

# What Every Body Is Saying Summary

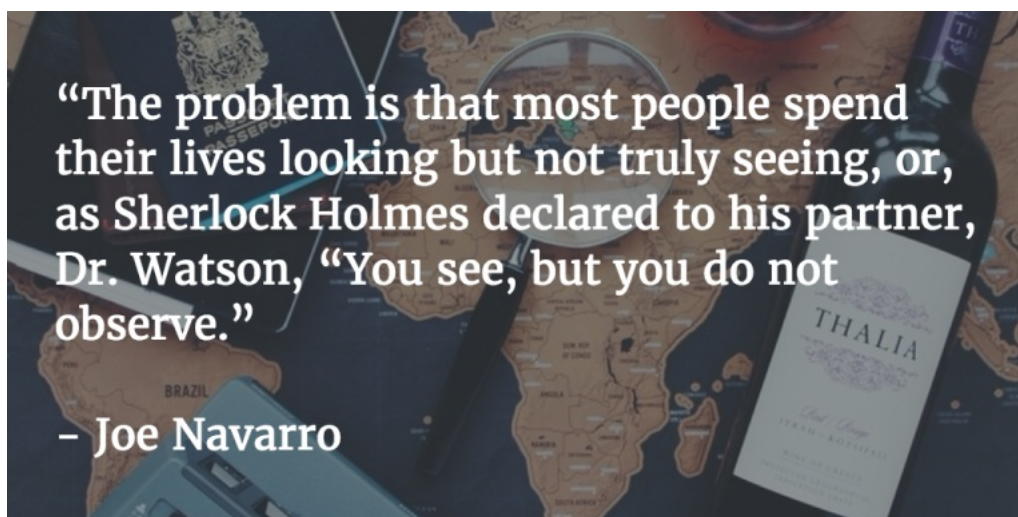
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 [fourminutebooks.com/what-every-body-is-saying-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/what-every-body-is-saying-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *What Every Body Is Saying* is an ex-FBI agents guide to reading non-verbal cues, which will help you spot others' true intentions and feelings, even when their mouths are saying something different.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



I got this book a few years ago and it's been a huge eye opener. After coming to the US from Cuba at age 8, speaking no English at all, Joe Navarro taught himself the art of body language.

Not being able to understand his peers didn't keep him from making friends, and reading non-verbal cues stuck with him all his life. He spent 25 years at the FBI as an agent specializing in counterintelligence and behavioral assessment.

After retiring he started speaking and writing books about body language, this is his most famous one.

Here are 3 things you should take home from *What Every Body Is Saying*:

1. At least 60% of what you say is not coming out of your mouth.
2. There's one more option next to fight or flight.
3. To become a master at reading body language, you have to develop situational awareness.

Want to become a master spy (or even just read people like books)? Let's go!

**Lesson 1: At least 60% of what you say is not coming out of your mouth.**

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The numbers often vary, which is why I'm lowballing it here. I remember the opening scene from *Hitch – The Date Doctor*, where Will Smith says that 60% of communication is body language, while 30% is tone.

Some studies agree on those numbers, others include tone in those initial 60%, so it's hard to say. However, a very safe bet to make is that **more than half of what you say does not come out of your mouth.**

Joe describes human communication as a complex puzzle, and the words we use are just a small part of the big picture. When you think about it, he's right. The example he makes is that two complete strangers can become friends without ever exchanging a word – which is a process he went through multiple times when coming to the US as a kid.

Or consider Chris Hughes, who used a simple gesture of respect to let him and his team walk away from an Iraqi ambush unharmed. We often don't understand what other people's bodies are trying to tell us, because we're not good at reading them, but when we do, we can be sure what we find out is the truth.

**Non-verbal cues are a lot more reliable than words**, because we're trained to adjust speech (and even truth) to the situation from a young age, but can't get rid of our deeply rooted, ancient physical behaviors.

## Lesson 2: There's one more option you can take next to fight or flight.

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The reason it's next to impossible to suppress our body language (have you tried not touching your face or neck when you're stressed?) is because it's rooted in our limbic brain. Joe also calls it "the honest brain" because the reactions from it are instant and pure.

The limbic brain was responsible for getting us safely to the next cave the second we saw a lion thousands of years ago, which is why it's always on and can't afford to have us "think things through". You've probably heard of this before as fight-or-flight response. But actually, that's only two thirds of the equation.

Joe says there's another part of this response, **the "freeze" reaction, and it actually comes before flight, with actually fighting being our last resort.** Lots of animals freeze in place when a predator is about to sneak around the corner, because movement attracts attention. By remaining silent, the predator might pass by and let them go unnoticed.

Remember when people tried to stay still in Jurassic Park? That's the freeze response in action, and people still resort to it today in extreme situations. Some students survived the Virginia Tech shooting simply by playing dead. Try to catch yourself the next time you freeze because you got "caught in the act" somehow and you'll see the power of your limbic brain.

## Lesson 3: You have to develop situational awareness if you want to master the art of reading people.

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So much for the basics, but how do you become good at this thing? As usual, there's no shortcut to success. Practice, practice, practice. The thing you have to develop is called *situational awareness*. It means to **have as many details at hand as possible in any given situation**.

Don't look down. Do you know what F8 does on your keyboard? No worries, no one does But that's what I'm talking about.

You practice situational awareness by focusing on your surroundings and the people around you, being very present, but not sticking out like a sore thumb. Don't stare, be subtle, but try to pick up on cues and details. **In order to know when someone's behavior is off you first have to know what their behavior is like when it's normal.**

**Note:** Brett McKay published a guide on how to develop the situational awareness of Jason Bourne, which is a good starting point! Steve Kamb from Nerdfitness also has a guide on "bournifying" yourself.

By becoming a constant observer you can assess the normality of any situation and quickly tell when things go wrong or feel off, because other people's behavior will give away their true intentions.

## What Every Body Is Saying Review

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*What Every Body Is Saying* is a fantastic book. I emailed Joe once to thank him, and he shared way back in 2014. There are so many things to learn even in the summary, because it's a field you're completely clueless about (most likely).

The best part about the book is that even reading a single page or chapter will give you something that's instantly actionable – you can start spotting non-verbal cues right away and get into practice while you're reading.

A tremendous book, great complement to books like *Start With Why* or *Talk Like Ted* and probably a completely neglected starting point for building better relationships for most people.

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- What a flight and fight response look like in our modern day life
- Which parts of our body are the most honest (it's neither your hands nor your face)

- Where you immediately give away when you're stressed
- How you sometimes accidentally threaten people with your hands
- Why you touch your neck or face and quiver when you're uncomfortable
- How to spot when someone is answering a question with a lie

## **Who would I recommend the What Every Body Is Saying summary to?**

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The 17 year old who feels misunderstood by his friends, the 37 year old, who makes her money mostly from communicating with people and building relationships, and anyone who doesn't know what their F4 key does on the keyboard.