



THE IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract:

People live within the reality of their bodies; eating, sleeping, playing and working. They move about in space and time affected by the weather and the environment. Their five senses provide them with information about the social and physical world they inhabit. Their central nervous system makes them sneeze or scratch when they itch. Indeed, the biological body seems to determine much of what humans do.

In society we share our thoughts, feelings, emotions, reactions, propositions, and facts and figures with individuals as well as groups at all levels, higher, lower and equal. Communication is, in fact, the most important of all activities as it has helped us organize ourselves as a civilized society.

The Importance of Body Language in Communication Skills:

The body is always on stage, whether the owner is aware of what the body is “saying” or not. It is inherently, inseparably, inter subjectively and interactively involved in nearly all social circumstances. People perceive; they think and act; they observe and make sense; and then, they start all over again in new mind body-interaction episodes, all of which have communicative potential. Perhaps it is better to describe this process as behavioral communication. The body is not a mere corpus of flesh; it is a dynamic constellation of symbolic meanings, deeply enmeshed in human activities.

The emotions are enmeshed in nearly every social interaction, whether it is a goodbye wave of the hand or a complex set interaction, as in sports activities or orchestral performances. At festive activities, like football games, humans share their emotions with others, ritualistically and contagiously, cheering on their team, shouting at the other team, moving in unison in a great wave of collective body motion. People feel happy at weddings; they feel sad at funerals. They display their emotion, which tells others how they feel.

They body is not a mere corpus; it is laden with semantic meanings produced by the owners. Bodies, involved in nearly all activities, do not act by themselves. They are not self-willed. Humans think about their bodies and about their social and physical world. Humans are people watches, never tiring of watching themselves or others. After arriving home from work or school, where they have spent the day in interaction with others, they may watch television or a movie that may depict even more human interaction. Observers pick up on the actions of others, whether the actors are simply gesturing or enacting a complex, contingent series of action events. Action communicates meaning to the observer. The non-verbal act becomes a communicative act.

The spoken word accompanies most non-verbal action displays. People talk to others; but they also talk to themselves in inner conversations with the self. They listen

to the words of others, words that are full of symbols and expressions that can fire up the imagination. Human language is framed on a nonverbal lexicon. After taking a walk, a person may say, "I took a step." Words express what people already know in their minds. Words may take the place of actions; actions may take the place of words. In face-to-face situations, humans talk to others using both body and words, they body, 'speaks.' What it is saying is a matter of interpretation.

People usually know the meaning of specific spoken words, but when they speak with their bodies, they often miss the details, 'catching' the meaning of body action in a kind of gestalt, or blurry faction. Spoken words may be used precisely but they may omit the emotional semantics of body language. No words are needed to see disappointment in a face. How many words would be needed to describe that disappointment? As people age they create a knowledge base, a body lexicon, syntax or corporeal semantics that helps them interpret body actions. They learn spoken language; they also learn body language and bodily communication.

A first impression is made within two or perhaps three seconds. This first impression and whatever is decided about you and the other person can take a lifetime to undo if it is incorrect. That first impression is mainly reached by interpretations about our body language. Knowledge of body language is important for us to achieve what is possible in our work, home and social lives. What we say with our words, actions and our way of being is vitally important to our success or failure. Research is very clear on one point: our words carry only a small part of what is being communicated. Our tone of voice and the way we use our body give out messages and unless we manage them, communication problems can arise.

This article will show you the basics of understanding body language. Once you have it, you will be able to develop a much greater ability to create rapport with others. Many of the quiet messages our bodies are giving out will be 'heard,' thus creating a much greater access to effective communication. Problems of miscommunication are minimized through effective body language. Make sure your body language communicates your intention.

You will need to remember that there may be regional and cultural differences in body language therefore always consider the context of the situation. For those of you interested in a more academic study remember this is a book of basics and there are many fine resources to take your knowledge to the next level. Mostly we identify communication with speech but communication is composed of two dimensions-verbal and non-verbal. Body language is part of non-verbal communication where messages are sent and received without words. It provides additional information to us about knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Non-verbal behaviors include facial expressions, eye movements, touching, and tone of voice. They also include less obvious messages such as dress, posture and spatial distance between two or more people. Everything communicates, including material objects, physical space, color and our attitude to time. Even though we may not be speaking, our non-verbal behavior comes through loud and clear to those who can interpret the language.

You cannot communicate. No matter how hard you try, you are always communicating. Activity or inactivity, words or silence all convey a message and influence others. Most people who are aware of body language spend time considering the other person's body language and what it means. People like to be in control of the communication process and getting their message across.

Communication takes place via our body language either at a conscious or other than conscious level. It is therefore essential that we consider what our intentions are for each other and whether we are moving forward with our communication. We soon realize if we are speaking with a fraud, or if we are being manipulated, or if an outcome is being forced on us. We all have an internal lie detector and often get a 'gut' reaction if communication is suspect. It is important to be clear on this because we are being assessed all the time and unless your intentions are honorable the communication will falter.

Our body language exposes our attitude towards the words we speak and our belief or conviction of those words. Our body language demonstrates if we are totally aligned with what is being communicated and that there is nothing hidden. This total honesty and authenticity is something young children do automatically but as life impacts them, they start to hide their true feelings and attitudes.

When we speak something, it is our body and its gestures that help in conveying the desired message effectively and easily. Sometimes we don't utter a single word, and yet we are able to communicate a lot. It is because our body parts, especially our facial expressions combined with various other gestures speaks a language of their own, which we call body language. It is not always that what we speak is really what we intend to say. Most of the time, while speaking, we do actually act. Our acting involves varying our speech and body gestures to suit different circumstances which we come across on different occasions in our daily life.

The whole world is like a stage where we all are mere performers. That is why we talk and behave differently with different people. While living in the same environment with a similar set of people for long, one tends to become stereotyped in one's behavior. And, in that case, it is highly possible that our acquaintances or people who interact with us regularly can easily understand our body language. Frankly speaking, body language is the only language which is common all over the world. Everybody can easily communicate through this language. But one must learn to interpret it precisely; otherwise, misinterpretation of body gestures could create lot of problems.

Our body responds to or expresses various emotions like sadness, happiness, excitement, anger, repentance, love, affection, lust, abhorrence etc. you must have observed that when a person is happy or excited over some good happening, his pupils get dilated and cheeks start glowing due to fast blood circulation. Other body parts like arms and legs too develop a rhythm about their movement. On the other hand, when one is angry, the eyes turn a bit reddish, the face is strained and the eyebrows are tightened upwards.

Sometimes, during a chat between two persons, it is observed that one person is the dominant speaker is the dominant speaker, while the other is a mere listener. Of course, this not chatting but preaching, in which the dominant speaker is preaching to the other person or instructing him. In such a chat, the dominant speaker can gauge from the expressions of the listener whether the latter is really enjoying listening to him, is a bit intimidated, or feeling bored. For a good conversation, all the participants should have real interest in the talk and they should also listen sincerely to what the fellow participants say. By reading the fellow speaker's expressions, especially facial, one can judge his or her interest. If you see expressions of abhorrence or poor interest on the faces of fellow listeners, check yourself, control your mental faculty, and then go accordingly. Otherwise, such a chat can create unnecessary fuss. It is bad to overload

others with our own opinions which they don't want to support. If you persist with such an exercise, then you are simply wasting your own energy.

We humans are social animals and we have to interact with other people in society. During our social interaction, we come across all sorts of people like doctors, advocates, judges, policemen, teachers, parents, colleagues, astrologers, cousins, among others. To interact with all these people in a better way, you must learn to interpret their body gestures. During a court appearance, you can ascertain whether the judge is going to pass judgment in your favor or against by reading his body gestures and the tone of his speech. For advocates, consultants and others who daily interact with their clients and persons from other walks of life, learning to interpret pays a lot. Sometimes during a handshake itself you can judge the nature or intention of the other person.

If a person who has mastered the interpretation of body language tries to fool you, there are still some natural gestures that lay bare his personality, because to hide and utilize all your body is next impossible. When you are into courtship, there are some gestures of the opposite sex that help you a lot and save you from unnecessary humiliation. Your gestures change according to your mood. Hence learning this special science is very necessary.

Conclusion:

Body language is an important part of communication which can be constitute fifty percentage or more of what we are communicating. If you wish to communicate well, then it makes sense to understand how you can use your body to say what you mean.

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