

Reading Body Language

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Flight _____

Directions: Read the article “How to Read Body Language – Revealing the Secrets Behind Common Verbal Cues.” Then answer the questions. Use complete sentences in your response. Your response must consist of multiple sentences that fully answer the question.

Questions:

1. Explain what you learned from the article?

2. How can you start implementing the information presented in the article in your everyday life?

3. What kind of body language do you present to the public?

4. How do you think your body language determines who you are?

How to Read Body Language – Revealing the Secrets Behind Common Nonverbal Cues

Whether at the office or out with friends, the body language of the people around you speaks volumes. It has been suggested that body language constitutes more than 60% of what we communicate, so learning to read the nonverbal cues people send is a valuable skill. From eye behavior to the direction in which a person points his or her feet, body language reveals what a person is really thinking. Below are valuable tips to help you learn how to read body language and better understand the people you interact with.

Study the Eyes

Eye behavior can be very telling. When communicating with someone, pay attention to whether he or she makes direct eye contact or looks away. Inability to make direct eye contact can indicate boredom, disinterest, or even deceit – especially when someone looks away and to the side. If a person looks down, on the other hand, it often indicates nervousness or submissiveness. Also, check for dilated pupils to determine if someone is responding favorably toward you. Pupils dilate when cognitive effort increases, so if someone is focused on someone or something they like, their pupils will automatically dilate. Pupil dilation can be difficult to detect, but under the right conditions you should be able to spot it. A person's blinking rate can also speak volumes about what is going on internally. Blinking rate increases when people are thinking more or are stressed. In some cases, increased blinking rate indicates lying – especially when accompanied by touching the face (particularly the mouth and eyes). Glancing at something can suggest a desire for that thing. For example, if someone glances at the door this may indicate a desire to leave. Glancing at a person can indicate a desire to talk to him or her. When it comes to eye behavior, it is also suggested that looking upwards and to the right during conversation indicates a lie has been told, while looking upwards and to the left indicates the person is telling the truth. The reason for this is that people look up and to the right when using their imagination to concoct a story and look up and to the left when they are recalling an actual memory.

Gaze at the Face – Body Language Touching Mouth or Smiling

Although people are more likely to control their facial expression, you can still pick up on important nonverbal cues if you pay close attention. Pay particular attention to the mouth when trying to decipher nonverbal behavior. A simple smile body language attraction technique can be a powerful gesture. Smiling is an important nonverbal cue to watch for. There are different types of smiles, including genuine smiles and fake smiles. A genuine smile engages the whole face, whereas a fake smile only uses the mouth. A genuine smile suggests that the person is happy and enjoying the company of the people around him or her. A fake smile, on the other hand, is meant to convey pleasure or approval but suggests that the smiler is actually feeling something else. A “half-smile” is another common facial behavior that only engages one side of the mouth and indicates sarcasm or uncertainty. You may also notice a slight grimace that lasts less than a second before someone smiles. This typically suggests that the person is hiding his or her dissatisfaction behind a fake smile. Tight, pursed lips also indicate displeasure, while a relaxed mouth indicates a relaxed attitude and positive mood. Covering the mouth or touching the lips with the hands or fingers when speaking may be an indicator of lying.

Pay attention to proximity

Proximity is the distance between you and the other person. Pay attention to how close someone stands or sits next to you to determine if they view you favorably. Standing or sitting in close proximity to someone is perhaps one of the best indicators of rapport. On the other hand, if someone backs up or moves away when you move in closer, this could be a sign that the connection is not mutual. You can tell a lot about the type of relationship two people have just by observing the proximity between them. Keep in mind that some cultures prefer less or more distance during interaction, so proximity is not always an accurate indicator of affinity with someone.

See if the other person is mirroring you

Mirroring involves mimicking the other person's body language. When interacting with someone, check to see if the person mirrors your behavior. For example, if you are sitting at a table with someone and rest an elbow on the table, wait 10 seconds to see if the other person does the same. Another common mirroring gesture involves taking a sip of a drink at the same time. If someone mimics your body language, this is a very good sign that he or she is trying to establish a rapport with you. Try changing your body posture and see if the other person changes theirs similarly.

Observe the head movement

The speed at which a person nods their head when you are speaking indicates their patience – or lack of. Slow nodding indicates that the person is interested in what you are saying and wants you to continue talking. Fast nodding indicates the person has heard enough and wants you to finish speaking or give him or her a turn to speak. Tilting the head sideways during conversation can be a sign of interest in what the other person is saying. Tilting the head backward can be a sign of suspicion or uncertainty. People also point with the head or face at people they are interested in or share an affinity with. In groups and meetings, you can tell who the people with power are based on how often people look at them. On the other hand, the less-significant people are looked at less often.

Look at the other person's feet

A part of the body where people often “leak” important nonverbal cues is the feet. The reason people unintentionally communicate nonverbal messages through their feet is because they are usually so focused on controlling their facial expressions and upper body positioning that important clues are revealed via the feet. When standing or sitting, a person will generally point their feet in the direction they want to go. So if you notice that someone's feet are pointed in your direction, this can be a good indication that they have a favorable opinion of you. This applies to one-on-one interaction and group interaction. In fact, you can tell a lot about group dynamics just by studying the body language of people involved, particularly which way their feet are pointing. In addition, if someone appears to be engaged in conversation with you, but their feet are pointing in the direction of someone else, it's likely he or she would rather talk to that person (regardless if the upper body cues suggest otherwise).

Watch for hand signals

Like the feet, the hands leak important nonverbal cues when looking at body language. This is an important tip when reading body language so pay close attention to this next part. Observe body language hands in pockets when standing. Look for particular hand signals, such as the other person putting their hands in their pockets or hand on head. This can indicate anything

from nervousness to outright deception. Unconscious pointing indicated by hand gestures can also speak volumes. When making hand gestures, a person will point in the general direction of the person they share an affinity with (these nonverbal cues is especially important to watch for during meetings and when interacting in groups). Supporting the head with the hand by resting an elbow on the table can indicate that the person is listening and is holding the head still in order to focus. Supporting the head with both elbows on the table, on the other hand can indicate boredom. When a person holds an object between him or her and the person they are interacting with, this serves as a barrier that is meant to block out the other person. For example, if two people are talking and one person holds a pad of paper in front of him or her, this is considered a blocking act in nonverbal communication.

Examine the position of the arms

Think of a person's arms as the doorway to the body and the self. If a person crosses their arms while interacting with you, it is usually seen as a defensive, blocking gesture. Crossed arms can also indicate anxiety, vulnerability, or a closed mind. If crossed arms are accompanied by a genuine smile and overall relaxed posture, then it can indicate a confident, relaxed attitude. When someone places their hands on their hips it is typically used to exert dominance and is used by men more often than women. The above tips can give you insight into the true motives behind people's behavior, but it is not foolproof.

When analyzing body language, keep in mind that these techniques will not apply to all people 100% of the time. Certain factors such as culture and a person's general body language habits must be taken into consideration to accurately decode nonverbal cues.

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