

# Table of Contents

## ***Introduction..... 1***

|                                                                  |   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| About This Book.....                                             | 2 |
| Conventions Used in This Book .....                              | 2 |
| Foolish Assumptions .....                                        | 2 |
| How This Book Is Organised.....                                  | 3 |
| Part I: In the Beginning Was the Gesture .....                   | 3 |
| Part II: Starting at the Top .....                               | 3 |
| Part III: The Trunk: Limbs and Roots .....                       | 3 |
| Part IV: Putting the Body into Social and Business Context ..... | 3 |
| Part V: The Part of Tens.....                                    | 4 |
| Icons Used in This Book .....                                    | 4 |
| Where to Go from Here.....                                       | 5 |

## ***Part 1: In the Beginning Was the Gesture..... 7***

### ***Chapter 1: Defining Body Language..... 9***

|                                                            |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Discovering How Body Language Conveys Messages.....        | 9  |
| Projecting an image in the first 30 seconds .....          | 10 |
| Transmitting messages unconsciously.....                   | 11 |
| Substituting behaviour for the spoken word.....            | 12 |
| Gesturing to illustrate what you're saying .....           | 13 |
| Physically supporting the spoken word.....                 | 14 |
| Revealing thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs .....           | 15 |
| Key Types of Gestures .....                                | 17 |
| Unintentional gestures.....                                | 17 |
| Signature gestures: Gestures that define who you are ..... | 19 |
| Fake gestures: Pulling the wool .....                      | 21 |
| Micro gestures: A little gesture means a lot.....          | 22 |
| Displacement gestures.....                                 | 23 |
| Universal gestures .....                                   | 24 |
| Getting the Most Out of Body Language .....                | 26 |
| Becoming spatially aware.....                              | 27 |
| Anticipating movements .....                               | 27 |
| Creating rapport through reflecting gestures.....          | 28 |
| Becoming who you want to be .....                          | 28 |
| Reading the signs and responding appropriately .....       | 30 |
| Appreciating Cultural Differences.....                     | 31 |

**Part III: The Trunk: Limbs and Roots..... 105****Chapter 7: Take It From the Torso .....107**

|                                                              |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Gaining Insights into the Impact of Posture .....            | 107 |
| Evaluating what your own posture says about you.....         | 109 |
| Showing intensity of feelings .....                          | 110 |
| Revealing personality and character .....                    | 113 |
| Three Main Types of Posture.....                             | 114 |
| Standing.....                                                | 114 |
| Sitting.....                                                 | 115 |
| Lying down.....                                              | 116 |
| Changing Attitudes by Changing Posture .....                 | 116 |
| Using Posture to Aid Communication .....                     | 117 |
| Showing high and low status through postural positions ..... | 118 |
| Leaning forward to show interest and liking .....            | 119 |
| Shrugging Signals .....                                      | 120 |
| Signalling lack of knowledge .....                           | 121 |
| Showing unwillingness to get involved.....                   | 122 |
| Implying a submissive apology.....                           | 123 |

**Chapter 8: Arming Yourself ..... 125**

|                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Building Defensive Barriers.....                 | 125 |
| Arms crossed on your chest.....                  | 126 |
| Touching yourself: tags, strokes, and more ..... | 129 |
| Holding objects in front of yourself .....       | 130 |
| Giving the cold shoulder.....                    | 131 |
| Conveying Friendliness and Honesty .....         | 131 |
| Touching to Convey Messages .....                | 133 |
| Creating a bond .....                            | 134 |
| Demonstrating dominance.....                     | 135 |
| Reinforcing the message.....                     | 136 |
| Increasing your influence .....                  | 137 |
| Embracing during greetings and departures .....  | 138 |

**Chapter 9: It's in the Palm of Your Hand .....139**

|                                                 |     |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Up or Down: Reading Palms .....                 | 139 |
| The open palm.....                              | 140 |
| The downward facing palm.....                   | 143 |
| Closed-palm, finger-pointed.....                | 144 |
| Hands Up! .....                                 | 145 |
| Hiding your hands .....                         | 145 |
| The hand rub: Good for you or good for me?..... | 146 |
| The folded hand .....                           | 147 |
| Hands clenched .....                            | 147 |
| Letting the Fingers Do the Talking .....        | 150 |
| The precision grip .....                        | 150 |
| The power grip .....                            | 152 |

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 15 of 337

|                                                                         |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Negotiating Styles .....                                                | 239        |
| Claiming your space.....                                                | 240        |
| Displaying confidence.....                                              | 242        |
| Avoiding nervous gestures.....                                          | 242        |
| <b>Chapter 15: Crossing the Cultural Divide .....</b>                   | <b>245</b> |
| Greetings and Farewells .....                                           | 246        |
| Expecting to be touched.....                                            | 246        |
| Acknowledging the no-touching rule .....                                | 247        |
| A word about waving farewell .....                                      | 248        |
| Higher and Lower Status Behaviour.....                                  | 248        |
| Bowing, kneeling, and curtsying.....                                    | 248        |
| Standing to attention .....                                             | 249        |
| Positioning and Setting Boundaries.....                                 | 249        |
| Common Gestures, Multiple Interpretations .....                         | 251        |
| Thumbs up .....                                                         | 251        |
| The 'okay' sign.....                                                    | 251        |
| Laughter .....                                                          | 252        |
| Smoothing Over Difficult Situations .....                               | 253        |
| Playing by the Local Rules: Eye Contact .....                           | 254        |
| Adapting Your Style for Cross-Cultural Communication .....              | 255        |
| <b>Chapter 16: Reading the Signs .....</b>                              | <b>257</b> |
| Finding an Interest in Other People.....                                | 257        |
| Drawing Conclusions from What You Observe .....                         | 259        |
| Looking at the sum total of the gestures.....                           | 259        |
| Dealing with a mismatch between spoken<br>and non-verbal messages ..... | 260        |
| Considering the context .....                                           | 261        |
| Practice Makes Perfect: Improving Your Reading.....                     | 262        |
| <b>Part V: The Part of Tens .....</b>                                   | <b>263</b> |

## **Chapter 17: Ten Ways to Spot Deception .....**

|                                                      |     |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Catching Fleeting Expressions Crossing the Face..... | 265 |
| Suppressing Facial Expressions .....                 | 266 |
| Eyeing Someone Up .....                              | 266 |
| Covering the Source of Deception .....               | 267 |
| Touching the Nose .....                              | 268 |
| Faking a Smile .....                                 | 268 |
| Minimising Hand Gestures .....                       | 269 |
| Maximising Body Touches .....                        | 269 |
| Shifting Positions and Fidgeting Feet .....          | 270 |
| Changing Speech Patterns .....                       | 270 |

### *In this part .*

**H**ere's where we explore the foundations of body language, the way of silently communicating that can improve your impact factor and relationships once you grasp even the basics. In this part we go back in time to the origins of body language, how it's evolved, and its subtle power.

## Chapter 1

# Defining Body Language

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Finding out how body language speaks for you
- ▶ Gesturing for a purpose
- ▶ Understanding what you're communicating

The science of body language is a fairly recent study, dating primarily from around 60 years ago, although body language itself is, of course, as old as humans. Psychologists, zoologists, and social anthropologists have conducted detailed research into the components of body language – part of the larger family known as non-verbal behaviour.

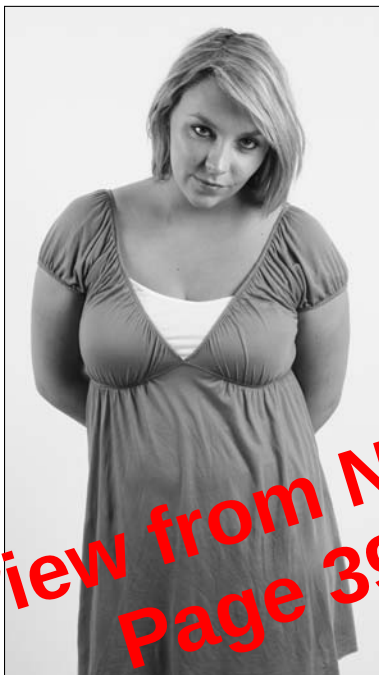
If you're quiet for a moment and take the time to pay attention to body language movements and expressions that silently communicate messages of their own, you realise just how much you rely on gestures that convey a feeling and transmit a thought. If you pay close attention, you can identify gestures that you automatically associate with another person, which tell you who she is. In addition, you may notice other types of gestures that reveal a person's inner state at that moment.

In this chapter you discover how to interpret non-verbal language, exploring the gestures and actions that reveal thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. Also, you have a quick glance at some of the research into this unspoken language and recognise similarities and differences throughout the world. In addition, you find out how you can use gestures to enhance your relationships and improve your communication.

## *Discovering How Body Language Conveys Messages*

When cave-dwellers discovered how to decipher grunts and to create words to convey their message, their lives became a lot more complex. Before verbal communication, they relied on their bodies to communicate. Their simple brains informed their faces, torsos, and limbs. They instinctively

One of Diana, Princess of Wales's most vividly remembered signature gesture's was the head lowered, eyes looking upward, now known as the Shy Di look (see Figure 1-5).



**Figure 1-5:**

A downward tilted head and upcast eyes looks vulnerable and pleading.



Sophie is a delightful woman in her early twenties. Pretty, vivacious, and polite, Sophie's signature gesture is thumb-sucking. I first noticed this gesture when she spent several days at our home. Curled up on the couch, Sophie slipped her right thumb into her mouth, lightly rubbing her nose with her index finger. Claire, a woman in her forties, also sucks her thumb. Her variation on this gesture is a small piece of soft fabric that she rubs in the palm of her cupped hand.



Toby, my personal assistant, is a quiet, thoughtful, focused man. I'm highly energetic with a mind that skips and leaps from one project to the next. Frequently, I ask Toby to do one task, only to interrupt his concentration by asking him to do something else, often unrelated. When Toby pats his eyebrows with the tips of his fingers I know that the time's come for me to back off and let him get on with what he has to do.

While speaking on the phone to my soon-to-be ex-husband I lit another cigarette which, after a drag or two, I stubbed out in the ashtray on my desk. I went to the bathroom to get ready for work. Here, too, I lit a cigarette, which I occasionally puffed on as I applied my make-up. In the course of less than 10 minutes I had lit three cigarettes, none of which I was interested in smoking.

Rather than stating their feelings verbally, people demonstrating displacement activities are letting their gestures reveal their emotion.



Prince Charles is noted for fiddling with his cufflinks. He crosses his arm over his body and touches his cufflinks in a protective and reassuring gesture. The Prince is displacing his anxiety by making contact with his cufflinks. On honeymoon with Diana, the late Princess of Wales, Charles is purported to have worn cufflinks given to him by his current wife, the Duchess of Cornwall. No wonder that his young bride was upset when she discovered this wedding gift of gold cufflinks with entwined Cs. Especially when she saw him fondling them.

Words convey information. Gestures reveal attitude. If someone's feeling anxious she may fiddle with her keys, twist the ring on her finger, or pull at her clothes to compensate for her anxiety.



If you see someone under pressure and being confused, look to see what her hands are doing. If she's gently rubbing her stomach, you may assume that she's feeling the pressure and is calming and comforting himself, the way you comfort a baby or sick child.

## Universal gestures

Universal gestures, such as blushing, smiling, and the wide-eyed expression of fear, mean the same thing across world cultures. These gestures stem from human biological make-up, which is why you can recognise them spanning the globe.

### Smiling

From the sands of Iraq to the shores of Malibu, humans are born with the ability to smile. From the earliest days in an infant's life, her facial muscles can form the upward turn of the lips and the crinkling around the outer edges of the eyes to create a recognisable smile.

Sure, each person may have her own unique way of smiling. The point remains that anyone with working facial muscles who's conveying a positive message lifts her lips in pleasure.

When you see the sides of the lips turned up and the eyes crinkling at their outer edges, count on that smile being genuine in showing pleasure.



The Japanese smile in embarrassment as well as pleasure. Young women giggle behind their hands. Don't expect the Japanese to respond to your humour with a raucous, belly laugh.

### ***Blushing***

If you blush, your embarrassment's showing. The blood flows to your chest and cheeks, and you want to drop down and hide. Go to Thailand, go to Alabama, or any country: You see this gesture everywhere when embarrassment takes over.



To control the blushing take several slow, deep breaths from your diaphragm to steady your nerves and control the blood flow.



My Aunt MarNell lives in Dallas, Texas and is the perfect combination of cow-girl and southern belle. When Dad, MarNell's only sibling and adored brother, raised his glass in special toast to her, her cheeks flushed like a young girl's.

### ***Crying***

Crying is a universal sign of sadness. One of an infant's first actions is to let out a wailing great cry when she first enters this world, having been torn from the comfort and safety of her mother's womb. No one had to teach her, she was born knowing how.



If you feel tears well up in your eyes and you want to stop them from flowing down your face, fix your gaze at that point where the ceiling and wall meet.

### ***Shrugging***

Shrugging is a gesture that people use when they need to protect themselves in some way. The full shrug is when your head dips into your rising shoulders, the sides of your mouth turn down, your palms turn upwards, and you raise your eyebrows.

The shrug can indicate

- ✓ Indifference
- ✓ Disdain
- ✓ Unknowing
- ✓ Embarrassment



## Generating information through nodding

Research shows that listeners who nod their heads frequently during an interaction can prompt the speaker to generate three to four times more information than when there's no head movement. Experienced interviewers

employ the head nodding technique to obtain additional information and longer discussions, thus making the sessions more effective and productive.

TRY THIS



Start a conversation with someone you know well. As she speaks, nod your head in encouragement. See what effect your head movements have. Then stop nodding all together and observe her reactions.

## Showing understanding

Although the slow head nod encourages the speaker to continue, shifting gears and speeding up your nodding indicates that you understand what she's saying. The fast head nod has a certain amount of urgency attached to it and shows that you completely support what the speaker's saying, or that you want to interject and take over the speaker's role.

TIP



The way you can tell the difference between someone who's interested and encouraging as opposed to someone who wants to take over the conversation is by observing where she's looking. If the person is looking at the speaker she's being supportive. If she's looking away from the speaker, she's indicating that she wants to take over the conversation (unless she's distracted, of course).

If the listener seems to be looking at the speaker supportively, sneak a peep at her eyes. If they're engaged, she's paying attention. If they're dull, she's probably bored or uninterested.

The strength of the nod – the degree of the up-and-down action – communicates the listener's attitude. If she agrees, the head nod is a firm action. A slight nod provides feedback to the speaker letting her know how well her message is understood.

REMEMBER



When making a formal presentation, the head nod is a useful gesture to emphasise words and phrases. Use it wisely. Too much repetition reduces the impact of any emphasising technique.

**Figure 3-3:**  
The head  
cradle  
provides  
comfort and  
security.



### *The head clasp*

Wherever the stakes are high, be they on the sporting field, on election night, or on the trading floor of an investment bank, and despair is in the air, you see people clasp their heads as if they're creating a manual crash helmet. The head clasp is a protective gesture in which the hands rise up and cover the top of the head.

Head clasp is a natural response to calamity, real or imagined, and acts as a metaphorical shield, protecting the head from psychological damage.

## *Showing Boredom*

Someone who is bored props her head in her hand. Her eyes droop at half-mast and before you know it she's nodding off. Resting your head in your hand is reminiscent of your childhood, when someone would support your head when you were tired. You rest your head in the palm of your hand because your head feels too heavy to stay upright on its own. Your palm cushions your cheek and your chin drops in a nod. You're usually bored when what you're doing doesn't inspire you or meet your abilities. You may even feel tired and fed up.

Take comfort in knowing that you're not alone if you've ever felt bored. You can recognise the signs of boredom in yourself and others.

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Page 79 of 337

## *Expressing a Range of Emotions*

Gestures reveal attitudes and emotions whereas words reveal information, and the range of emotions people experience on a daily basis is vast. From anger to worry, you can count on your face to reflect your feelings.

### *Showing happiness*

If your grandmother was anything like mine, she'd tell you to 'put on your happy face' when meeting someone new because she knew, intuitively, that people respond positively to positive behaviour.

Facial displays of genuine, unadulterated, free-flowing happiness can't be missed (see Figure 4-1). When you're experiencing pure joy your eyes spontaneously twinkle, the laugh lines at the outside corners of your eyes deepen, your cheeks raise, and as your lips pull up at the sides and separate you expose your pearly white teeth. No one can deny your joy.

**Figure 4-1:**  
A genuine smile pulls back both the mouth and the eyes.



eyes widen, taking in the information and your mouth may be slightly opened.

The open position indicates interest. Whether the interest is romantic, intellectual, spiritual, or just plain friendly, the look on the person's face is open. The eyes are engaged, the head may tilt or nod, and the body leans forward as if getting immersed in the subject. No blocks – such as lowered eyebrows, a jutting chin, or a furrowed forehead – stand between you and the person you're interacting with. You lean forward, ready to go, and your expectant face follows.



**Figure 4-3:**  
A fearful  
person's  
face is  
tense.



People nod when they're listening. A slow nod shows that they're taking in what the other person's saying and are prepared to let him continue. A fast nod indicates that although the person may be interested in what the speaker's saying, he feels a sense to hurry things along.

Research into the behavioural similarities within the animal kingdom shows that birds, dogs, and humans amongst others cock their heads when they're



**Figure 5-2:**  
The  
sideways  
glance with  
a smile  
shows  
interest.



**Figure 5-3:**  
The  
sideways  
glance  
away from  
you can  
indicate a  
lack of  
interest.

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Page 104 of 337

## Chapter 6

# Lip Reading

### *In This Chapter*

- Recognising how the lips reveal thoughts, feelings, and emotions
- Differentiating the smile

**R**ead my lips,' said President George Bush when running for President in 1988. Although your lips are the doorway to verbalising messages, they're equally adept at revealing emotions, thoughts, and feelings without uttering a word.

In this chapter you discover how the various lip positions, including pursed lips, a pout, and a one-sided grin, tell the story of what's going on inside.

**Revealing Thoughts, Feelings, and Emotions**

The lips are made up of a complicated series of muscles running over, under, and around the sides of your mouth. Because the muscles can work independently of one another, they can pull and twist your mouth into all kinds of positions. One side of the mouth can mirror the other so that the whole mouth conveys the same message, as with the turned up sides of your lips in a genuine smile of happiness or the downward turn of your lips when you're sad. Your lips can also pull in opposite ways, one side going up, the other side going down. The upper lip can rise in a sneer. The lower lip can tremble in fear.

The complicated series of muscles that control the lips include the orbicularis oris muscles, which sit at the sides of the mouth. Their function is to pull the lips back and push them forward. The elevators, such as levator labii superior, lift the upper lip, whereas the mentalis, sitting at the tip of your chin, pushes up your lower lip, causing your chin to wrinkle, making you look doubtful or displeased.

## *Pursing as a sign of disagreement*

Pursed lips, in which the lips are puckered in a rounded shape of disagreement, connivance, or calculated thought, send a message of considered dissent (see Figure 6-2). Pursued lips can show that someone's thinking, considering his next move, before he says or does anything. He's holding his thoughts in before letting them out.

One of the signs of disagreement is pursed lips. If you're at a dinner party and your partner is about to spill the beans, a stern pursing of the lips pointed in your partner's direction should stop the flow.

Because pursed lips give a sign of disagreement – and wrinkles the lips, which is aging – you may want to avoid the gesture, unless you want to be known as Old Prune Face.



If you're making a proposal or putting forward a suggestion and your listener meets your ideas with pursed lips, signalling mental resistance, ask him if he disagrees before continuing your verbal argument. By clearing the air, you make the other person better disposed to understand your position. Equally, he's going to be impressed with your intuitive grasp of his thinking process.



**Figure 6-2:**  
Pursed, or  
'prune lips',  
indicate  
measured  
thinking.



**Figure 6-3:**  
Smiling with  
tight lips  
means that  
you aren't  
going to be  
sharing your  
deepest  
thoughts.



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Page 118 of 337

### *The lop-sided smile*

When your muscles pull the sides of your mouth in opposite directions, one side going up and the other going downwards, you've got yourself in a twist. What you're doing is showing opposite emotions on either side of your face and the observer has to figure out what this lop-sided smile is conveying – in Western culture this type of smile can signal sarcasm, embarrassment, and irony.

In a lop-sided smile, one side of your mouth is moving upward in amusement while the other side's pulling down in restraint. Subconsciously, when your mouth seeks this position you're showing both your pleasure and your pain. Harrison Ford and the late Princess of Wales both mastered the gesture of the lop-sided smile.

The gesture elicits protective responses in others. The side of the mouth going downward indicates sadness, anxiety, or another negative emotion. The side going upward shows that the person's not angry – had he been, both sides of the mouth would turn down. The gesture is softened by the upward turn of the lip, making the gesture non-threatening.



If you carefully observe a group of individuals interacting you can tell their degree of attention, involvement, relative status, and how they feel about one another by the way each one positions her body in relation to the others. People who are actively participating in the exchange lean towards one another. Those who are reflecting on what's going on pull back. The opposite of the forward lean is the backward lean, which indicates fear and displeasure. Someone who's not interested or is bored with the conversation may slump and look in another direction.

If someone is really angry not only does she scowl, she leans forward as well. If someone is filled with happiness she smiles as her body moves forward. It's as if both people want to get further into the emotion. The expressions on the face reveal the emotion. The lean of the body reveals the intensity of the feeling.



Stand upright with your feet hip width apart, put your hands on your hips, lean forward and frown. Now stand in the same position, slightly leaning back and smile. Just by this slight change of posture and facial expression you have conveyed two very different moods.

When you're at a meeting that's lost your interest, sit forward in your seat and rest your elbows on the table. When you look at the speaker. This posture both helps your energy rise and you to feel more engaged.



Dicken was preparing for a job interview. He was feeling conflicted about the interview because he was leaving his current job, not having progressed as far in his career there as he'd wanted to. During a practice session he leant back in his chair, letting his chest droop, and his head sink into his shoulders. When he saw himself on video he realised the negative signals he was giving out. I encouraged him to sit towards the front of the chair and lean forward, letting his elbows rest on the table. When he saw himself again, he observed how much more interested, engaged, and likable he seemed.

## Shrugging Signals

A child avoiding telling you the truth adopts the wide-eyed, head-pulled-back 'What? Who me?' look as she raises her shoulders in disbelief. The student who's called on by the lecturer to summarise the chapter that hasn't been read, raises her shoulders in submissive apology. The person who wants to show a complete lack of interest gives a disdainful lift of the shoulders as she turns her head away. A submissive gesture, the shrug absolves the shrugger of any responsibility and indicates apology, disbelief, and lack of interest.

- ✓ **The fig leaf:** Men hold hands with themselves in a barrier position to make themselves feel secure. Covering their 'crown jewels' they subconsciously protect themselves from a potential full frontal attack (see Figure 8-2). Look at the line-up of soccer players during a penalty kick and see where they place their hands and arms.



The next time you see someone who's feeling lonely, dejected, or in any way vulnerable, notice how he positions his hands. You see that he holds his hands in the fig-leaf position in an attempt to create feelings of comfort and reassurance.



**Figure 8-2:**  
The fig leaf position makes a person feel more secure.

### *Placing objects in front of yourself*

By placing a coffee cup, a clipboard, or any other object between yourself and another person, you are setting up a protective barrier. These barriers are a subconscious effort to conceal any nervousness or insecurity you may be experiencing, whether you're aware of the feeling or not.



During a role play with a client in which she had to enter her boss's office, sit across the table from him, and make a recommendation that she knew he wouldn't like, Lynne clutched a pad of paper in front of her, clasp- ing it tightly to her chest. Although she said that she had to carry the pad for taking

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Page 149 of 337

notes, the way she held it clearly indicated that she was feeling insecure and threatened. So strong were her subconscious feelings that not even seeing herself on video convinced her that a different posture would create a stronger, more authoritative and professional appearance.



If you're at a function where drinks are being served and you're feeling insecure, hold your glass or cup in front of you with both hands. This action creates a subtle barrier, behind which you can seek refuge. As you look around the room you are likely to see that almost everyone else is standing in the same position, indicating that you're not alone in your feelings.

## *Giving the cold shoulder*

As you are undoubtedly a kind and thoughtful person who would never purposely insult anyone, this section is probably superfluous to your requirements. However, should you ever feel the need to display indifference or aloofness with the intention of giving someone a quick sharp jab to his ego, turn your shoulder towards him, creating a barrier between yourself and your object of contempt. With a look of disdain, a downward turn of the mouth, and the briefest of glances, the gesture leaves the recipient in no doubt of your feelings of scorn and derision towards him.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
page 150 of 337

## *Conveying Friendliness and Honesty*

Open arms indicate a receptive, friendly, and honest attitude. This position says that you've got nothing to hide and are approachable and amenable. It draws people to you, making them feel comfortable and at ease in your company. By leaving your body exposed you're indicating that you're receptive to whatever comes your way.

Go to any sporting event and watch the players. The moment the winner sinks his final putt, crosses the finish line, or scores the winning goal his arms open with the thrill of victory. The losers cross their arms in front of their bodies or let them hang dejectedly by their sides.



Every summer my son, Max, and I visit his godmother, Libby, who is my dearest lifelong friend. As Libby lives in Oregon and we live in England we seldom see one another more than once a year. The moment Libby sees us exit the customs hall, she flings her arms open before folding us in her embrace. Her open arms are like a welcoming beacon indicating her joy at seeing us.



If you want to persuade someone to your viewpoint, hold your arms in an open position. Open arms indicate a confident, constructive attitude and create a positive impression. You're perceived as sincere, direct, and trustworthy, as long as your other gestures are equally open and forthright.

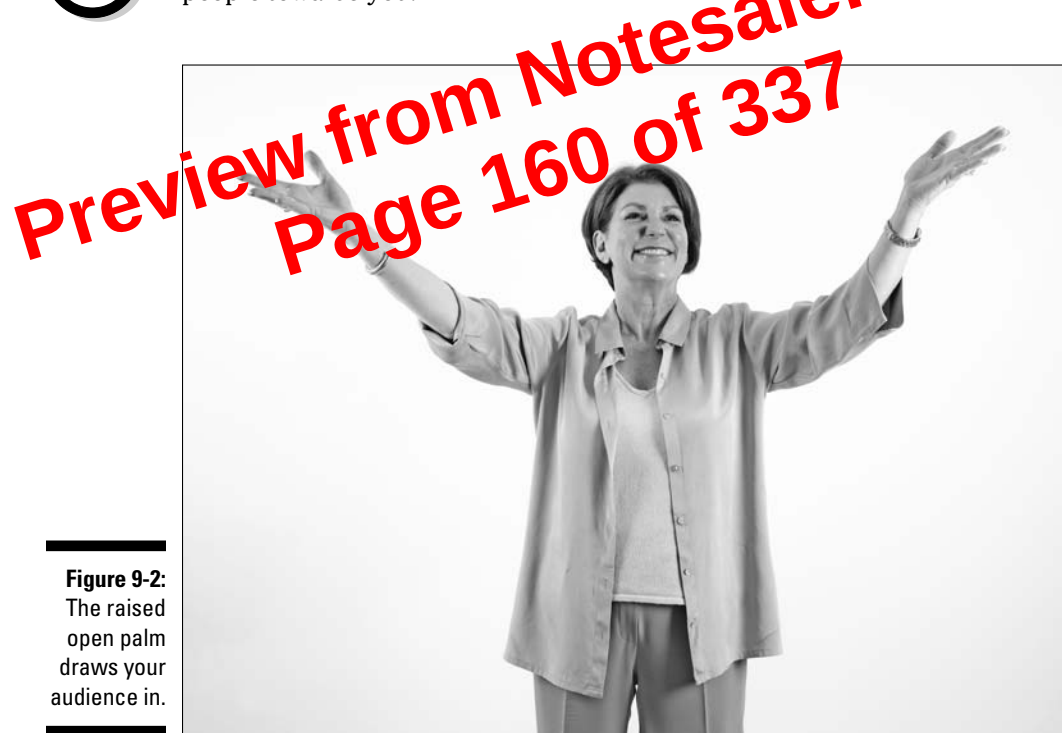
Oh, sure, con artists, professional liars, and used car dealers know the tricks and use the open palm gesture when trying to convince you that they're genuine and sincere. But you're able to detect that something's not quite right because other gestures of honesty, such as open facial expressions, calm breathing, and a relaxed stance, are missing. Alarm bells ring as your instincts cry out, 'Wait a minute. This person's a fraud!'

### ***Making a connection***

You often wave to someone you know when seeing her from a distance. Your palm is in the open position, facing front, rhythmically moving from side to side. This is a similar gesture to the one you use when waving good-bye. When you wave it's as if you're reaching out towards that person with a desire to touch her.



A good way to make contact with a large group of people is to hold out one or both of your hands with your fingers spread apart and your palms facing upwards. This gesture, shown in Figure 9-2, acts like a magnet and pulls people towards you.



**Figure 9-2:**  
The raised  
open palm  
draws your  
audience in.



Many (many!) years ago when my husband Karl was starting off in sales he was told to watch the customers' hands when they were giving reasons why they couldn't buy his product. What he noticed was that when people were being honest with him they used their hands freely and often exposed their palms. He also noticed that when someone was being less than truthful her hand movements were reduced and kept more concealed.

## *The hand rub: Good for you or good for me?*

When you rub your palms together you're signalling a positive expectation. How quickly you rub them indicates who's going to benefit. The slow palm rub can appear devious or crafty and may leave you feeling a little uneasy. You can bet that whatever positive result may happen is going to happen for anyone but you. The quick hand rub indicates excitement, pleasure and enthusiasm. If someone is offering you an opportunity and is rubbing her hands together quickly as she speaks, you can feel assured that her proposal is good for you.

Consider these examples:

➤ A friend tells you how excited she is about a holiday she's about to take, a promotion she's been given, or a fabulous idea she's just had. She may well quickly rub her palms together with a big smile on her face.

Once upon a time I lived and worked in Las Vegas, Nevada. No, I wasn't a showgirl! However, I occasionally went to the casinos and observed the gamblers. Something I noticed at the craps table was that people throwing the dice inevitably rubbed them together quickly before throwing them. This action, along with the look on their faces, indicated that they were expecting something positive to happen. Most of the time something positive did happen, but for the casino, not the gambler.

- The car salesman or real estate agent sits you down and asks whether you're ready to pull out your cheque book, rubbing her hands slowly together as she does so. Meaning? Buyer beware!
- After taking all your relevant details about the purchase you want to make, the sales person rubs her palms together quickly and says, 'I've got just the thing for you!' Here the message is that she expects the results to be to *your* advantage. And if it works out for you, it probably works out for her. Everyone wins in this case!



Now, when you're speaking and want to say something accurately or delicately press your fingers and thumb together in a similar position with your palm facing towards you. Presto! Your listener understands that you're reinforcing what you're saying with great precision and accuracy.



To focus your listener's attention and be seen as authoritative place your index finger against your thumb in the 'okay' gesture with your palm facing outward and your fingers softly rounded. This way you avoid intimidating your audience and you're likely to be perceived as thoughtful and goal oriented. This gesture is a favourite of modern politicians. Gosh, what a surprise!

In some countries the okay signal is considered rude. Before making any definite gesture find out what is acceptable behaviour and what may cause offence. (You can read more about the use of the okay signal in Chapter 15.)

When you ask a question or are feeling uncertain about a point you're making or responding to, you may well find that your thumb and index finger are almost – but not quite – touching (see Figure 9-8). Funny how that happens, as if the fingers know that the answer isn't quite there. When the fingers do come together in a definite grip it's as if they've grabbed the information and are holding onto it.



**Figure 9-8:**  
The thumb  
and  
forefinger  
not quite  
touching  
shows  
hesitancy or  
uncertainty.

## Chapter 10

# Standing Your Ground

### *In This Chapter*

- Finding the right stance for your attitude
- Showing how you really feel
- Revealing information without meaning to

At certain times in your life you've had to take a stance and make a firm decision. You probably planted your feet firmly on the ground and got on with what you had to do. At other times you've been able to take it easy, wandering from one pillar to another post.

You've stamped your foot in anger, or thrown someone who has – you've pulled your ankle up against an intruder's as well as your own, and you've stood with your weight on one leg in boredom, as well as bouncing on your toes in excitement.

In this chapter I look at the different types of stance you adopt depending on your mood and circumstances. You also discover what the swinging foot is saying, as well as the pointed toe.

## *Showing Commitment and Attitude through Your Stance*

The foundation for any stance is to stand with your feet evenly placed under your hips and with your weight equally distributed between them. What you choose to do with that foundation depends on what you want to show and how you want to be perceived. How you hold yourself reflects the effects of life experiences as well as social position.

You can spot status by the way a person stands. The Queen doesn't slump, at least, not in public. The petty officer stands to attention when his superior enters the room. The servant bows at his master's will.



## Signs of holding back

Studies of body language by Gerard Nierenberg and Henry Calero, in which they paid particular attention to the participant's ankles, has shown a high rate of individuals locking their ankles when holding back information.

In-flight airline personnel are trained to spot passengers who would like service and who are too shy to ask for it. Apprehensive travellers sit with their ankles locked, especially during take-off. When being offered refreshments from the cabin staff, these same individuals tend to unlock their ankles and move toward the edge of their seats. If, however, the ankles remain in the locked position, the crew are alerted to the fact that the person may really want something, even though he may be saying 'No'. The crew member responds by asking if the passenger is sure that he doesn't want something. Asking the passenger in this manner has an opening-up effect on that person.

Further studies into patients in a dental surgery showed that, of 150 male patients observed, 128 immediately locked their ankles when they sat in the dentist's chair. These men tended to grip the chair's armrests or clench their hands together around their groin area. Of the 150 women analysed, only 90 initially sat with their ankles crossed. Women, too, clench their hands, but they tend to rest them on their mid-section.

If a person sits in the waiting room with his ankles uncrossed he's probably there for a routine dental

check-up that he knows won't take too long and won't be particularly painful. If, due to extensive dental work, the patient has to make a number of visits to the dentist, that person becomes more comfortable in the dentist's chair after four or five visits, and doesn't lock his ankles.

Research with law enforcement and government bodies revealed that most people being interviewed knot their ankles at the start of the interview. The reason for this is as likely to be based on fear as on guilt.

Defendants sitting outside a courtroom waiting for their hearing are three times more likely than the plaintiffs to have their ankles tightly crossed and tucked under their chairs in an attempt to control their emotions.

Nierenberg's and Calero's research into the human resources profession revealed that most interviewees lock their ankles at some point during an interview, indicating that the person being interviewed is holding back an emotion or attitude. Using appropriate questioning techniques during a negotiation, in which one party locks his ankles, the questioner can get the other to open up and reveal valuable information.

Finally, Nierenberg's and Calero's research showed that patients who were being wheeled into an operating room with their ankles crossed and their hands clenched, tend not to have reconciled themselves to the unavoidable.

he finds particularly attractive. He's very likely to stand with one foot pointing toward her with his legs apart exposing his groin area, and holding his arms in a splayed position to make himself look larger and fill more space. If the woman doesn't find him attractive and wants to give him the brush-off, she holds her legs together, faces her body away from him, folds her arms, and makes herself appear as small as possible. No one says a word, yet the visual messages tell the story (see Figure 10-4).

The girl props her sunglasses on her head, her brother wears his cap backwards on his head, their father perches his reading glasses far down his nose as he examines his children's behaviour, and the elder brother at the sink nosily snaps a dishtowel. Coy, defiant, domineering, annoyed; each person is telling you their state of mind.

Regardless of the purpose for which props are designed (glasses for reading and protecting our eyes from the sun, briefcases and handbags for holding personal and work items, and pens and pencils for writing), how you handle them reflects your mental state. You put things near and in your mouth when you feel in need of reassurance – chewing on fingers, pencils, and arms of glasses for example. You check your briefcase and handbag repeatedly to set your mind at rest. You throw things in annoyance. Your moods are revealed in the way you handle your props.

### *Showing inner turmoil*

According to zoologist Desmond Morris, putting objects in or near the mouth is reminiscent of an infant seeking comfort at its mother's breast. Any gesture, no matter how small, in which you place an object against your lips or mouth, is an attempt to receive the sense of security you felt as a suckling babe, and is a sign that you need reassuring. In the words, chewing on the arms of your glasses, clomping on a pencil, and sucking on a cigarette indicate that all is not at peace in your world.

Some tension-relieving activities you may observe include:

- ✓ **Adjusting clothes.** This action indicates that the person is feeling uncomfortable. If you see someone making adjustments to her clothes when none are needed, you're correct in thinking that the person's feeling tense.
- ✓ **Biting fingernails and cuticles.** This action is similar to the sucking behaviour of infants and provides reassurance. It's also related to the gesture of putting your hand in front of your mouth to hold back a thought or an emotion.
- ✓ **Playing with objects.** Jangling change in pockets, clicking a pen, or fiddling with jewellery are deflecting signals indicating nervousness. Touching the objects provides sensory reassurance, similar to holding a favourite toy when you were a child.
- ✓ **Running fingers through hair.** When you're feeling tense and agitated you may find that your hand goes to your head and your fingers run along your scalp. This gesture is a comforting gesture, reminiscent of the hair ruffles or strokes you received as a child.

Your choice of accessories and how you put them together reveal how you perceive yourself and how you want to be perceived. If you can afford to invest in high quality items, do. They don't have to be the most expensive products on the shelf, although cost and quality often go hand and hand. What they do have to be is appropriate for the environment and reflective of you at your best.

## *Women's accessories*

Forget about fashion and follow the styles that work best for you. Although leggings and smocked tops can look great on women at play or working in creative industries, they're out of place in a corporate environment. The same goes for short skirts and low cut tops. These items draw attention to the wearer, which is fine for a date but not the office. The sexual messages they send out are better left outside of the office where the focus is meant to be on the task.

Excessive jewellery is also out of place at work if you want to head up the ladder. Dangly earrings are distracting, as is a wrist full of bracelets and fingers covered in ethnic rings. Stick to a few classic pieces to be seen as professional. Unless you're a Vivienne Westwood fashionista, in which case pile it on!

### **Not for women only**

Archaeological finds in the Iranian geographical plateau have revealed that approximately 10,000 years ago both men and women were avid wearers of make-up. Early examples of facial cosmetics were made from colourful stones as well as animal skin, shells, bones, and teeth. Men and women of the Kermani tribe in Iran used white powder made of lead or silver as a foundation, highlighting their cheeks with a red powder made from the hematite stone.

Both men and women wore make-up with enthusiasm. Men applied their cosmetics with such care that it was often difficult to tell them apart from the women. Surena, the fifth-century BC Iranian chieftain known for his bravery and fearlessness, used to decorate his face for battle with such finesse that even his enemies were surprised.

Although well documented that men regularly wore make-up, little proof existed that the same was true for women until masks and statues were discovered in Khuzestan. These masks had eyebrows that were elongated and painted black. The lips and cheeks had a rose tint, and a painted line extended from below the eyes to the eyebrow.

As personal adornment became more important, water, which the early cave-dwellers used for viewing themselves, was no longer a satisfactory solution. The Iranians discovered a material that, when melted, shaped, polished, and formed into sheets, accurately reflected a person's likeness. These early mirrors were also highly decorated, often with beautiful mythological images.

### *In this part . . .*

**I**n this part I take you on a trip from the office to the bar, then overseas to experience different countries and cultures. In the boardroom you find out where to place and position yourself for greatest effect. In the dating arena you discover how to read and reveal signs of interest and dismissal and how to engage with a possible romantic partner. In sampling different cultures I warn you of body language pitfalls to avoid, and tips to utilise to improve your relationships with people from all over the world.

cooperative creatures. As humans strive for dominance, systems must be put in place to avoid chaos. Territorial perimeters, where everyone knows and respects one another's space, is one cooperative system.

A man is said to be king of his castle. As reigning sovereign, whether your castle is a flat in the heart of the city, a country farmhouse, or a caravan, you know that you've the right to be dominant in your own territory. And, everyone else has the right to be dominant in his. When someone enters your space without being invited, you may feel a little edgy. Whether it's fighter planes attacking from above, or a mother bursting into her teenage son's room, the likelihood is that the person whose space has been invaded is going to fight back.

Although you may feel perfectly confident, comfortable, and at home in one surrounding, when you enter another, your feelings change. Say that you work in your own office. You feel comfortable and in control of your environment because you're in familiar surroundings. Then you're called into your boss's office. Suddenly the comfort level changes. You're now entering someone else's territory and the control shifts from you to the person whose space you've penetrated. Your body language changes from dominant to submissive without you even realising it.

*Knowing Your Space*  
Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 215 of 337

Humans have circles of space around them, which range from no space at all (touching) to far enough away that, even though you can be seen, you're not close enough to touch. As with animals, humans protect their territory by following accepted codes of behaviour. Whereas birds sing to proclaim their dominance over a particular part of a hedgerow, and dogs lift their legs to stake claim to a lamppost, humans indicate through their body movements what they perceive to be their territory, and how near and how far a person may penetrate it.

## *The five zones*

In his book, *The Hidden Dimension*, the American anthropologist Edward T Hall, defined *proxemics* as the study of the human use of space within the context of culture. Understanding that cultural influences impact upon how people move within their space, and the amount of space a person is comfortable with, Hall divided space into five distinct areas. The relationship you have with another person determines how near you allow that person to come to you.

Hall defined five concentric spatial zones that affect behaviour:

- ✓ **Close Intimate (0–15 centimetres/0–6 inches):** This space is saved for lovers, close friends and family members. It's a position for the most intimate behaviours, including touching, embracing, and kissing.
- ✓ **Intimate (15–45 centimetres/6–18 inches):** This space is where the lover, friend, and relatives are welcome. The distance is comfortable and secure. You feel uncomfortable, and your body reacts protectively, if a stranger, someone you don't know well, or someone you don't like, enters this space.
- ✓ **Personal (45 centimetres–1.2 metres/18 inches–4 feet):** For most Westerners, this distance is the most comfortable for personal conversations. If you step too far into the space, the other person may feel threatened. If you stand outside of the space, the other person can feel rebuffed.
- ✓ **Social (1.2–3.6 metres/4–12 feet):** When you're in a business-based interaction with shop assistants and tradespeople, this area is where you feel most comfortable. If you stand within the inner parameter, you're perceived as being too familiar. If you stand outside the outer ring, you're perceived as rude and stand-offish.
- ✓ **Public (3.6 metres +/12 feet +):** If you're speaking to an audience in a formal setting, the distance between yourself and the first row is in the public space. Any closer and you feel intruded upon; your communication feels cramped. Any farther away and you feel distanced from your listener, making it harder to connect with them.



The distance people keep between themselves reveals their relationship and how they feel about the other person.

## Other territorial positions

In addition to your space bubble's five concentric circles, you have another set of territorial positions, private and personal to you. You have:

- ✓ **Inner space:** Your internal thoughts and feelings.
- ✓ **Immediate outer space:** Friends, family, close colleagues.
- ✓ **Your public arena:** The larger world in which you interact with an assortment of people.

People who enjoy their own company and prefer to keep to themselves have few requirements. They live quieter, simpler lives than those who surround themselves with people and fill their lives with social activities.

People who live lives that involve lavish entertaining need space to accommodate all the individuals and the accompanying accessories that go with a socially active life. Their personalities require a broad expanse of space.

A person who has many people taking up much of his time occasionally draws into his inner space for quiet contemplation. Executives, politicians, busy parents, and professionals – as well as the ubiquitous celebrity – need time alone to recharge their batteries.

Big personalities fill their space with their movements. For example, they hold their arms farther from their bodies than people with quieter personalities. Their gestures are definite and they move with purpose. People whose personalities are more internally directed use fewer and smaller gestures.

Space also works in proportion to status. Presidents, senior partners, and chief executives require a copious amount of resources, including space, if a practical sense and to fill status expectations, both their own and other's.



Pauline is a Human Resources (HR) specialist working in the telecoms industry. When she was promoted to the role of HR director, she moved from her open plan office to a private office of her own. Although the room wasn't large, it had windows and a door to close herself off, knowing that she needed thinking time as well as time for interacting with her team. Pauline appreciated the way that she was able to manage her public and private space according to the requirements.

Growing up in Palm Beach, Florida, a town of great opulence and wealth, I often saw 12-bedroom mansions for a family of four. The size of people's homes reflected their status – large homes indicated large incomes and large personalities. Small homes indicated lower income and lower status. My mother's home in Palm Beach had two bedrooms that cosily accommodated my mother, my sister, and myself. Mom was a single mother, struggling to raise her two daughters. She didn't entertain much and had little use for a lot of space. Half a mile away was the winter home of the late President John F Kennedy. His home was huge in comparison, with high walls surrounding the property and bodyguards walking the grounds. The President's position of power, status, and authority came with more needs than that of a young divorcee on a restricted budget.



You can tell a person's status by how much personal space he requires. The more space expected and offered, the higher the status.

How you view and define your space determines how others respond. By being clear about how far a person may come into your territory, you make it easier for others to know your boundaries and behave accordingly.

## *Keeping to yourself*

If two people don't want to interact with one another they sit diagonally across the table, at the farthest ends of the table. This position is typical in a library, when two people share a reading table.

The expression 'diametrically opposed' comes from this seating position and implies lack of interest, indifference, or hostility. If you want to keep the discussions open between you and others, avoid sitting in this position.

## *Creating equality*

King Arthur's Round Table empowered his knights with equal authority and status. No one was in a lesser, weaker, or more dominant position than anyone else. Each knight was able to claim the same amount of table territory as his compatriot, and everyone could be seen easily. The circle is considered a symbol of unity and strength, and sitting in a circle promotes this effect.

Although the model of King Arthur's round table promotes equality, who sits where in relation to the perceived leader denotes positions of status and power.

The position in which people sit affects the dynamics of a group's power. The people sitting on either side of the person of higher status (and holding the most power), hold the next level of power, the individual on the right of the high-status person being granted more power than the individual on the left. The farther away from the high-status individual, the more diminished the power. Whoever sits directly across from the person with the highest status is placed in the competitive position and is most likely to be the one who causes the most trouble.

In business, a rectangular desk is effectively used for business activities, short conversations, and reprimands. A round table creates an informal relaxed atmosphere. Square tables belong in the company cafeteria. High-status people sit facing the door, not with their backs to it.



If you're seated at a round table, having a discussion with two other people and you want to make sure that they're both involved, begin by ensuring that the three of you sit in a triangular position. When one person asks you a question, look at that person first as you begin to answer, and then turn your head towards the third person as you continue your answer. Carry on like this, turning your head back and forth between the two people as you complete your answer. As you make your final statement, complete your remarks by looking at the person who first posed the question. This technique makes both people feel included and is particularly useful in helping the second person to connect with you.



## The allure of being sexually appealing

Research consistently shows that men are attracted to healthy looking women who demonstrate sexual availability. Both men and women want someone with an athletic body. Men see this as a sign of good health and an ability to provide him with progeny. Women see this as a sign of power, signalling the ability to provide for her.

Men are drawn to women with child-like faces, including doe eyes, petite noses, bee-stung lips, and full cheeks. These facial characteristics elicit fatherly, protective emotions in most men. Women prefer men with mature faces that show they have the ability to protect and defend. Strong jaws, large brows, and a prominent nose appeal to women.

The good news for women is that although good looks may initially give a woman a slight edge

over her competitors, women don't have to be natural beauties to attract a man. Primarily, they need to display the signals of possible availability. Although it may take surgery to create a tilted nose or a rose bud mouth, and you can't always count on the results being what you hoped for, all a woman has to do to signal her availability is find out and practise the signals.

Granted, some women may be disturbed, if not appalled, to know that modern men are initially more attracted to a woman based on her looks and her sensuality than on her ability to discuss world affairs, balance a cheque book, play the piano, or stuff a turkey. But modern research concurs with what painters, poets, and writers have been telling us for thousands of years – a woman's ability to sexually satisfy a man appeals more to him than any family trust fund or intellectual capabilities she may possess.

### 4. Talk

The man walks over to the woman, making it look as though he's the initiator, and gives her a few chat-up lines. Having given him permission to approach by the signals she's sent through her body language, a woman then waits for the man to begin the conversation.

Actually initiating a conversation can be a minefield. Here are a couple of tips to help you navigate it safely:



- If you misread the signal and sense that the approach is going to land you where you'd rather not be, pretend that you just want to ask the other person about unrelated subjects. You may sound a bit of an idiot but at least you aren't given a brusque brush off in response to a clumsy pass.
- If after a few minutes of speaking with a woman she yawns, frowns, or sneers you can count on the fact that she's not interested. If she crosses her arms, puts her hands in her pockets, and avoids your gaze, you may as well walk away.



On the reality television show *The Apprentice*, Sir Alan Sugar sits in a black leather chair with a high back. The back of the chair frames his face and gives him authority. The would-be apprentices sit in front of him. The backs of their chairs are lower. Before a word is spoken, it's clear who holds the authority in the room.

High status people prefer to sit on high backed chairs.

### ***Rolling on casters***

Chairs on casters have power and mobility that fixed chairs lack. The person sitting in a chair that swivels has more freedom of movement and can cover more space in a shorter time than someone sitting in a fixed chair. When a person is under pressure, being able to move quickly expels energy and expedites the process.

People sitting on fixed chairs rely on their body movements and facial expressions to convey their attitudes and feelings. Look at the person who's sitting in the chair on wheels, with the arm rests and the high, reclining back, and you're looking at the person in charge.

### ***Gaining height advantage***

Height is associated with status and power. The higher you are, the more authority you hold. Savvy business types know that by adjusting the seat height of their chairs they gain a competitive advantage.



If someone invites you to sit in a chair that puts you at eye level with the other person's desk, decline, saying that you prefer to stand.

### ***Placing the chair***

Sit directly across the desk or table from another person, face to face, shoulders facing shoulders, and the atmosphere is confrontational. Place the chair at a 45 degree angle in front of the desk and you create a welcoming environment. If you want to reduce a visitor's status, arrange for him to be seated as far away from your desk as possible, into the public zone at least 8 feet away from where you're sitting.

## ***Negotiating Styles***

When it comes to crunch time and you're at the final negotiation, you want to win, right? The best negotiations result in everyone feeling he's a winner. And to feel you're a winner you have to look, sound, and act like one. In theatrical terms, it's called acting the part.

## Acting the part

The Russian director, Constantine Stanislavski, explored and popularised a style of acting that became known as *method acting*. Considered to be difficult to teach because it relies on no single system, the actor bases his characterisations on the emotional memory process. The actor immerses himself in the character's life, to experience that life as the character would. Drawing upon memories and incidents from the actor's own life, which he then incorporates into the role, the actor's portrayal becomes enriched and enhanced. Devotees of method acting

include Dustin Hoffman, Jane Fonda, and Robert DeNiro. Although some people believe that method acting produces the most realistic results, it can annoy other actors who follow a more traditional approach to character portrayal. During the filming of *The Marathon Man*, Dustin Hoffman went for several days without bathing, in order to immerse himself in the character's psyche. Upon seeing Hoffman's condition, Laurence Olivier, Hoffman's co-star in the film, asked him, 'Why don't you just act?'



Before you go into any meeting where you want to be seen performing well, whether it's an interview, a negotiation, or an assessment, find yourself a quiet spot where you can gather your thoughts in peace. Five minutes should be ample. Reflect on how you want to be perceived. Visualise yourself behaving in that manner. See and hear yourself performing at your best. Experience the feeling. By creating your desired image you're able to act the part and convince others that that's who you are. Who knows, you may actually be that person.

## Claiming your space

When you enter a negotiation, you need to claim your space right from the beginning. If you don't, the competition is going to have you for breakfast. Claiming your space means that you're taking responsibility for yourself and your actions. It means that you act as though you've got the right to be where you are, doing what you're doing. When you walk into a space and make it your own, you're telling anyone who's watching that this territory's yours and woe betide anyone who tries to take it away from you. Dogs spend much of their time marking out their territory in order to let the rest of the pack know that they've been there. It's the same with people. You just mark your territory differently, hopefully. You have to let people know that you've been there, you own this space, and you're to be taken seriously.

Someone who claims his space successfully acts as if he belongs there. His gestures appear fluid, his posture's upright, and he engages in eye contact with ease. He sends out positive signals indicating that he's comfortable and in control.

## Standing up for meetings

Research shows that when people participate in meetings standing up they speak for a shorter length of time. It encourages quick decision making, and cuts down on time spent socialising. The studies also demonstrate that the perception of people who conduct their meetings while standing is of them having a higher status than the people who are seated.

Kate attended a marketing meeting at a company in Denmark. In the middle of the room where she and her colleagues met was a tall stone table. The room had no chairs. The table

was at a comfortable height, enough for people to stand at and lean on it, and there was enough space in the room for them to walk around the table easily. The participants in the meeting were encouraged to mill around the room speaking with one another, and come to the table when a point was being made and a decision was required. Kate found the experience to be liberating, as the thinking in the room was more creative and energising than in other meetings she'd attended, in which the norm was to remain seated.



Accessories are meant to enhance your image. Decide what image you want to project and choose your accessories accordingly. Also, to make a positive impression, invest in good quality accessories.

### *Watching your buttons*

Tightly closed jackets indicate a tightly closed point of view. People who button up their jackets while making decisions indicate that they're closed to the idea put forward. When they fold their arms across their chests with their jackets buttoned, they're really feeling negative. If you notice someone unbuttoning his jacket during a meeting you can safely assume that he's changing his position and opening up to what's going on.

## Chapter 15

# Crossing the Cultural Divide

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Greeting people and saying farewell
- ▶ Understanding different cultures
- ▶ Playing by the rules

With businesses spanning the globe, students travelling the world, and the media bringing foreign lands into people's homes on a daily basis, no group can any longer believe in the infallibility of their own customs and culture. As the singer/songwriter Paul Simon says, 'One man's ceiling is another man's floor.'

In part, the shrinking world is perhaps because of it, cultures hold onto their customs and traditions with pride and determination. Behaviours as simple as cupping your fingers, walking along the street, and shaking hands, vary widely across the globe.

Unless you know the rules that govern behaviour in cultures other than your own, you can make some major mistakes that, in addition to insulting your host, may lead to a diplomatic crisis. Or, at least an uncomfortable embarrassment.



You don't want to make a fool of yourself, insult your host, or cause an international crisis because you didn't know the differences between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. So when in doubt, ask. A native is more than happy to guide you in the ways of her country and is flattered that you asked. One gesture that you're always safe to use, no matter where you go, is the smile. This is the one truly universal gesture that's understood by the most sophisticated city person as well as by desert nomads.

Because so many countries and cultures exist in the world, and I have so few pages in which to write about them, this chapter gives you a few tips and techniques to get you started on a safe path as you trek the globe.

By observing people's body language, you're on the inside track to knowing what's going on between them. Whether you're observing participants in a business meeting, a family negotiation, or watching a couple in a restaurant, by being aware of how the people position and move their bodies, you may end up understanding more about their relationship than they do.

Here's a list of the telltale, mainly facial, expressions for different emotions:

- ✓ **Happiness:** Lower eyelids are slightly raised, crinkling around the outer edges of the eyes, eyes sometimes narrow; the corners of the lips move up and out and lips may part to expose upper teeth; cheeks are raised with an apple-like bulge; C-like wrinkles pull up from corners of raised lips to the sides of the nose. Body is open and forward moving.
- ✓ **Surprise:** The eyebrows zoom upwards in a curve, wrinkles spread across the forehead; eyes open wide showing their whites; jaw drops; mouth slackens. Head hunches into raised shoulders.
- ✓ **Sadness:** Inner ends of the eyebrows rise; eyes appear moist; mouth drops at the corners and the face appears lined. Lips may quiver. Shoulders hunch forward; body is slumped.
- ✓ **Fear:** Similar to surprise with subtle differences. Raised eyebrows are pulled together (not a much curve in the brow as in surprise). Forehead furrows in the middle (when surprised furrow carries across the brow). Whites of the eyes show; lips are pulled back; mouth is slightly opened. Shoulders are hunched with a backward movement to the body.
- ✓ **Anger:** Eyebrows pulled down and inward; vertical crease between the brows; eyes narrow and take on a hard, staring look. Lips close tightly, and turn down at the corners; nostrils may flare. Hands are clenched, body is forward moving.



TIP

Be subtle when watching other people. If they feel they're being scrutinised, they may become antagonistic toward you.



ANECDOTE

James, a highly respected and acclaimed prize winning scientist, is quite a bit older than his current wife. At a private dinner party held in his honour he was invited to speak informally while coffee was being served. Earlier in the day he had been the guest speaker at a luncheon meeting of colleagues and supporters. At that time he spoke with reasonable authority and clarity. In public view, his wife looked at him adoringly, laughed at his jokes, and led the applause. By the end of the evening James was tired. His stories rambled, his words were mumbled, and his jokes fell flat. As he spoke, his wife whispered and giggled with her young, handsome dinner partner, occasionally casting a glance towards her husband and pointing to her watch as if to tell him that it was time for him to wrap it up. When he finally sat down, his wife scowled at him across the table before turning again to the man on her right and resuming their intimate discussion. By the way James's wife behaved throughout the day and evening, it was clear that their relationship was both complex and complicated.

have had a disagreement. As you both agree that it was a foolish argument and it's time to make up and move on, you notice that your partner is sitting with his arms crossed over his chest, his fists clenched, his legs tightly crossed, his head bent, his mouth turned down at the corners, and a big frown covering his forehead. When you suggest that he may still be harbouring some resentment, anger, or other negative feelings, he scoffs at the suggestion, and assures you that you're putting too much emphasis on what you see. Trust your instincts. Here is a case of actions speaking louder than words.



Stephen went into his boss's office for his quarterly review. Although Kate, his line manager, said that he was doing a fine job she avoided his gaze during the meeting, focusing instead on the report in front of her, and only occasionally lifting her head. At no time did she smile. When she did lift her eyes from her desk, she looked over Stephen's shoulder or at the floor. When her hands weren't folded, her arms crossed over her body and her fingers played around her mouth. Her facial expression was serious. From the way she was presenting herself, Stephen knew that Kate was holding back negative comments. Although her words were supportive, her body language said that she wasn't happy with the job Stephen was doing. He left her office feeling confused and worried.



Think back to a conversation you may have had when you knew that something wasn't quite right. Something about the way the words and the gestures didn't match had indicated to you that the person didn't mean what he was saying. What gestures was the person using? What words was he saying? How were you able to tell that the gestures weren't supporting the spoken message?



Over lunch with her friends, Jacqui was talking about her relationship with her husband, Michael. Although her mouth was formed in a smile and her words were positive, her eyes looked sad. She seemed distracted and kept twisting her wedding ring on and off her finger as she spoke. Several months later Jacqui told her friends that she was leaving Michael. Remembering how she had behaved at lunch that day, none of them was surprised.

## Considering the context

Just because someone sits bent forward with his head tucked into his shoulders, his arms crossed tightly over his chest, and his hands balled up in fists and tucked under his arms, doesn't mean that he's angry. Look at the bigger picture. If it's cold where he's sitting, he just may be trying to keep warm. Or perhaps he ate something he now wishes he hadn't.



If you want to read body language correctly, you have to take in all the signs.

## The New Zealand haka

The Maori haka, an action chant with hand gestures and foot stamping, is traditionally performed by the New Zealand rugby team, the All Blacks, before an international test match. Originally acted out by warriors before battle, the haka proclaimed the soldiers strength and prowess and served as a verbal challenge to the opposition. The most famous haka 'Ka Mate' tells of the wily ruse that a Maori chief used to outwit his enemies and is interpreted as a celebration of the triumph of life over death.

On August 28, 2005 before a match against South Africa, the All Blacks unexpectedly introduced a new haka, 'Kapa o Pango'. The climax of this new haka is particularly aggressive as each player, staring at the opposing team, performs a throat-slitting action. Answering allegations that the gesture was offensive, the New Zealanders explained that in Maori culture and haka traditions the throat-slitting gesture signifies the drawing of vital energy into the heart and lungs. The All Blacks went on to win the match 31 to 27.



Dr O'Connor is a tall, handsome, and physically fit man. He gives the appearance of being strong and active. When I first saw him I was pleased that my mother was in his care. However, when we shook hands I had my doubts. His hand felt limp in mine and I was aware that it was exerting more pressure than he was. Based on that handshake, I began to doubt how committed a man he was. After thinking about it later that day, however, I recalled how gentle his touch was when taking my mother's blood pressure and listening to her heart, and how he lightly rested his hand on my mother's shoulder as he encouraged her to take her medications. Because his hands are vital for his work, he must protect them, and use them gently.

## Practice Makes Perfect: Improving Your Reading

Wanting to read body language accurately is the first step. Paying attention to the signs is the second. Finally, in order to improve, as in any other endeavour, you have to practise. Give yourself 15 minutes a day to observe other people's gestures and see if you can make sense of what their bodies are saying. Choose a good place to practise, where lots of people are busy with their own lives. Train stations, airports, and restaurants afford the opportunity to observe people without being obvious.



Watch television with the sound turned off. See if you can figure out what's going on by observing how the people on the screen are interacting. After a few minutes, turn the sound on and check how closely you came to interpreting their attitudes correctly.



you're thinking and feeling. The minor muscular twitches, the dilation and contraction of the pupils, flushed cheeks, and the slight sweating that occurs when you're under pressure can give away your game.

Watch someone's face carefully if you think she may be deceiving you. While the face may look calm and composed, at some point there comes a moment when the mask falls to reveal the true feelings.

Imagine you've recently taken up skiing. Someone asks you how you're getting on. You tell her you love it, that after your first week you tackled a black run, and even though you wiped out and spent most of the run careering down the mountain flipping between your front and back sides, you're mad about the sport and can't wait to give it another go. While your words say 'Yes!' and you're smiling and laughing as you're telling the story, for the briefest of moments a look of fear crosses your face, immediately replaced by your previous enthusiastic and excited expression. If spotted, that momentary look exposes your terror. It shows that, although you want to convey the impression of loving what you had been doing, during that fall you feared for your life.

## *Suppressing Facial Expressions*

A composed face, lacking any expression is the one that may be masking emotion. It's what's known as a 'poker face' and is the easiest and most successful way of concealing what you'd rather not show. Narrowed eyes, a tense forehead, and tightened jaw muscles are other small, subtle signs that an emotion is being suppressed.

Say you're at the funeral of a dear friend. While what you may really want to do is cry uncontrollably you feel it is inappropriate to expose your emotions so openly. You voluntarily compose your facial expression, replacing your instinct to cry with a tight-lipped pose or even a slight smile as people pay their condolences. The giveaway signs here are that your eyes are filled with sorrow, your forehead is holding tension, and your smile is crooked or the sides of your mouth are turning downwards. Your lips may well tremble as you fight to contain your emotion and deceive others into thinking that you are bearing up well.

## *Eyeing Someone Up*

Some deceivers look you straight in the eye while telling a barefaced lie. Others look away. What you, as a lie detector, have to do is look for the intensity of the action and compare the behaviour to what you've noticed in the past. Possible signs of deception include:

## Touching the Nose

If the mouth cover is the easiest gesture to spot when you think someone may be deceiving you, the second easiest is the Nose Touch. As the hand comes towards the mouth it is deflected to avoid being obvious. The nose, conveniently close by, serves as a suitable landing point.

When someone lies, it releases chemicals known as catecholamines, triggering the nasal tissues to swell. This is known as the Pinocchio Response because, although the reaction may not be visible to the untrained observer, the nose becomes slightly enlarged with the increased blood pressure. A tingling sensation in the nose develops resulting in an itch that screams to be scratched. The hand, already in position, vigorously squeezes, rubs, or pulls at the nose, to soothe the sensation.



During his Grand Jury testimony over the Monica Lewinsky affair, President Clinton touched his nose 26 times when answering probing and uncomfortable questions. When asked questions that were easy for him to answer his hands were nowhere near his face.

The Nose Touch is an overworked deceit action, so if you're ever in the position of having to be duplicitous, find yourself another gesture.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
page 287 of 337  
Faking a Smile

The smile is the easiest facial gesture to produce and is therefore the one most often used when someone is being deceptive. A smile is disarming. It makes other people feel positive and less suspicious.

But there's something about a fake smile that causes warning signals to flash. Whereas a genuine smile involves many facial muscles, including the ones that crinkle the eyes as well as those that pull up the corners of the mouth, counterfeit smiles are different. Firstly, they are confined to the lower half of the face. The teeth may show but the eyes remain unresponsive.

Secondly, the timing of a fake grin is an indicator. Someone assuming a phoney smile puts it on hastily and holds it longer than its genuine counterpart. While the artificial smile swiftly disappears, the genuine smile evolves slowly and fades gradually.

Finally, a real smile is usually symmetrical with both sides of the mouth raising. A deceptive smile is asymmetrical, appearing more pronounced on one side of the face than the other and giving a lopsided effect. Look for a smile where the mouth corners turn down. It's hard to make the corners rise if someone's feeling sad or depressed.

- ✓ **Crossed arms and legs:** These are further signs of holding back an attitude or emotion. As always with body language, in order to obtain as clear a reading as possible, read the signs in context to avoid misinterpreting the message.

## *Shifting Positions and Fidgeting Feet*

Feet shuffle, toes twitch, and legs cross and uncross when someone's being deceptive. That person avoids bodily contact with another person, preferring to keep her distance. While she may wriggle and squiggle her actions appear stilted rather than animated.

Signs of deception are most prevalent in the lower part of the body. Legs and feet are farthest away from the brain so they're under the least amount of mental control. Therefore, they reveal vital signs that the deceiver may not even know she's sending.

When a person is being deceitful you may notice an increased number and more frequent slight changes in body posture. It's as though the body is saying, 'Get me out of here.' These non-verbal leakage signs show that an inner/outer conflict is going on that's making the deceiver uncomfortable.

A hopping foot, a jabbing toe, and repetitive foot jiggling alone or in combination with crossed or shifting legs, reveal the conflict between what's being said and what's being felt.

## *Changing Speech Patterns*

People don't think of speech itself as body language, but the *way* you speak *is*. How you say something can tell the observer more about your feelings and attitude than the words you utter. Someone observing you watches for the pattern of the speech and how that fits with the words you choose to say.

People who are purposely misleading you tend to say less, speak more slowly, and make more speech errors. They may be likely to take longer pauses before replying to a question, and hesitate more during their replies. They're inclined to quickly fill in any potentially awkward gaps in conversation.

Another giveaway area is the tone of a deceiver's voice, which is likely to be higher than usual in register, with a lift at the ends of sentences.

focused on you. Establishing and maintaining eye contact with other people shows you're interested in them. And if you show interest in other people, they're going to be attracted to you.

When you look at someone, make sure that your eyes reflect your curiosity for who that person is. Refrain from frowning, squinting, or avoiding eye contact all together, unless you want to make him feel as if he's being judged or simply ignored. And scrunching up your face gives you lines and wrinkles long before they're due.

By paying attention and demonstrating care you make the other person feel important. Anyone who makes another person feel significant and worthwhile is automatically perceived as attractive.

## *Showing Liveliness in Your Face*

Smile and the world smiles with you, cry and you cry alone. At least, that's what my grandfather told me. A natural, genuine smile, where both the eyes and the mouth are engaged, is appealing. People want to be with someone who makes them feel good. Frowning, pouting, and a generally miserable face are definite turn offs.

A face that shows liveliness, interest, and enjoyment is like a magnet. It draws people to you and makes them want to be in your company. By smiling you can directly influence how other people feel about you. You can control their reaction to you by the look on your face. By making judicious use of your facial expressions you can guide people into responding positively to you and to perceiving you as an attractive person. This is not to say that you should walk around with an artificial grin plastered to your face; that's a definite turn off.

## *Offering Encouragement*

By nodding, tilting, and cocking your head in another person's direction you show that you're listening and are interested in what he's saying. And anyone who shows interest is consistently perceived as attractive.

Nodding encourages the person to continue speaking and shows that you care. Tilting your head to one side also shows that you're involved and paying attention. Appealing minor head gestures, showing concern, fascination, or involvement in someone's story, make you seem connected and empathetic. And who doesn't find those characteristics attractive and appealing?

Respecting someone's personal space is an attractive quality. In a work or social context, when you choose to position yourself next to another person you're telling him that you value him and are interested in what he has to say. Attractive people don't purposely embarrass someone else and never intentionally invade someone's territory. They position themselves close enough without being so close as to cause embarrassment.

If you want to reveal your attractiveness, respect the other person's space. If you sit or stand near the person you're engaging with and look at him directly, he feels confident and comfortable in your company.

## *Touching to Connect*

Attractive people aren't afraid to make physical contact. They know the powerful effect an appropriate touch can have. Touching can be used to encourage, to express affection or compassion, and to show support.

An attractive person demonstrates respect when touching someone else. Your attractiveness quota rises if you intentionally touch another person in these situations:

- ✓ When you're listening to someone's problems or concerns, touching the other person indicates that you care and are offering support.
- ✓ When you're persuading someone to your point of view, your touch serves as a bridge connecting the other person to your position.
- ✓ When you're giving information or advice, your touch conveys encouragement and cooperation.



Only touch another person if you have a relationship that permits deliberate physical contact. Touching implies that a bond exists between the people involved. Observe the kind of contact people feel comfortable with before initiating contact. If in doubt about how your touch is going to be received, best not do it.

## *Being on Time*

The most attractive people are those who demonstrate respect and care for others. Although you may not think that how you manage your time has anything to do with body language, it's an integral aspect of non-verbal communication, which is why I've included it here.

## Lookin' good

Attractive people take pride in their appearance. They know what clothes look good on them and which ones they should give to the charity shops. You don't have to spend copious amounts of money to make yourself attractive. Start by being clean and well groomed. See that your hair is washed and styled to suit you. Are your fingernails clean and trimmed? Do you visit the dentist regularly? Are your clothes and shoes in good repair? How you present yourself reflects how you feel about yourself. If you don't take the time and effort to present yourself at your best, don't expect to be seen as an attractive individual.

If in doubt about what colours and shapes suit you best, treat yourself to a session with a

personal stylist who can guide you when your friends, family, and your own personal taste take you down the wrong path.

If you're physically out of shape, do something about it now. Life's short. Not only are you going to look better, you're going to feel better as well. You don't have to join an expensive gym or health club, although if that works for you, do it. You don't have to invest in lots of fancy kit to do stomach crunches, though a good pair of running shoes is vital if you're heading off for a jog. What you do need to do is find what works for you, commit to a plan, and stick with it. Fat and flabby isn't healthy or attractive.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 294 of 337

If you have ever been kept waiting whether for an appointment, a date, or even a response to an e-mail, you know how annoying it is. Keeping to schedule and being punctual is more than a demonstration of good manners; it's a reflection of your core values. It demonstrates how you feel about and treat other people.

In some cultures, such as India and Saudi Arabia, being kept waiting would not be an issue. It is even expected. But in Western culture we're obsessed with time.

If you're habitually late, consider the impact of your behaviour. Don't be surprised if people consider you to be a bit of a flake, if not rude and selfish. Although you may think that arriving at a dinner party 'fashionably late' is appealing, the host whose soufflé depends on precise timing won't be thrilled.

## Synchronising Your Gestures

For successful communication to take place, your actions and gestures in face-to-face encounters with others need to be synchronised. Watch people as they speak and you see how their bodies move in a rhythmic pattern,

## Watching for Head Movements

Observe someone nodding in agreement, understanding, or with the desire to add her point of view to the speaker's. The eyes look engaged, the head is held upright, and her face is mobile. Slow nods tell you she's following the speaker, and fast nodding indicates a desire to jump into the conversation. A shake of the head tells you she's not buying the speaker's opinion.

Cocked, canted, and tilted heads tell you the other person's

- ✓ Thinking about what's going on
- ✓ Contemplating a retort
- ✓ Responding submissively

When you register head movements in combination with other gestures, such as lip and eye actions, you're better equipped to determine a person's attitude and its underlying message. Head to Chapter 3 for more on head movements.

## Noticing Hand and Arm Gestures

Look at a person's hands for revealing gestures. If the fingers are tapping and the nails bitten, you can be sure she's filled with nervous anxiety. Someone flapping her hands like Prissy in *Gone With the Wind* is, well, in a flap!

When someone's hand goes to her mouth, you're safe in betting that she's holding back some kind of feeling, emotion, or attitude. And when her lips are firmly sealed, she's keeping her thoughts to herself.

Anyone rubbing her hands and licking her lips at the same time is feeling happy and excited, as long as the speed's up tempo. If the hand and lip rub is slow and deliberate, be careful. This person may be dreaming up a scheme, calculating her chances, or devising a strategy that benefits herself – and not you.

Arms crossed against the chest, hands tucked into the armpits, or a lowered head and furrowed brow are not signs of a warm and welcoming person. Of course, she may just be reacting to a cold blast of air. Opened arms, a dropped-jaw smile, and an eyebrow flash conveys a sense of pleasure and excitement, whereas a pointed finger wagging in your face belongs to someone who's aggressive, controlling, and domineering. You may want to stay out of that person's way.

For more on hand and arm gestures, go to Chapters 8 and 9.

## Observing Posture

An upright stance, with legs parallel and feet under knees, knees under hips, and hips under shoulders, marks out the strong and powerful individual. If her chest is thrust forward, with chin jutting out, and the jaw clenched, beware. She may have moved into aggressive territory.

Slumped shoulders, hands protecting the privates, and a downcast eye all indicate that the person's depressed or despondent. In a woman, crossed ankles and hands neatly folded in her lap suggest a prim and proper attitude, whereas men who sit with their legs splayed, their arms stretched across the back of their chair, and their chests pumped out, are showing how manly they are.

You can read more about posture in Chapter 7.

## Considering Proximity and Orientation

Does a person get up close and personal when she's not been invited? Does she turn her back when you approach? You can tell a lot about a person's nature, attitude and culture by the amount of space she places between the two of you, as well as how she positions her body in relation to yours.

If someone's feeling cooperative and helpful she sits next to you. If she's feeling competitive she sits across from you. If she really doesn't get on with you, she turns away.



Look at where a single person places herself in public places. Someone sitting with her back to the other people is clearly indicating that she wants no engagement with anyone, thank you very much. Although facing other people head on may indicate a fearless attitude, it can be a bit overwhelming for both the person assuming the position as well as other people. The person who sits at an angle is indicating that she is open to speaking with another person if the opportunity comes along.

Those with a sense of high status remain seated while others stand. People with a low sense of status hang back by the door when entering someone's office. Someone who believes she's of equal status with a colleague sits next to that person's desk.

Go to Chapter 10 for more information on the messages you send through positioning yourself in relation to others.



Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 303 of 337

more respect than if you move at a slower tempo. Slowness is equated to laziness, although someone who takes a more measured approach towards time may actually accomplish more than those people who dash about, often accomplishing little or nothing.



One way you can improve your use of time is to anticipate what's coming next. Before completing one task, think about what may follow, and plan your approach. This anticipatory scanning technique is particularly useful for anyone working with the public, such as waiters and airline personnel. A skilled employee anticipates the customers' needs in advance by identifying cues and specific signals, and responds to them before being asked.

Sometimes you feel good and can communicate with ease and enthusiasm. At other times, all you want to do is turn out the lights and pull the covers over your head. The body's natural time rhythms influence these moods. When the rhythms become disrupted as happens when you're suffering from jet lag or too many late nights, you may find yourself making mistakes and behaving irrationally. Go get yourself a good night's sleep and see how you do in the morning.

If you want to show that you're paying attention to a person who's speaking, synchronise your body movements with his. It has been argued that by having your gestures echo those of others, a rhythmic pattern is produced that enhances communication.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 307 of 337  
**Dressing the Part**

Glad rags, jeans, or a pinstriped suit? What's it to be? It depends on how you want to be perceived and the impression you want to make. The way you dress sends out messages about you. Observe how your friends and colleagues present themselves and adapt your style to meet theirs.

The key is knowing what's expected and what's acceptable. If you work for a traditional organisation where a suit and tie for men and jackets and skirts or trousers for women are the norm, you're tempting fate to show up in track-suit trousers and a hoodie. To do so makes other people uncomfortable. They would also question your judgement.

Sure, you want to be comfortable and dress in a way that reflects who you are. You also want to be appropriate. You really do. Your clothes needn't be expensive. They do need to be clean, in good repair, and suited to your shape and style. They need to represent you at your best and make the people you're with feel comfortable.

## *Acting the Way You Want to Be Perceived*

First, you decide how you want to be perceived. Then, you behave in a way that creates that impression.

You may never have thought about the way you act, thinking that how you behave is just fine. And it probably is, most of the time. Just remember, if you want to be perceived in a certain way you have to give some thought to your behaviour. If you want people to think that you're the life and soul of the party you smile, laugh, and make an effort to put other people at their ease. If you want to be taken seriously, your actions need to be more contained, and your facial expression more sober. The trick is to determine how you want people to perceive you, and after that, to take on the behaviour of that kind of person.

## *Demonstrating Awareness*

Some people just don't get it. They seem to be blind to their own behaviour and the impact it has on others. If you pay attention to the reactions of other people you develop an awareness of what works when and where.

You may say that what other people think about you doesn't matter. And in many ways you're right. Yet at particular times someone's opinion of you can matter very much. By knowing how certain people respond to specific behaviours, you can adapt your style to meet theirs thus creating an environment that's conducive to successful communication.

In addition to focusing on your own behaviour, observe how other people behave. By paying attention to how someone else is conducting himself you can respond in a way that makes that person feel noticed and valued. And if you make someone feel that he matters, you're going to matter very much to him.

## *Asking for Feedback*

It doesn't hurt, well, not too much, to ask how people perceive you. If their response matches your vision of yourself, all's well. If, however, they tell you one thing and you thought you were projecting something else, you may want to spend some time re-evaluating your perceptions.

interviews. *See also* business situations;  
meetings  
body position during, 231, 237–238  
facing directly for serious answers,  
237–238  
first impressions, 230–234  
head nods during, 52  
interviewers leaning forward, 119  
knotted ankles during, 176  
negotiating styles, 239–244  
pointing body in the right direction,  
234–235  
power seats, choosing, 238–239  
preparing for, 230  
relaxed attitude for, 235–237  
intimacy, 78, 119  
intimidation, 50

## • I •

Japan. *See also* Asian cultures  
bowing customs, 210, 247, 249  
business card, presenting, 248  
eye contact in, 76, 84, 234  
eyebrow flash, considered rude, 88  
greetings and farewells, 247  
handling difficult situations, 243  
hands in pockets as rude, 247  
laughter in, 252, 253  
no-touching rules, 247–248  
okay signal in, 251  
smiling, 25  
thumbs up gesture, 251  
jaw. *See also* chin  
drop-jaw smile, 100  
jutting, 46–47, 65  
jewellery, 189  
John, Elton (musician), 184  
*Journal of Applied Psychology*, 209  
Judge, Timothy A. (professor), 209

## • K •

Keating, Paul (Australian Prime  
Minister), 136

Kennedy, John F. (U.S. President), 26, 198  
kinesics, 36–38  
*The King and I* (musical), 117  
kissing  
air kiss, 250  
on the head, 51  
knee, pointing, 224  
kneeling, 248–249  
knowledge, signalling lack of, 121–122

## • L •

La France, Marianne (professor), 98  
labia, 224  
labial tractor muscles, 94  
Latin countries, 256  
laughter. *See also* happiness; smiling  
cultural differences, 251–253  
overview, 102–103  
leach, Lindsay, 159  
leaning  
backward, 121  
forward, 119–120  
learned gestures, types of, 39–40  
leave, desire to, 170–171  
left side advantage, shaking hands from,  
161–162  
left wing and right wing politics, 207  
legs. *See also* feet  
ankles, knotted, 174–175, 176  
crossed, 18, 270  
entwining, 172, 225  
men posing, 172  
Lemmon, Jack (actor), 217  
levator labii superior muscles, 91  
lips. *See also* smiling  
about, 91–92  
chewing on, 93  
emotions expressed in, 92  
enhancing women's, 224  
kissing with, 51, 250  
loose, 93  
muscles of, 91  
pouting, 94–95, 221  
pressed together, 18

Rome, 252  
 royalty, gestures of, 132  
 rubbing  
   the eyes, 267  
   the nose, 269  
   palms together, 146  
 running fingers through hair, 162, 180

## • S •

sadness  
   facial expressions for, 69, 258  
   loose lips as sign of, 93  
   shifting out of, 46  
 safety and security, gestures to assure, 54  
 salute, hand, 142  
 Saudi Arabia. *See also* Middle East  
   greetings and farewells, 246–247  
   relaxed approach to time, 275, 282  
 Schwarzenegger, Arnold (actor), 81  
 scissor stance, 18–19, 171  
 Scott, Sir Walter (*St. Ronan's Well*), 202  
 scratching the head, 162  
 self-confidence. *See* confidence  
 self-improvement  
   body language for, 28–30  
   evaluating your posture, 99–110  
   feedback, asking for, 289–290  
   improving your body language, 285–290  
   practicing gestures, 287  
 sexual appeal, 184–185, 216  
 shaking hands. *See also* hand gestures  
   bone cruncher, 157–158  
   double-handed, 134, 135, 159, 160  
   firm shake, 161  
   history of, 156  
   at an interview, 231  
   the leach, 159  
   left side advantage, 161–162  
   power shake, 158–159  
   reaching out first, 157  
   space invader, 160–161  
   upper-hand position, 26  
   wet fish, 158

shoe  
   dangling, 181, 224  
   high heel, 218  
 short people, 209, 211  
 shoulder shrug, 120–121  
 shoulders  
   giving the cold shoulder, 131, 202  
   glancing sideways over, 223  
   turning, 202  
 shrugging gesture  
   apologizing with, 123  
   described, 120–121  
   signalling lack of knowledge, 121–122  
   as a universal gesture, 25  
   unwillingness to get involved, 122–123  
 Siddons, Henry (*Rhetorical Gestures*), 59  
 sideways glance, 84–86  
 Sign of the Cuckold, 36  
 signature gestures, 9–21  
 silence gesture for, 13  
*film messages* (Mehrabian), 118  
 sitting. *See also* positioning; posture  
   asymmetrical, 211  
   chair for, 238–239, 241  
   combative and defensive, 205  
   cooperative, side by side, 205  
   creating equality, 206–207  
   importance of, 203–204  
   keeping to yourself, 206  
   overview, 115–116  
   power seats, choosing, 238–239  
   relaxed, 204, 235–237  
   with subordinates, 236  
   table shapes for, 204, 206, 207  
   tête à tête, 55  
 slouching, 114, 115, 166  
 smiling. *See also* happiness; laughter; lips  
   about, 97–98  
   closed-lip grin, 102  
   drop-jaw, 100  
   fake grin, 22  
   fake (insincere), 67, 68, 268  
   flirting with, 215  
   full-blown grin, 102

- genuine, 66, 68, 268  
 lop-sided, 99–100  
 muscles controlling, 68  
 reading, 259  
 tight-lipped, 98–99  
 turn-away, 101  
 as universal gesture, 24–25  
 smoking  
   cigar smokers, 186–187  
   as displacement gesture, 23–24  
   origins of, 186  
   pipe smokers, 187  
   sexual appeal of, 184–185  
   specialty smokers, 186  
   stress increased with, 188  
   ways of smoking, 185–186  
 Social Gaze, 78  
 social space, 197  
*Some Like It Hot* (film), 217  
 Sommer, Robert (psychologist), 27, 203  
 soul, eyes as gateway to, 75  
 space. *See* personal space; positioning  
 space invader handshake, 100–101  
 speech  
   body language substituted for, 12–13, 61–62  
   conveying information, facts and data, 35  
   deception, signs of, 270  
   facial expressions supporting, 63–64  
   illustrating with body language, 13–14  
   mismatched with body language, 260–261  
   origins of, 34  
   physically supported with gestures, 14  
   touch reinforcing, 136–137  
   vocabulary, indicating status, 232  
   voice, well-modulated, 63, 276, 283  
*St. Ronan's Well* (Scott), 202  
 standing. *See also* feet; posture  
   to attention, 249  
   bent blade stance, 171  
   Bonaparte pose, 19  
   buttress stance, 170–171  
   with entwined legs, 172, 225  
   at an interview, 230  
   at meetings, 244  
   overview, 114–115  
   parallel stance, 169–170  
   scissor stance, 18–19, 171  
   showing attitude through, 165–166  
   standing tall, 114–115, 233–234  
   status reflected through, 165–166  
   straddle stance, 166–168, 170  
 Stanislavski, Constantine (director), 240  
 stare, unflinching, 81  
 status. *See also* dominance gestures;  
   power and authority; submissive  
   gestures  
   behaviour, cultural differences,  
     248–249  
   bowing, kneeling, and curtseying,  
     210, 248–249  
   elevating yourself, 211  
   gestures indicating, 232  
   hand on hip, 119  
   lowering yourself, 203–210  
   personal space and, 198  
   posture showing, 118–119  
   seating, positions indicating, 206  
   stance reflecting, 165–166  
   standing to attention, 249  
   vocabulary indicating, 232  
 steeple gesture, 154–155  
 stiff upper lip, 92, 93–94  
 Stockholm, 252  
 Stone, Sharon (actress), 89, 225  
 Stop! gesture, 13  
 straddle stance, 166–168, 170  
 stress. *See also* tension  
   body language showing, 259–260  
   drumming fingers in, 259  
   increased with smoking, 188  
   rapid blinking with, 88  
 stroking the chin, 59  
 stroking yourself, 129  
 submissive gestures. *See also* power and  
   authority; status  
   eye contact, avoiding, 83  
   eye dip, 86

# Notes

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 329 of 337

# Notes

Preview from Notesale.co.uk  
Page 331 of 337