

work // life DAILY

How to crack the body language code



Arms in front of the body

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Understanding body language can mean the difference between success or epic failure in business or personal relationships, but it's a language few of us are fluent in.

Non-verbal communication makes up around 55 per cent of what we tell others and what they tell us, according to pd training, a leading provider of professional development and training.

"The body doesn't lie. It truthfully portrays feelings and motives, like attraction or boredom, aggression or deception, and it's often the precursor to action," global operations director Karen Winfield says.

Different feelings create physical responses within the body and on our face and because of this connection it's difficult to continually 'fake it'.

"A flash of true emotion will typically flicker across the face, even when the feelings are kept in check," Winfield says.

Sometimes we misinterpret signals because of cultural differences,



Body language expert Karen Winfield.

differences in way men and women react, and even false readings, when we think we understand the message but it may be masked by sickness or tiredness.

And because technology has changed the way we communicate, we are now becoming less adept at picking up signals.

"We spend much less time face-to-face and we have less time to build trust in front of someone, so we need

to make sure our body language is highlighting the right message," Winfield says. "We need to understand how to build instant, subconscious rapport by managing our own body language in a particular manner."

A simple understanding of body language can be a huge advantage at work — even if you are aware only of the messages your own body is sending.

"By being open to body language you also become a better listener, which can be particularly useful during negotiations.

"On a simpler level, you can quickly tell if your audience is bored or if someone is potentially fibbing to you."

Body language basics

- Proximity — in Australia we are protective of our personal space but in other cultures it's less of an issue.
- Positioning — standing tall or slouching can convey confidence, boredom or even disdain.
- Facial expression — eyes rarely lie and can betray what you are thinking.
- Touching — can convey agreement and assurance, but can also quickly be seen as invasive.
- Breathing — our rate of respiration is telling.

What to look for

Head movement: Nodding may mean someone agrees with you but a fast nod signals impatience. Head up means a person is listening without bias. Head down can mean disinterest or rejection.

Open v closed: Open body language can be passivity or aggression, acceptance or just relaxation, while closed can be a desire to hide. Crossed legs while seated can indicate caution and, when one leg is over the other at the knee, stubbornness. An arm or object in front of the body can be self-protection.

Eyes: Complete lack of eye contact

may mean someone is nervous and lying but it's not always the case. Moving the gaze to the left may indicate lying as it signals the imagination is being engaged (left-handed people will move their eyes to the right). The direction a person looks is telling:

Left: Is accessing memory and can mean that someone is remembering something, and when combined with looking down indicates self-communication.

Up: Means facts are being recalled.

Sideways: Associated with imagination, and may also indicate storytelling.

Right: Combined with looking down can mean they are guessing. Looking up possibly lying

Hand gestures: Many people will suddenly hide their hands or keep palms down when telling lies and lack of hand movement may also indicate lying. Self-touching may be a calming action, but be alert when someone touches their face. Hands at the nose and mouth are often seen as an attempt to hide the spoken lie.

Mouth: Look out for forced smiles — one that doesn't quite reach the eyes. People who lie are more likely to lick their lips after speaking.

• Be careful about interpreting every action as a lie. A number of factors, including stress and insecurity, can cause suspicious body language.

Power moves

With practice these can be an effective business tool but too much power can suggest aggression.

- A wide stance with the feet apart indicates power, as does hands on the hips with the elbows out to take up more space
- Walk quickly and take long strides.
- Offer a firm handshake and keep the hand vertical. Placing the palm up is a submissive gesture and palm down is a dominating gesture.

Dire warning on our jobs disappearing

□ MORE than 5 million Australian jobs could disappear in the next 10 to 15 years because of technological advancements.

Almost 40 per cent of Australian jobs have a moderate to high likelihood of disappearing due to computerisation and automation, a Committee for Economic Development of Australia report found.

"In some parts of rural and regional Australia in particular there is a high likelihood of job losses being over 60 per cent," CEDA chief executive Professor Stephen Martin says.

New jobs and industries will emerge but Australia will be left behind if it is not planning and investing in the right areas, he warns.

"While we have seen automation replace some jobs in areas such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing, other areas where we are likely to see change are, for example, the health sector, which to date has remained technological change.

"If we do not embrace massive economic reform and focus on incentivising innovation, we will simply be left behind in an increasingly competitive global marketplace."

Martin says Australia also needs to consider how it deals with reskilling workers as particular fields of employment disappear.

& relax

RAG DOLL

This poses reduces tension in the back.



This pose reduces tension in the back. Stand with your feet at hip distance or wider. Exhale then tuck your chin and fold over, hands towards the ground. Keep knees bent with chest close to your thighs. Grab opposite forearm or elbow and let your head hang heavy. Gently bounce and sway side to side for eight breaths. Inhale as you roll up to standing with bent knees.

POSE BY EMMA NUNN, ZENINTHECITY.COM.AU

How to read men v women

BOTH genders are good at picking up body language, but women are more emotionally intelligent and likely to act on things, while men are better at ignoring the signs, Karen Winfield says.

Women:

- Smile more often than men. Look to see if the eyes are engaged to learn any deeper meanings.
- Will lean forward when interested in something or someone and lean

away when displeased or uncomfortable.

• Legs and feet typically point in the direction of a woman's interest, including romantic interest.

Men:

- Less likely to stand close to each other, even when with friends.
- Often choose wide stances to increase their size. Spread legs with a straight back, both sitting and standing, indicates confidence.