

BODY LANGUAGE

Reading between the words

WHY BODY LANGUAGE?

60% of communication is non-verbal.

You gain a competitive edge by being able to read body language.

You'll learn to manipulate your own body language. Confident people have confident body language, but by forcing yourself to appear confident you also make yourself more confident.

HOW TO OBSERVE

Everyone has a default set of behaviors, you have to establish a baseline.

Some pacifying behaviors are natural, they aren't all signs of discomfort. You need to look for clusters of good / bad signs.

Don't give away you're observing. It has to become second nature.

HIGH LEVEL GUIDE

Anything that exposes you or makes you vulnerable is a sign of confidence

Anything that looks like you're protecting yourself is a sign of discomfort, as are any indications of a desire to "fight" or "fly"

READING THE FACE

Signs of Comfort / Confidence

Raising eyebrows when greeting someone or making a point



WHY?

Raising your eyebrows like this lets more light into your eyes.

More light = being able to see more. Your body is responding to a positive stimulus by wanting to see more of it

Head tilt, exposing the neck



WHY?

Your neck is one of your two most vulnerable parts of your body.

Exposing your neck to someone shows you trust they won't kill you.

This is part of why "necking" feels good too, it's a sign of trust.

Nodding head in agreement with statement



WHY?

It's an unintentional display of agreement with yourself

It shows that deep down you really believe and agree with what you're saying

This is why it's good to nod along with other people too

READING THE FACE

Signs of discomfort, low-confidence, or deception

Blocking the eyes by squinting



Or by putting
something in
front of them



WHY?

We naturally shield our eyes from things that we don't want to see.

It could be something scary, annoying, mean, anything “bad.” It’s a defense mechanism.

Pursing lips
tightly



WHY?

It's our body subconsciously restricting our speech.

Most common when someone said something we disagree with; our body is trying to prevent us from responding in a way that could cause trouble.

Facial
Touching /
Stroking



WHY?

First, this is a “pacifying behavior,” it’s something we do to relax ourselves.

Second, this gets your hands moving near your neck/face in case you need to quickly defend yourself.

It can be a sign of boredom or insecurity though. You just have to judge the situation.

BUT...

As with many things, this has its exceptions.

If you're in a dating situation and the other person is adjusting their hair, etc. it's a form of preening and indicates attraction.

Context is key.



Like this!

Looking away/down implies disinterest or low confidence



WHY?

If we're not confident in what we're saying, we don't want the other person to know.

So we break eye contact so they can't "see it" in our eyes.

And we look for exits in case we need to escape.

Even though the most skilled experts are only ~60% effective at detecting lies, we still think people can do it.

READING THE ARMS

Signs of Comfort / Confidence

Moving freely and emotively. Anything defying gravity.



WHY?

Defying gravity requires effort, and when we're unconfident we tend to not do things that are effortful.

This also gets your arms away from your body where it's harder to defend yourself.

Hands on hips implies a sense of dominance



As does putting your hands behind your head while sitting



WHY?

This is called “hooding.” Think of it as our version of a lion’s mane or a cobra’s hood.

It means we’re very confident, and don’t need to protect ourselves.

We’re making ourselves “bigger” to appear more powerful and to take up more territory.

We’re also making our lungs very vulnerable to attack, a sign of high confidence.

BUT...

A guy putting his hands behind his head in a room with at least one woman and multiple guys is asserting that he's the "alpha male," and frequently that he's interested in at least one of the women there.

It can also be an indication that someone doesn't respect the opinion of whoever's speaking or believes themselves better/smarter.

READING THE ARMS

Signs of discomfort, low-confidence, or deception

Arms close to your side and succumbing to gravity



WHY?

When we're low on confidence we don't want to make effortful movements.

Also this protects our lungs which are most accessible from our sides.

Arms behind back as if hiding something



WHY?

It tells whoever's facing you that you could have something dangerous hidden behind your back, a way of bluffing that you're powerful.

It also protects you from touching something you see as bad or harmful.

READING THE TORSO

Signs of Comfort / Confidence

Leaning in to the conversation



WHY?

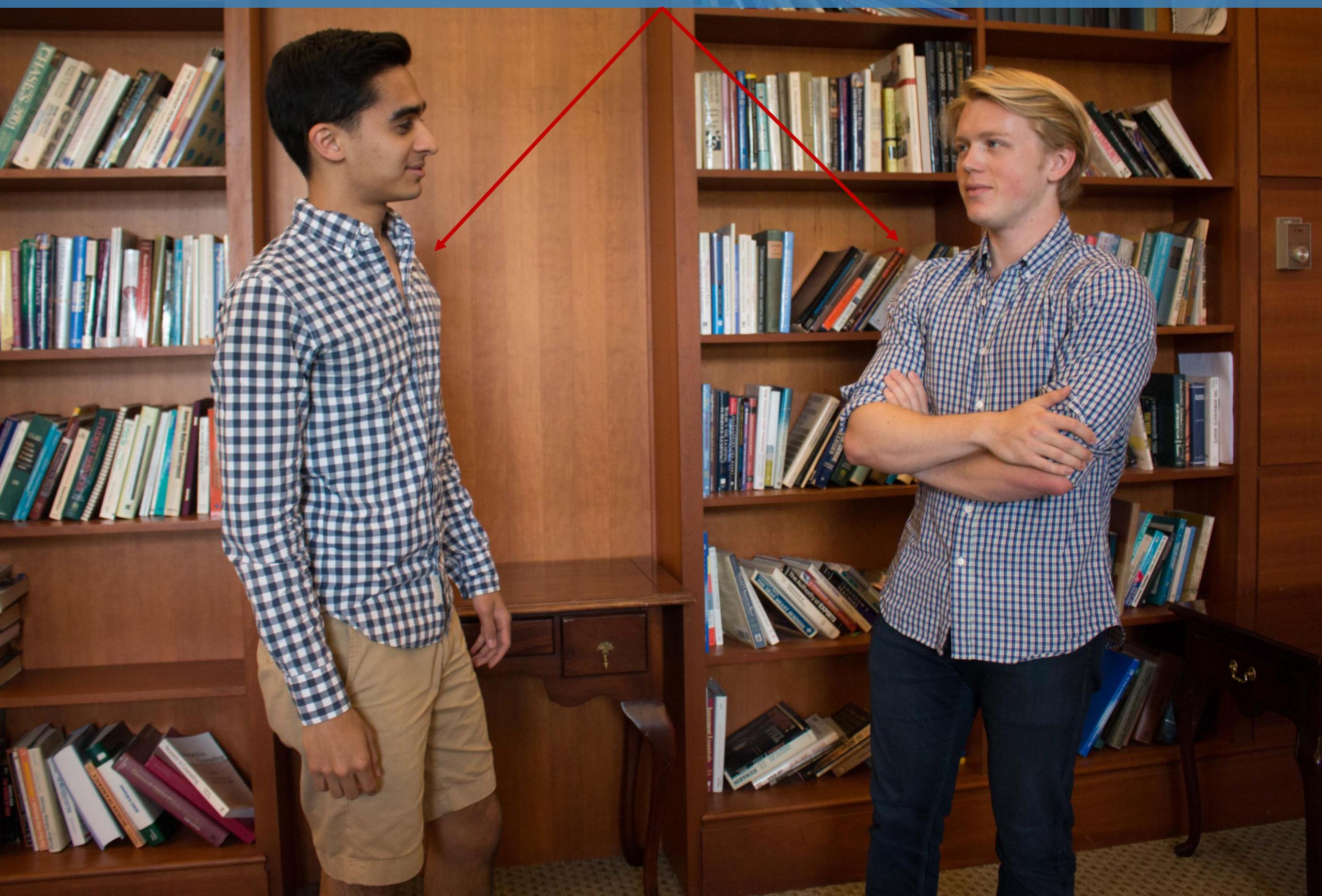
We naturally want to be near things/people we like, so we lean towards them.

Also a slight bow is a hard position to defend yourself from because you're off balance.

READING THE TORSO

Signs of discomfort, low-confidence, or deception

Leaning away from the conversation



WHY?

Indicates that you don't want to be near them.

Also makes an escape easier since part of you is already moved in that direction.

Turtling, pulling shoulders up to head



WHY?

This protects your neck, one of your most vulnerable areas.

Turning torso away from someone



WHY?

This protects all of your organs at once, especially your heart which is more vulnerable from the front.

It also has you turned slightly towards an escape route if they attack.

Blocking the chest more than normal



WHY?

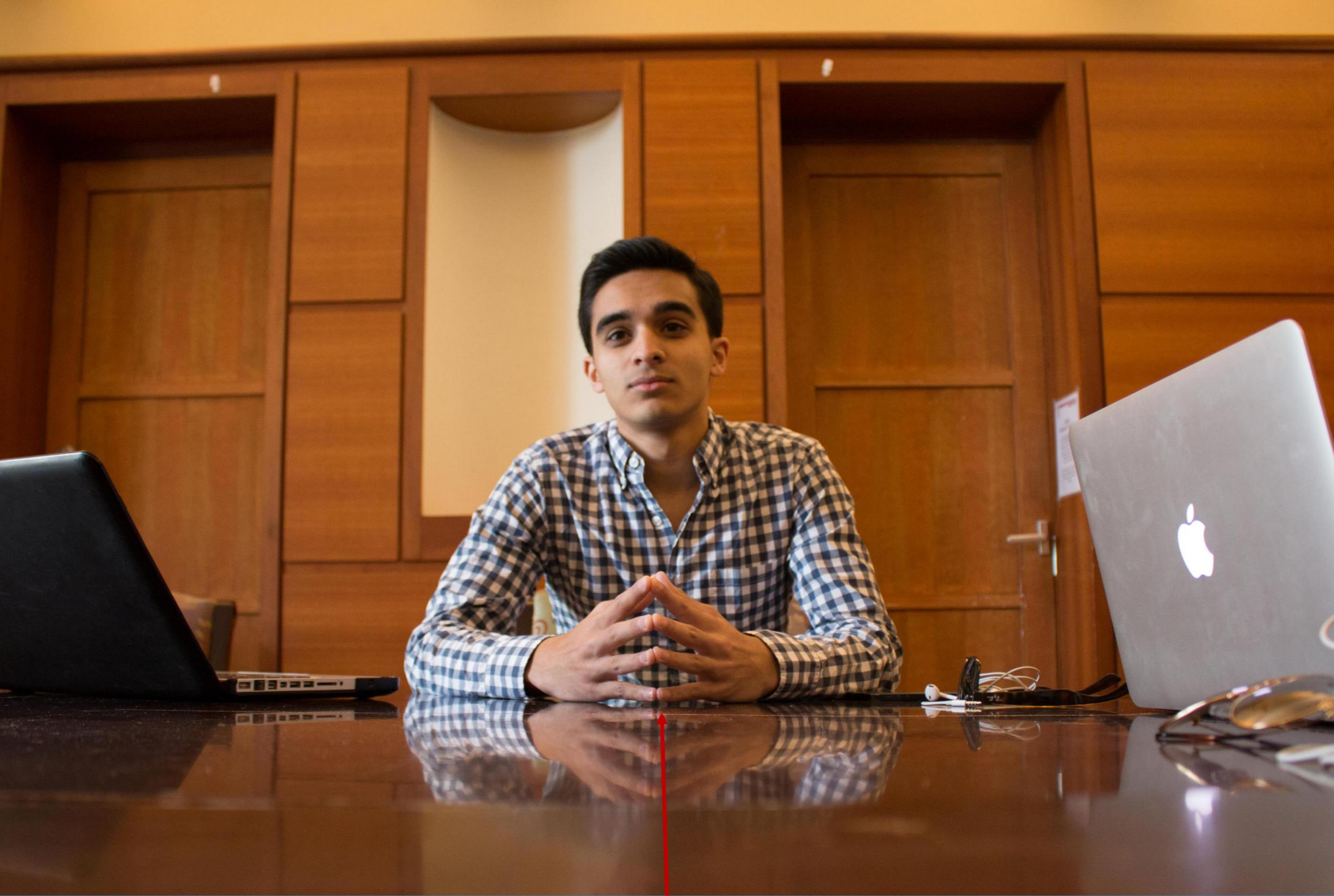
This is again protecting your organs, especially your heart.

It's also referred to as "ventral denial."

Notice that Adil's arms are crossed higher up on his chest than the more natural and comfortable position Nat is in.

READING THE HANDS

Signs of Comfort / Confidence



Steepling

WHY?

It's hard to move your hands into a defensive posture from this position.

Also most times when someone has their thumbs up, they're feeling confident.



Thumbs up and out of pockets

WHY?

The “thumbs up” gesture in any context is a sign of confidence.

This is also called “crotch framing.” You’re using your hands to draw attention to your crotch area... which is why it’s more common for men to do this.



Fingers interlaced, thumbs up

WHY?

Same thing, thumbs up is always a sign of confidence.

This is similar to steepling, except that only the thumbs are up instead of all five fingers.

READING THE HANDS

Signs of discomfort, low-confidence, or deception



Self-preening during a conversation

WHY?

It indicates you think you're more interesting than whatever is being said or than the person talking.

BUT...

Again the dating example applies. In that context you can't read too much into this because it could be a sign of attraction.

The key there is where the person is looking during the preening.



Fingers interlaced, thumbs hidden

WHY?

This is similar to a thumbs down pose, and indicates disagreement or uncertainty.

It's a very subtle variation on the steepling or interlaced with thumbs up pose. All you have to observe is what their thumbs are doing.



Thumbs in pockets, fingers out

WHY?

Same reason, it's a thumbs down pose that shows uncertainty or unconfidence.

Also to do this comfortably you have to roll your shoulders forward a bit, instead of pulling them back like you would in a confident pose.

READING THE LEGS

Signs of Comfort / Confidence



Crossing legs towards someone

WHY?

You're pointing your foot towards them which means you're interested in them / want to be near them.

You're also exposing your femoral artery, one of the most vulnerable spots on your body.

And it's a form of *isopraxis*, or imitation of another's behavior. We most frequently demonstrate this with our legs because we think about their positioning the least.



Pointing toes towards someone

WHY?

Feet indicate where we want to go / want to be.

By pointing our feet at someone we're saying we want to be there with them, and we feel comfortable there.



Casually balancing on one leg

WHY?

If you're on one leg you're in a very poor defensive position, you have to trust someone won't attack you to stand like that.

People will only do this when they're comfortable in their environment.

READING THE LEGS

Signs of discomfort, low-confidence, or deception



Feet pointed away or towards door

WHY?

Again, feet tell us where someone wants to go. Pointing away means they want to leave.

Pointing towards the door is also a sign they want to leave. Someone who only crosses their legs towards the door is saying the same thing.



Spreading feet during conversation

WHY?

Implies that they feel the need to get on more solid footing. A wide stance is confident, but starting closed and moving wider is a bad sign.

This is the opposite of standing on one foot. On one foot you're easy to push over. In a wide stance you're on better footing.



Subtle inward foot pointing

WHY?

Femoral artery again. This makes it harder to reach from someone in front of you.

In many sword fighting martial arts, you stand with your toes pointed inwards in order to protect the insides of your legs from attackers.



Feet pulled under, weight forward

WHY?

Try this. Put your feet out in front of you and try to stand up, then pull them under your chair and try to stand up.

Them being under you makes your escape much quicker since you can stand straight up instead of having to shift your weight forward first.

Also if there's someone across the table you're pulling your legs away from them to create distance.

PULLING IT TOGETHER

Now you know how to read others' body language, and manipulate your own.

Make sure that in your speeches in the future you're conveying confidence, and start observing the body language of those around you.

Send any questions to Nat.