



Solution

Body Language

What...

Nonverbal messages including body movements, facial expressions, posture, and vocal tone and volume are collectively known as body language.

According to experts, your nonverbal messages make up a huge part of your daily communication. You are continuously, and often unconsciously, giving and receiving these wordless signals that greatly impact each conversation.

Experts who research non-verbal communication consistently agree that 70-93% of all communication overall is non-verbal. The “7-38-55 rule” demonstrates this and has been widely accepted.

7% of all meaning comes through the spoken word
38% comes from a tone of voice used
55% comes from body language

When we choose what to say, we rely on the executive parts of our brains (the “neocortex”). This part of the brain is responsible for conscious attention, language, and thinking, all of which we have a degree of control over. In essence, we make deliberate choices in what we say.

When it comes to our body language, we don't often deliberately choose it. Our nonverbal communication arises from the automatic parts of our brains (the “limbic system”). This part of the brain is responsible for our emotions, instincts, and gut reactions, all of which we don't normally take control over.



A key to your success in both personal and work relationships lies in your ability to communicate well. Yet it's your body language – not your words – that speaks the loudest.

Why...

Your body language can put others at ease, build trust, bring clarity, and draw people towards you. Or, your nonverbal messages can confuse, offend, undermine what you're trying to say, and create tension or mistrust.

When your body language matches up with the words you're saying, this increases trust, clarity, and rapport. When your body language and words don't match up – or are perceived as unkind or uncaring – this can result in tension, mistrust, and confusion.

How...

If you want to become a better communicator, it's important to become more sensitive not only to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, but also to your own.

Being fully present and engaged in your interactions with others – instead of being rushed or distracted – opens you up to being more observant and intentional in the giving and receiving of nonverbal messages.

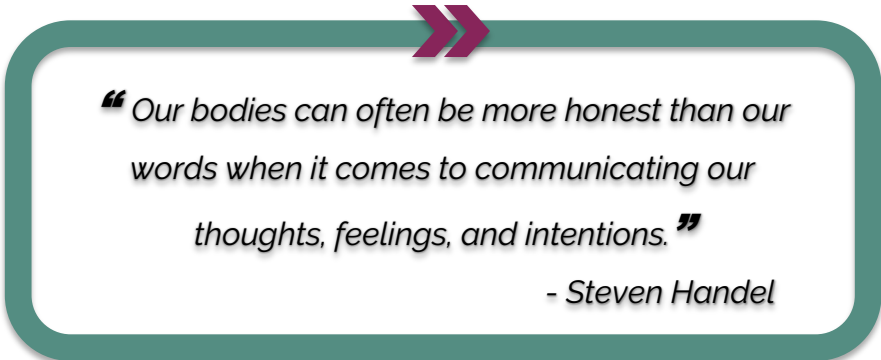
Because our body can often be more truthful than our speech, focusing more on body language can be one of the most important tools you have in becoming a more effective listener and communicator.

You are continually sending or receiving nonverbal messages in these ways:

- ▶ **Eye Contact** – Can you imagine life, let alone communication, without eye contact? It is the one thing that universally tells someone you notice, you acknowledge you're paying attention, you care. Eyes are windows – they can reveal sincerity and confidence and respect. Done well (don't stare!) eye contact quickly creates the foundation to a relationship. Eye contact might have different meanings in some cultures so it's always best to learn as much as you can about the person(s) you're talking with but smiling with your eyes is a universal sign of friendliness.



- ▶ **Facial Expressions** – A smile is a joyful connection that sends a clear message to everyone. A smile means acknowledging with kindness. Who doesn't want that? Raised eyebrows can mean many things – interest, skepticism, surprise, fear. Narrowed eyes often mean distrust. But a smile is the universal signal of human connection and needs to be sincerely used with every person you meet - the basic tenet of Hallway Hospitality is a smile! Remember that any lovely facial expression can be negated with an eye roll. An eye roll is never a sign of respect.
- ▶ **Gestures** – Gestures are visible movements or actions of various parts of the body that can add meaning to communication. Many people speak fluently with their hands and those gestures have many meanings! A simple gesture like a nod of the head pretty much mean the same thing around the world. A wave, a nod, a smile, an "OK" sign, a thumbs up or down, are generally understood and can add clarity to a conversation.
- ▶ **Posture** – Consider your posture and the posture of the person you're speaking with. Sitting up straight and facing a person is a sign of engagement and interest. Slouching can mean disinterest, fatigue, sadness. Arms crossed in front of a person's body means the person is either a) cold or b) closed to listening. Consider the posture of someone who is angry – they are rigid, tense, stiff and often accompanied by gestures (clenched hands) and facial expressions (tight lips) that express their emotion without words.
- ▶ **Tone of voice** - Communicates the kind of relationship you want with the person. Your tone can be warm, accepting, friendly, sincere, helpful, and welcoming. Or it can be cold, distant, clipped, harsh, hurried, and impatient. So many emotions and messages are communicated by the tone of your voice. And, a friendly tone of voice, whether in person or on the phone, builds trust. Your tone clarifies the meaning of your message!




“Our bodies can often be more honest than our words when it comes to communicating our thoughts, feelings, and intentions.”

- Steven Handel



Body language is an important component in the use of the Positive Communication Standards, such as:

- ▶ **Hallway Hospitality** – it starts with your eye contact and a smile, and maybe the gesture of a nod, and a warm greeting; yet also be mindful of the body language of others to recognize if possibly another person is lost or in need of some assistance
- ▶ **Service Recovery** – when faced with a dissatisfied patient or family member, make eye contact, listen attentively, and use a calm and helpful tone of voice to convey sincerity and support during a situation that might be difficult and emotionally charged. Also, be watchful of the body language of patients and their family members – this may be how you first learn that they are dissatisfied.
- ▶ **Listening** – you show that you are actively listening when you face the other person, lean in, nod, and make eye contact
- ▶ **Handoff Communication** – these interactions go better when the tone of voice is helpful, unhurried, and confident
- ▶ **Telephone Etiquette** – your tone of voice is the star of the show here and is as (or more!) important than the words you choose to use in the conversation. Smiling while talking can be a helpful way to keep your tone of voice friendly and helpful.



“Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important.”

- Janet Lane

Body language is the most memorable component of communication! Use it carefully and considerately and you can enhance your messages – and relationships – in very powerful ways.

