



WHAT EVERY BODY IS SAYING

by Joe Navarro



Overview

The author is a former FBI agent with a long history of interviewing suspects. He has studied body language in depth (both through scientific research as well as his own experience). This book goes into detail about specific body language signs that every person exhibits. For example, people will only cross their legs when they feel comfortable in a situation, since crossed legs are more unbalanced than a wide stance. While our voices can lie, our brains' limbic system cannot help but showcase our true intentions. This knowledge is crucial for law enforcement situations, business meetings, as well as your daily social interactions.

Chapter 1. Mastering the Secrets of Nonverbal Communication

The author's skills at nonverbal communication were born out of necessity, as he was an FBI special agent. Our bodies are essentially billboards demonstrating our true feelings; 65% of communication is nonverbal and such communication may be more honest than our words. You can learn to read the billboard until it becomes automatic. You need careful, "concreted (effortful) observation" that you make into a way of life. For example, notice how somebody's body language changes as they react to a phone call, even though the other party will not see such nonverbal communication. Make sure you are not staring while observing others; learn to be unobtrusive in your nonverbal observations.

While there are thousands of nonverbal signals, this book will discuss the most important and common ones. For example, squinting is meant to protect the eyes from unfavorable images, and occurs frequently when people dislike the person to whom they are talking. A second example is how a robber in a store may flair his nostrils (to give himself more oxygen) when preparing to take an aggressive action.

You want to observe people's baseline nonverbal behavior, following which you look for deviations from

this baseline. Such cues will typically occur in clusters, and can be roughly classified into "comfort" and "discomfort". Aim to classify body language cues into one of those categories when you're unsure.

Chapter 2. Living Our Limbic Legacy

Our limbic system contains automatic reactions that reveal the truth of our mental state. It "reacts to the world around us reflexively and instantaneously." For example, when you bite your lip, rub your forehead, or stroke the back of your neck, you are pacifying some internal discomfort. Look at people in an airport after hearing that their flight is canceled if you want to see concrete examples of body language. Our automatic responses can roughly be split into fight, flight, or freeze.

Freeze: Motion can attract predators, so animals evolved to freeze to avoid being noticed. You can notice this behavior in school massacres, in which students at Virginia Tech instinctively hid and froze to avoid danger. You can also see this in the first row of Vegas shows which include tigers or lions. It's essentially a deer-in-the-headlights look. Interview suspects may experience shallow breathing or fixing their feet behind the chair, all of which are examples of freezing behaviors meant to limit their exposure. Shoplifters, for example, will slouch to hide their bodies or "turtle" their neck to limit exposure.

Flight: When trying to create distance from a threat, people will react evasively. They may shift their feet towards an exit, place a purse on their lap, place their hands in front of their face, or block their eyes. All of which are primitive examples of distancing, stemming from an instinct for flight.

Fight: Modern-day aggression typically is done in the form of verbal arguments. Insults and sarcasm are just attempts to create outlets for our natural, in-born aggression. You may see people heighten their posture or puff out their chests.



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