need to have the right amount of eye contact during a conversation. Too

little, and it looks like you're avoiding the other person or not interested in hearing them; too much, and you're staring uncomfortably and giving off aggressive vibes.

Keeping your neck straight, without either staring at the ceiling or slumping toward the floor, is a sign of confidence. However, tilting your head slightly to the side shows interest, empathy, and engagement. The position of your chin is also important—if it's jutting out, you will appear stubborn, while tucking your chin against your neck suggests that you're anxious or uncomfortable.

Hands, arms, and torso

Your arms and hands can say a lot about your state of mind during a conversation. For example, if you're fidgeting and making a lot of hand movements, you come across as bored or nervous. Placing your hands on your hips can make you appear arrogant, while crossing your arms tightly in front of you suggests that you're defensive or angry. Holding your hands with your palms up or facing toward another person is seen as supplicating (asking for something).

There is also your posture to consider. Slumping forward with your shoulders down – whether seated or standing – is typically a signal of low confidence. However, it can come as a request for sympathy when you sag slightly around the shoulders from an erect position. The best way to portray ease and confidence throughout this body region is to stand or sit straight, keep your shoulders back, and fold your hands in your lap to create a neutral position.

Legs and feet

When you're seated and talking to someone, your legs join the conversation. Like crossing your arms, tightly crossing your legs can make

you appear closed-off and defensive. Leaving your legs open can translate as positive body language, but take care that you don't open them wide enough to appear sloppy or sprawled.

The clothes you're wearing can also affect your leg language. If your pants are too tight, or you're a woman wearing a skirt that you're worried is too short, the discomfort or anxiety over your clothing choices will seep into your body language. If you're anxious or nervous in general (not just about your clothing), you may shake your legs—which is almost always seen as nerves. While sitting, the best confident and neutral leg position is to cross them at the ankles.

Feet are more expressive when approaching someone or having a standing conversation. Your gait and stride say a lot—shuffling or stumbling indicates anxiety and reluctance and may even make you seem untrustworthy. The best option is a steady stride combined with good posture. The movement and positioning of your feet while talking to others are also important. Avoid tapping your feet (which makes you seem impatient or bored), and keep them pointed toward the other person. If your feet are pointing away, this shows you want to move in the direction of the nearest exit from the conversation.



Now that we've talked about some of the science behind body language and the basic components involved, the next step is to look at how our body communicates and the critical role that nonverbal communication plays in our interactions with others.

Chapter Two

How Our Bodies Communicate

A conversation is far more than the simple act of exchanging words. Many factors can affect the words used when talking to someone in person – whether at work, at home, or in a social situation. Body language is one of them, but the physical environment also influences the conversation and communication barriers. So, conversations often involve misunderstandings that can slow things down or even stop us from communicating effectively.

Awareness of these factors can help you become a more effective communicator and improve your persuasive skills so that you can learn to shift conversations in your favor regardless of any barriers that may be present. This chapter will look at some of the common communication barriers and explore the importance of non-verbal cues in effectively communicating with others.

What's Keeping You From Communicating?

Communication between humans is not often a straightforward process. Even when we strive to say what we mean, others can misinterpret the

intended message and vice versa. Unfortunately, it is easy to misunderstand what someone else is trying to tell you, usually due to one or more barriers to effective communication.

When it comes to communication barriers, they typically fall into three categories:

- **Physical:** Some common physical barriers to communication include closed doors, non-visual communication styles (phone calls, texts, and emails), and modern workplace conventions such as remote work and social distancing.
- **Emotional:** Negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, and mistrust can override the intended message of a conversation and send the wrong signals on the speaker's part.
- **Language:** Differences in culture, native language, or even dialects and regional idioms can cause problems with communication and lead to misunderstandings.

Some of the most significant barriers to communication that you may encounter include:

- ***Communication style and/or skill level:*** If you are discussing with someone who communicates differently than you—for example, if one person tends to use generalized statements for simplicity while the other speaks in detailed specifics—the intention behind the words can be lost. There may also be issues with understanding the message if a conversation happens between people with different levels of communication skills and experiences.
- ***Information overload:*** When it comes to holding a conversation, too much information can be bad. Many people cannot focus on what is communicated to them when they receive a barrage of details and tangents on a subject. The conversational drift that occurs brings the focus away from the intended message.
- ***Disengaged parties:*** If anyone involved in a conversation has little to no interest in the topic discussed, communication is broken because of

a lack of attention. Undoubtedly, you have experienced this yourself—when someone is talking to you about something you have no interest or personal stake in, your attention wanders. You effectively tune them out, failing at communication.

- ***Lack of trust:*** People tend not to listen to those they don't know or trust. The failure to listen causes disengagement, which leads to a failure to communicate. Learning to read and use body language can be especially helpful in these situations, as you can use body language to create trust and forge connections with people.
- ***Cultural and demographic differences:*** Communication between people from different cultures, backgrounds, and/or age groups can be challenging. Usually, these differences cause a disconnect in understanding that results in miscommunication. This is another reason why body language is so crucial in effective communication.

Understanding the potential barriers to communication in any given situation is one of the first steps you can take toward using body language to enhance your message—and ensure that it's received the first time you speak with someone.

The Many Types of Non-Verbal Communication

There is much more to reading body language than simply deciphering a person's face. Nonverbal communication includes many cues that people give off beyond their words.

Facial expressions

Facial expressions are the most commonly known type of body language and one of the most universally understood. Facial expressions that indicate happiness or sadness, fear, anger, surprise, anxiety, and a wide range of emotions are similar across all cultures and demographics. With an expanded knowledge of body language, you can decipher facial expressions beyond the common emotional cues.

Gestures (hand and arm movements)

While not as universal as facial expressions, gestures play a significant role in non-verbal communication and cross cultures. Gestures can be a powerful way to add meaning to communication. For example, attorneys in court often use gestures while others are speaking. Lawyers may roll their eyes during testimony to suggest that a witness is not credible or look at their watch to signal that witness testimony or the opposing lawyer's discussion is tedious and unnecessary. Of course, one of the most common gestures is during road rage when a person sticks up their middle finger at another to show their anger at the other person's driving.

Posture

A person's posture can suggest quite a bit about their feelings, attitudes, and intentions. There is a noticeable difference in the tone of communication between a person standing straight with relaxed limbs and slumped or leaning away with crossed arms. While in many cases, reading posture suffers from over-interpretation (for example, crossed arms do not always mean that a person is defensive or closed off), posture can indicate general intent.

Proxemics (distance)

An often overlooked aspect of body language is the idea of "personal space." The distance between people having a conversation can indicate the level of interest and personal space they consider their "territory." Someone who stands back and signals reluctance to move closer may be anxious or disengaged from the conversation, or they may be aggressive and attempting to signal dominance.

Paralinguistics

This vocal aspect of non-verbal communication includes all parts of spoken communication separate from the actual words. Paralinguistics refers to factors like the inflection, tone, pitch, and volume of a speaker's voice, indicating many variable meanings. When factoring in paralinguistics, the same spoken words can mean something entirely different.

Haptics (touch)

Touch is a significant part of non-verbal communication. The use of touch during a conversation can mean many things depending on the individual doing the touching. For example, physical contact can be used to convey concern, care, and nurturing; or to assert control or power over someone. People who consider themselves high-status tend to use touch more often and intensely to invade others' personal space.

Appearance

Your overall physical appearance also plays an essential role in non-verbal communication. While most people would like to believe they don't judge others by their appearance, it is an unfortunate fact that humans tend to react to normalized appearance cues, even if it's on a subconscious level. The better dressed and put together a person appears, the more likely we will judge them favorably.

The Five Functions of Non-Verbal Language

Non-verbal communication plays many important roles in conveying the intentions behind our words. The five primary functions of non-verbal cues are:

- **Reinforcement:** Non-verbal communication is used to reinforce the message we intend to send to ensure clarity and make sure others don't misunderstand. For example, if you're wishing someone good luck, you do so with a cheery voice and cheerful, encouraging gestures.

- **Accentuation:** Similar to reinforcement, accentuation acts as a modifier for the message we want to convey. Whereas non-verbal reinforcement is like using descriptive words to expand on a message, accentuation is like adding an exclamation point to indicate the importance of the message. Typically, accentuation is added through exaggerated gestures and speed, and voice volume.
- **Contradiction:** Sometimes, non-verbal cues indicate something opposite to the actual words said. This is an example of contradiction. Body language cues that oppose spoken words are often used when someone is joking or teasing, being sarcastic, or simply does not feel the way they're trying to come across (either consciously or subconsciously). For example, you've probably had a friend or family member tell you that they're fine when it is evident through their body language that they are far from fine.
- **Substitution:** This occurs when non-verbal communication is used instead of actual words. For example, you might wave at someone instead of saying hello or goodbye. If a person is in your personal space, you might glare at them until they back off. Or, when you see or hear something that thrills you, you may respond with excited gestures and an exaggerated smile rather than trying to express your happiness using words.
- **Regulation:** Finally, regulation is when people use non-verbal cues to maintain the flow of a conversation. This includes holding up a hand when someone else is speaking to indicate you have something to say, raising the pitch of your voice to show that you're asking a question, or raising your eyebrows when you're expecting a response from someone.

Non-verbal communication, in all its forms, is critical to human interaction. The full spectrum of non-verbal cues plays a significant role in your life and the lives of others. It can help you improve your communication and convey what you mean to say, persuade others to agree with you, and better understand other people to deepen connections. Conversely, a lack of

knowledge about non-verbal cues and body language can lead to misunderstandings and struggles in many areas of your life.



In the next chapter, we'll look at some specifics of body language to help you improve your body language reading skills and start to communicate with intent.

Chapter Three

Deciphering the Body Language Code

A person's body language can give you a lot of information about what they're feeling and thinking—provided you know what you're looking for. Most people typically subconsciously pick up on the more obvious types of body language signals. Still, there is much more you can “read” from a person when you understand what various gestures, expressions, and other types of non-verbal cues mean.

This chapter will cover tips for reading body language, factor context into your body language analysis, and the specific meanings behind common body language from head to toe.

Overall Tips for Reading Other People's Body Language

Here are some general guidelines to help you interpret body language when communicating with others:

Understand the difference between positive and negative body language.

You can often determine a person's overall feeling during a conversation if you pay attention to whether their body language is positive (loose or relaxed) or negative (tight or tense).

Listen to the pitch. The pitch of a person's voice often changes depending on their mood. Happy people tend toward faster, higher-pitched tones of voice, while unhappy people will speak slowly and lower their volume and pitch.

Check the fingers. The curvature and the grip of a person's fingers can give more clues to their thoughts and feelings. For example, if the fingers are naturally curved, the person is likely relaxed, while stiff fingers can indicate stressful emotions like anxiety or anger. Tight, balled-up fingers or tightening a grip on an object they're holding also shows stress.

Which way do they lean? Many people subconsciously change their proximity according to their interest levels. If they lean close to you, they feel positive and interested. If they lean away, they may be looking to escape the conversation.

Observe their movements. Excessive movement can indicate anxiety, nervousness, or stress—for example, a person is wringing their hands, biting their lip, shaking or jiggling a leg, or showing nervous twitches or ticks.

Determine their smile type. According to body language expert, Dr. David Matsumoto, smiles come in a few different varieties. Genuine smiles typically reveal teeth and reach the eyes. Polite smiles are usually closed-mouth and move only the lips. Dominant smiles (smiling with one corner of the mouth) may signal condescension or confidence.

Why Context Matters

It's important to consider the context of the conversation itself and the surrounding environment when reading another person's body language. As mentioned previously, crossed arms do not always indicate defensiveness.

In some contexts, it could mean anxiety or nerves, or it may be demonstrating power or confidence. A person with crossed arms also might just be cold.

Another important way context matters is that in addition to figuring out what certain gestures and body stances mean, you'll often have to determine *why* the other person is transmitting a specific mood. For example, someone leaning away from you with crossed arms is probably uncomfortable, but the reason for their discomfort might be any number of things. Perhaps they don't like the topic of conversation, they might have an upset stomach, or they might have noticed something they aren't comfortable pointing out (like your fly is down or you have food in your teeth).

Consider the conversation you're having, the person's recent experiences, and the surrounding environment to apply context while reading a person's body language. If you notice a reason the other person may be uncomfortable besides the conversation itself, try removing the potential problem to see if it helps them relax.

Body Language from Head to Toe

So what, exactly, does body language mean? Below is our head-to-toe body language glossary that will help you interpret other people's body language to read their intentions, achieve better communication, and hold persuasive conversations.

Eye Contact and Facial Cues

You've probably heard that you need to maintain eye contact to show interest and get what you want. Conversely, you may have heard that failure to make eye contact means a person is lying.

One of these things is sort of true, while the other is not true at all.

Strong eye contact is a gesture of intimidation. You've most likely experienced – at some point in your life – a person who stares at you and simply does not (or will not) look away. You remembering this means you recall how uncomfortable it made you feel. Maintaining eye contact is an expression of intensity, whether the person is intentionally trying to intimidate or wants to make a point.

However, all body language needs context. For example, prolonged direct eye contact at a business meeting may be someone's attempt to get another person to back down. In contrast, long gazes between two dating people may signify high-interest levels.

On the other hand, a person who averts their gaze or refuses to make eye contact is uncomfortable. Many people assume that gaze aversion equates to lying, but the person may not like the topic of conversation or the answer they have to give.

Here are a few additional body language tips for reading eyes and facial expressions:

- Raised eyebrows indicate some level of interest and an invitation for the speaker to continue
- Squinting and eye twitching convey some level of discomfort (again, reading the context of the situation is essential here)
- A person who covers their eyes is bothered by something and doesn't want to talk about it
- Wrinkled noses are an indication of a suggested dislike
- If someone purses their lips, they disagree with what was said and may be thinking of some alternative that's more agreeable

Head Signals

The head tilt is among the most powerful when it comes to head movements and body language. A tilted head signifies interest and engagement with the conversation. If you're speaking to someone and they tilt their head, it's almost certain that they want to hear what you have to say.

Other common body language tells for the head area include:

- Nodding means the person agrees with what you're saying (this is common across all cultures)—or it may simply indicate empathy or encouragement. Again, this depends on the context of the conversation.
- A bowed head is often a sign of respect, greeting, or an indication that the person wants you to lead the conversation.
- Head shaking can mean “no,” or it might mean the person wants to clarify something, for example: “Yes, but what about....”
- Typically, a shrugging of the shoulders means that the person doesn't know or is not prepared to contribute to the conversation at this point. Depending on the other cues that the person is giving, it may also mean “I don't care.”

Arms, Hands, and Gestures

As discussed above in the section on body language myths, arm and hand gestures are often essential for human communication—and folded arms don't always mean that a person is closed off. Loosely folded arms with space between the arms and body can often indicate that a person is entirely comfortable, even happy with the direction of the conversation.

Other elements of hand and arm body language include:

- If a person's hands are folded tightly together, they are nervous or lack confidence about the situation. It's important to distinguish between confidence in a situation and confidence in oneself—as many people mistake discomfort with certain social situations for a lack of self-confidence.

- Steepled hands—hands held straight with fingertips leaned in and touching at the top, whether held out in front of a person while standing or propped up with elbows while sitting—are the most universally recognizable body language sign of confidence.
- If a person's hands or fingers are stiff and rubbing against each other with interwoven fingers, this indicates very high levels of discomfort.

The All-Important Handshake

The handshake is a traditional greeting between two strangers in many countries, especially in the United States. A handshake is typically a large part of the critical first impression we form when meeting someone. It's also the first time we make physical contact with a person, and at this moment, our bodies release bonding chemicals that may be accepted or rejected, depending on the nature of the handshake.

Many people still adhere to the idea that a “strong, firm handshake” is the best option. However, if you have been the victim of an overenthusiastic hand-pumping, you know it's more than possible to overdo “strong and firm.” Conversely, a limp handshake or one that's unpleasant to the touch can generate immediate, instinctual dislike—even if everything else about the person is great.

A person's handshake can tell you whether they are confident, nervous, uncertain, or trying too hard. If you're receiving a handshake and the person exerts a pressure equal to yours while smiling and leaning slightly forward, they view you as an equal and are happy to meet you.

When it comes to poor handshakes:

- If they put too much pressure on them, they are likely trying to assert their dominance.
- If the handshake is clammy, cold, or weak, chances are the person is acutely nervous (or physically ill)

- Awkward handshakes can mean that the person is socially inexperienced, is exhibiting cultural differences, or for whatever reason, did not want to shake hands in the first place.

Stance, Positioning, and Posture

What can you tell from where and how a person is standing? Quite a bit! Here are a few examples:

If a person stands or sits close to you while talking, it's typically an indication that they feel comfortable with you. Conversely, if they settle further away or back off when you approach.

Someone placing their hands on their hips is often confident or about to take assertive action. However, the meaning varies depending on the context. People waiting to start something (such as someone on the fringes of a conversation they haven't yet joined) may place their hands on their hips. This gesture may also indicate boredom, which is also readiness—to find a point where they can exit the conversation.

Mirroring is among the most powerful facets of body language. When one person is subtly copying the positions and gestures during a conversation (either consciously or subconsciously), they convey empathy, understanding, and a willingness to listen to the other. If someone mirrors you while you talk to them, they're on your side.

Leg and Foot Movements

The lower body, particularly the feet, can be the strongest indicator of true intent in body language. Some examples include:

- Bouncing or jiggling one or both legs is usually a self-soothing behavior, similar to crossed arms, and often means the person is trying to calm and reassure themselves.
- A person standing with one foot pointed away may be looking for a graceful exit from the conversation.

- Crossed ankles or kicking feet often indicate concern or nervousness with the direction of the conversation.
- Feet pointed toward something almost always mean interest, while feet that are angled away or withdrawn nearly always mean disinterested.

Clothing and Appearance

The phrase “dress for success” (sometimes presented in further, context-specific detail, such as “dress for the job you want, rather than the job you have”) refers to this powerful aspect of body language. A person’s choice of clothing and grooming habits can say a lot about their thoughts, attitudes, and intentions toward a given situation.

Reading this type of body language is usually straightforward—a person who is well-dressed with carefully groomed hair is confident and projects an air of competence (deliberately or as a habit). At the same time, someone whose clothing and overall presentation are less polished may reflect lower levels of interest or care (although it’s important to note that in some cases, a less-than-perfect appearance is more an indication of economic standing than deliberate confidence).

It’s essential to pay attention to context regarding clothing and overall appearance. People who are not well-dressed or meticulously groomed may simply feel relaxed, casual, and comfortable in their surroundings—and conversely, those dressed to the nines may be doing so as a conscious effort to impress rather than an everyday routine.



Reading the body language of others is only half of the equation for success. In the next chapter, we’ll discuss how you can use your body

language to become an expert communicator and help you persuade others to get what you want.

Chapter Four

Winning with Body Language

Confidence is a primary key to success in all areas of your life. Those who project confidence are typically listened to and admired more often, have a more significant influence on people, and gain access to more resources than their less confident peers. Whether it's your career or personal life, a show of confidence can accomplish many things.

Of course, not everyone feels confident in what they're doing at any given time. The good news is that you can learn to “fake it ‘til you make it” by using your body language to project confidence — and with practice, you can come to feel as confident as you look.

How Does Projecting Self-Confidence Work?

When you appear confident, most people will assume that what you have to say is worth listening to. Remember that body language and non-verbal cues are critical in communication, which means that sometimes *what* you're saying is not as important as *how* you say it.

Your tone, phrasing, and body language all play a role in conveying confidence. For example, let's say that a friend is telling you about a new

restaurant they've been to after you asked for a recommendation on a good place to get dinner. If your friend is slouched away with crossed arms and speaking slowly and quietly, with a lot of pauses and shrugs and filler words such as "um" and "like," and says: "Well, I went to, um, George's restaurant and they ... I mean, the chili was great," you probably won't try that restaurant.

On the other hand, if your friend is standing straight, looking you in the eye and gesturing while speaking loudly and with excitement: "Well, I went to George's restaurant, and the chili was great!"—the chances are high that you'll not only go to George's restaurant for dinner, but you'll look forward to it. If you agree with your friend's assessment about the food, you'll value that friend's opinion more.

People believe you know what you're talking about when you speak clearly and use non-verbal cues to project confidence. This type of confidence is a special skill, and it's one that you can learn with practice. Just as importantly, you will *be* more confident — not only because you're projecting it – but also because you'll respond subconsciously to the way people treat you when *they* believe you're confident.

Six Tips for Delivering a Winning Show of Confidence

How can you portray a greater sense of confidence through your body language? One way is to work on your tone and patterns of speech. Practice speaking clearly and with more volume (though not *too* loud, as you don't want to come across like you're shouting), and work on eliminating filler words and pauses from your speech.

As for how you hold yourself, here are six body language tricks to help you showcase confidence and become a persuasive communicator:

Maintain the right eye contact: Eye contact is one of the most critical components of confident communication. It can also be a difficult balance to get right. You want to hold eye contact with the other person, but not for so long that it seems intense or intimidating (or creepy). One way to keep eye contact steady without turning it into a staring match is to shift your focus after a few seconds from the other person's eyes to their nose, mouth, and face on a rotating basis before returning to the eyes. Continuing this rotation keeps your attention on the other person throughout the conversation while not staring into their eyes constantly.

Hold your head up: The expression "keep your chin up" traditionally refers to being brave, but it can also apply to confidence. If you watch a confident person speaking, you may notice that they keep their head and chin up and never look down at their feet, the ground, or even at a table or desk if they're seated during a conversation. This gesture is similar to eye contact in that it shows you're giving your full attention to the other person.

Strike the right stance: What does a confident stance look like? You will always appear confident when standing straight with your shoulders rolled back. Maintaining good posture is an excellent way to project confidence. Keep your feet planted on the ground and about a foot apart to align with your hips and shoulders. Make sure your feet are pointing toward the person you're talking to rather than in a direction that indicates you want to escape the conversation.

Know how to hold your hands: By now, you know to avoid crossing your arms, but you should also prevent yourself from shoving your hands in your pockets. This movement suggests discomfort or uncertainty and will undermine your confidence. However, there is one hands-in-pockets pose that is an exception. According to former FBI agent and body language

expert Joe Navarro, placing your hands in your pockets with your thumbs out is a power move that projects vast confidence.

Choose interested over interesting: People love to talk about themselves. When you give them that opportunity, rather than dominating the conversation by telling them all about you, they will find you confident that you don't *have* to talk about yourself. Focus more on what the other person is saying and practice active listening, and you will automatically appear more confident.

Give steepling a shot: Steepled hands—hands held straight with fingertips leaned in and touching at the top, whether held out in front of a person while standing or propped up with elbows while sitting—is the most universally recognizable body language sign of the confidence we have. You may want to practice this gesture until it comes naturally to you to project peak confidence.

Using body language to boost your confidence is a great way to achieve your life goals and attain success. You should also keep in mind that reading other people's body language represents the other half of the equation for success. When you can interpret what others are saying beyond their words, you can respond more effectively and lead conversations where you want them to go.



In the next chapter, we'll look at making deeper connections through reading others' body language and responding appropriately.

Chapter Five

Making Deeper Connections

The greater your connection is with a person, the more likely they are to be interested in what you have to say—and the more likely you will be able to persuade them. Having a greater understanding of body language can help you create meaningful connections quickly and gain the trust of the person you're speaking to, even if you're meeting them for the first time.

Part of making deeper connections with people is the use of active listening. And when you combine active listening skills with body language analysis, you can accomplish great things as a communicator. This chapter will talk about using active listening skills and ways to read what other people tell you through their body language.

What is Active Listening?

As the name suggests, active listening involves putting a concerted effort into listening to another person when they're talking to you. There are plenty of benefits to the practice of active listening — it helps you communicate more effectively with fewer misunderstandings, become a

better negotiator, make an excellent impression on everyone you meet, and develop more profound and more successful relationships.

When you engage in active listening, you'll focus on more than what a person is saying. This is where your body language skills will come in handy. The first part of active listening should be self-evident, but we'll mention it: *do not* do anything else while talking with another person. This includes not checking your phone, looking at nearby clocks or televisions, or investigating what other people around you are doing. Your focus should be solely on the other person involved in the conversation.

While listening, you should consciously analyze what you hear and read the person's emotions, intentions, and any context clues surrounding the conversation. Additionally, you'll need to ensure that the other person *knows* you're listening by displaying non-verbal cues and strategic acknowledgments that demonstrate you genuinely hear what they're trying to say.

How to Use Active Listening in Your Conversations

It can take practice to use active listening effectively. The following tips will help you improve your active listening techniques so you can form instant connections with others:

Practice paying attention. It's easy in theory to say you'll stop looking at your phone, the television, or whatever might distract you from a conversation, but harder to put into practice, especially when it comes to phones. Most people are so used to constantly accessing their cell phones that they often don't notice when they look at them. The best way to break yourself of this habit is to put your phone away when talking to someone.

For planned conversations, you may want to silence your notifications entirely so that you're not interrupted.

Demonstrate that you're listening. Some people believe that they can “trick” someone into believing that they're paying attention as long as they maintain eye contact. This belief is not true. Others can tell when your eyes glaze over and your mind wanders away from the conversation. In addition to making eye contact, you should nod when appropriate and offer short verbal comments such as “yes” or “huh” while the other person speaks. However, don't interrupt the conversation just to repeat what they said, as this can derail the flow of your talk.

Offer appropriate feedback. Typically, there are points in a conversation where you'll have the opportunity to give your thoughts. You might, for example, ask follow-up questions, reflect on what the other person has just said, or provide your perspective on the issue. When you are actively listening, you'll be better prepared when the person who's speaking says, “What do you think about X?”

Avoid jumping to conclusions. If you get confused, upset, or concerned about what someone tells you, take a breath before reacting negatively. Instead of assuming, ask the person to clarify by rephrasing what you *think* they mean. For example, you might say, “It seems like you're saying X, and I just wanted to check. Did you mean Y?” This way, you won't make any assumptions that could be wrong, and the other person will not get offended by your assumption.

Common Body Language Cues That Other People are Sending You

There are plenty of things you can read from the body language of others that will help you understand them better and make deeper connections. What can you learn from other people's body language? Here are some common clusters of body language actions that can help you determine what people may be trying to tell you beyond the words they're saying.

When someone is confident:

- Strong, solid eye contact
- Walks with purpose and intent
- Relaxed facial features
- Wide open arms and flowing hand movements
- A firm handshake (but not too strong)

When someone is defensive:

- Almost no eye contact with a downcast gaze
- Small hand gestures that stay close to the body
- Neutral facial expression
- Crossed arms
- Physically turns away from you while talking or listening

If someone is nervous or uncertain:

- Looks away frequently, unable to maintain eye contact
- Clenched fists and jerky hand movements
- Tight or tense facial expression
- Closely folded arms
- Tentative stride and a weak handshake

If someone is thinking (before they respond to you):

- Hand on cheek and/or fingers touching chin
- Broken eye contact that returns when responding
- Head tilted at an angle

- Gaze pointed into the distance or upward
- Drumming fingers on a table with gaze pointed into the distance or upward

If someone is bored or inattentive:

- Little to no eye contact as they focus on something else
- Glazed or unfocused eyes
- The head may be down
- Fidgeting with hands, feet, or objects
- Slumped while seated in a chair

Body Language Myths to Be Aware Of

In a previous chapter, we talked about how crossed arms do not always mean that a person is closed off or defensive. Instead, you must read the context and body language so that you don't make incorrect assumptions.

When reading body language, be sure to take in everything about the other person, including their actual words and nonverbal signals. If you're not sure what a particular gesture or movement means, ask questions or make suggestions so you can clarify the problem if one exists. While arm crossing is a commonly misunderstood component of body language, it's not the only one. Here are some other body language myths you should know about:

When a person looks up, the direction of their eyes indicates whether or not they're lying. A popular theory developed by NLP experts suggested that a person looking up and to the left is telling the truth while looking up to the right means lying. This theory was based on the left-brain/right-brain theory that the left brain is analytical and logical, while the right brain is

creative—and therefore, looking up and to the right suggests that you’re creating a lie.

However, this concept has been disproven in at least three separate studies. When a person looks up during a conversational pause, they simply process the information they’ve just received.

It’s important to note that this finding has not invalidated NLP as a theory. Many NLP techniques and practices effectively analyze other people through their body language and applications for use in persuasive conversations. You can learn more about NLP techniques in our book *How to Analyze People*.

The Pinocchio Effect: Touching your nose (covering your mouth, or clearing your throat) means lying. Fortunately for those who tend to touch our noses in a pacifying gesture, like crossing our arms, the Pinocchio effect simply does not exist. Science has found no concrete way to prove whether or not someone is lying through their body language. Even lie detector tests are inconclusive at best.

In many cases, body language can suggest whether or not a person is generally honest as a rule. However, it can’t function as a lie detector.

People who gesture a lot while talking are exaggerating/unprofessional.

Many of us have witnessed “the animated speaker.” The person (or people) we all know whose arms and hands fly all over the place while they’re talking. Somehow, society has led us to believe that people who gesture as they speak must be exaggerating, making a bigger deal out of whatever they’re telling us than it is. In workplace situations, big-gesture talkers are often unable to communicate because they’re “cheating” using hand gestures instead of the right words. At the same time, those who speak with minimal movement are viewed as poised and professional.

The truth is that gestures are helpful for both the speaker and the listener. Watching someone speak with hand gestures improves your ability to track and interpret what is said on the listening end. And on the speaking end, gestures help to “power up” your thoughts, allowing you to gain conversational momentum and decrease the number of uhs, ums, and awkward pauses in your speech.

“Power posing” changes your blood chemistry. If you stand with your feet spread and your hands on your hips, does it decrease your cortisol levels and boost testosterone? The common belief that it does began when social psychologist Amy Cuddy gave a TED talk about her research findings, indicating that when people take an expansive stance, they feel more powerful. While power posing can affect you psychologically, the idea that is simply changing your stance causes a change in hormone levels is up for debate. Other research groups have been unable to reproduce Cuddy’s findings—although most have agreed that while it’s not chemical, the psychological effects remain.



In the next chapter, we’ll go over some practical tips for using body language in your everyday life that you can put into practice now to read and persuade others and achieve the success you want in your life.

Chapter Six

Everyday Body Language Practices You Can Use

Now that you're more familiar with body language, how can you put that knowledge into practice? This chapter will discuss actions that you can take every day to help you become a better communicator by using and understanding non-verbal cues when speaking to others.

How Improving Your Body Language Helps You Communicate

Here's one example: If you're a parent, you know that there are times when you don't want to listen to your child—and not because of anything the child has done. Instead, you may be exhausted or in a bad mood because of something that has nothing to do with your child. You would still want to hear what your child says in these circumstances, but your body language may suggest otherwise.

With greater awareness of your body language, you can communicate a willingness to listen to your child even when you're not fully “in the mood.” Choosing one aspect of your feelings over the other is that you are frustrated or upset about something, but you also want to hear what's bothering your child. So, you choose to focus on body language that

communicates openness and interest while suppressing the “tells” that indicate disinterest, annoyance, or frustration.

This same type of body language adjustment applies when speaking with a spouse, a friend, a family member, or any other person you care about and want to show interest in. You may not be feeling in the best mood to talk, but you still want to offer your support, emphasizing one desire over the other.

Another example is when you meet someone and want to make a first impression that shows you’re interested in them and desire to know them better—but you are nervous about meeting them. This type of situation often happens: during interviews, when meeting a higher-up at work, on first dates, or even being introduced to the friend of a friend that you hope will join your circle.

Just as with the previous example, you’ll want to highlight one aspect of your feelings over another. You can choose to demonstrate that you’re happy and excited about meeting this new person rather than allowing your body language to indicate your level of nervousness.

Improving your own body language does not equate to deception or manipulation. Instead, it allows you to be more in control of the messages you’re sending at all times, so you can be on your way to becoming a master communicator.

Everyday Tips for Improving Your Own Body Language

The more you know about analyzing people through body language, the easier it will be to recognize and adjust your own. We hope that this book helps you improve your understanding of the many ways you can read body language!

In any given situation, be aware of what you are feeling (or will be feeling) and choose to emphasize the most important aspect of your feelings/desires through your body language. For example, you're both excited and nervous to meet someone new, emphasizing your excitement.

One powerful way to analyze your body language is to record a video of yourself speaking, such as at a work meeting or with a trusted friend. Here's a helpful tip: if you play the video back at 2x the normal speed, your gestures and body language will jump out, allowing you to identify your personal "tells" and work on them. You can also use this technique to analyze the body language of others.

Here's another power tip for using body language to impress others: Whenever you walk into a room, wave to someone and smile. You can do this even if you don't know anyone present—just wave toward a corner of the room, offer a smile, and you can even mouth something (for example, "I'll be right there"). This action suggests you're someone who knows people, and it will make you immediately more likable.

How to “Speed Read” Body Language for Improved Results

“Practice makes perfect” is an old saying for a reason. It's true, and it works.

The more you practice anything, the better you'll get at it. This concept also applies to reading other people through body language. Once you have a strong understanding of body language analysis, your reading of people will improve when you use and apply this knowledge in everyday life.

Try to use your knowledge of body language as often as possible in your everyday life. Pay attention to your conversations with others and watch their body language as you do. You can also practice interpreting body

language by watching other people converse and interact (however, be sure to adjust your body language, so you don't appear creepily intent on other people's conversations!).

There are also some ways you can learn to speed-read body language right from the start before you've put in the hours of practice. Here are a few tips to help you do that:

- Don't immediately try to focus on microexpressions and tiny gestures that may indicate some secret intent on the other person during a conversation. Instead, focus on the "big picture" of what they're saying—whether they are smiling and nodding, maintaining eye contact, leaning toward you, backing away, failing to look at you directly, or pointing their feet opposite.
- Work on relaxing your body language during awkward conversations. This is one of the strongest advances you can make in body language reading—because if you're able to relax, the person you're having a challenging conversation with will start to relax. You're both free to get to the point and make real progress.
- Follow your instincts. Even when you learn body language in more detail, your body will still have a "gut reaction" to other people's body language. If you try to force what you think you know above what you subconsciously believe, there's a high chance that you will end up both sending and receiving mixed signals.
- Use techniques that help make the person or people you're talking to receptive, especially if your audience is guarded, mistrustful, or striving for a poker face. If you feel that you're not getting an accurate read on someone's body language, you can try doing something unexpected to snap them out of it. For example, if the other person isn't offering anything, you might gently tease them about how "talkative" they are. Another way to provoke a reaction is to throw a sudden shift in the conversation by asking a random and interesting question (such as, "If you had a million dollars but could only keep it if you spent it in 24 hours, what would you buy?").

With daily practice, you will find yourself more confident, more connected to others, and more persuasive than ever!

Final Words

Even when we're not saying a single word, we constantly communicate. Suppose you're sitting alone in a restaurant to enjoy a meal, and you're not interested in striking up small talk with a stranger. In that case, you will subconsciously signal disinterest whenever someone comes within conversation range—you'll avert your gaze, turn away in your chair, or even suddenly find something interesting on your phone.

On the other hand, if you're sitting alone in a restaurant because your car broke down and hoping someone can help you, your signals will be different. You'll appear distressed rather than disinterested, and you will look at everyone who comes within conversation range. Through the power of body language, you can communicate all these things.

Body language is truly incredible. Not only can you read the body language of others to help you better understand them and make faster, more robust connections, but you can also use body language to project confidence, trust, and openness that will help you improve communications and hold more persuasive conversations.

Reading body language is incredibly useful in a variety of situations. It can help you improve your career, relationships, and life overall. The ability to read body language is an often-overlooked skill that can significantly impact your well-being in all areas if you learn how to read it correctly.

When you incorporate these practices into your everyday life, you will soon notice a difference in how other people regard you and how you view yourself. We hope that you've learned a lot from this book and that you're ready to go out and put your new skills to use to achieve great things!