

**The Power of Nonverbal Communication**

**How You Act**

**Is More Important**

**Than What You Say**

**Henry H. Calero**

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**The Power of Nonverbal Communication**

**How You Act Is More Important Than What You Say**

**First edition**

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**How You Act Is More Important Than What You Say**

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**Dedication**

To Yen and Christina.

Henry H. Calero

Redwood City, California

Summer 2005

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**Introduction: Nonverbal Cues Are Critical**

**Introduction**

**Nonverbal Cues Are Critical**

Whenever we perceive information that is not written or spoken, we comprehend something that is *nonverbal*. Humans have the capability of receiving information besides what is written or spoken. Our senses of touch, taste, seeing, hearing, smells, signs, symbols, colors, facial expres-sions, gestures, posture, and intuition are the primary sources of the non-verbal messages we receive. It is a silent language not formally taught, and which has existed before language was invented.

The only humans who do not have the capacity for perceiving non-verbal communication are those who are autistic.

One of the foremost experts of autism is Simon Baron-Cohen who teaches at Trinity College in England. She says:

*It’s a developmental disability that begins in childhood with the inability to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and see the world from someone’s else’s perspective; but also the in-ability to figure out what they might be thinking. So these children literally cannot interpret what a frown or raised eye-brow might mean.*

When one considers the biological antiquity of human nonverbal com-munication—existing for thousands of years before formal spoken lan-guages were invented—it is amazing how little is known about nonverbal

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communication and the small amount of research and study which has been conducted worldwide. For thousands of years, mankind has used wordless messages to communicate thoughts, attitudes, ideas and emo-tions, by using gestures, posture, facial expressions, sounds and symbols. The biggest mystery in all of this is why so few people have made the effort to study these meanings.

**Kinesics and Nonverbal Communication**

One of the first researchers on nonverbal communication was Ray Birdwhistell, who used the term “kinesics” in 1952 when he wrote *Intro-duction to Kinesics*. The first time the phrase “nonverbal communica-tion” was used in 1955 was by G.W. Hewes when he wrote *World Dis-tribution of Certain Postural Habits*.

This was followed by Irving Goffman’s *Behavior in Public Places* which used the term “body idiom.” That, in turn, led to Julius Fast in 1971 using the now common expression “body language” in the book he wrote by the same name.

Mankind’s knowledge of nonverbal communication would have pro-gressed further if others besides Ray Birdwhistell had devoted more time to researching the subject. During the 1950s, Birdwhistell was just about the only person studying this method of communication. His effort has contributed greatly to our present day knowledge and understanding of nonverbal communication.

From the literature that *does* exist, there some useful quotes about the essence of nonverbal communication; my favorite comes from the au-thor E. Sapir:

*We respond to gestures with an extreme alertness and, one might almost say, in accordance with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all.*

Considering those words, we begin to understand in a small measure the matter and substance of nonverbal communication and its effect in human society.

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**Little Is Absolutely Certain**

When we rely solely on verbal communication, we often have prob-lems in communicating. I can never clearly say to you what is completely going on inside me. And the same applies to you when you speak to me. It is only when all my senses perceive information through verbal and nonverbal communication that I’m close to understanding and compre-hending what you’re feeling and then I can comprehend the feelings and emotions you have.

Albert Mehrabian explained this process in his book, *Silent Mes-sages,* when he wrote: “We are excessively sensitized to words and havevery few terms for characterizing nonverbal behavior:” And, I might add, it is the congruent or incongruent silent messages that greatly influence the message a person receives.

**Our verbal language is one dimensional, whereas the mind is multidimensional. Language can only describe one sequence of events at a time; if several occur simultaneously, language has to jump from one to another along parallel lines which creates great confusion to the person listening. And this process is compounded when we realize the mind has the capacity to absorb different information simultaneously along parallel lines.**

Regardless of how fast *you* may speak, *I* will always be able to think faster and, when I add all my other senses, what you have said is like a tricycle trying to catch up with a jet airplane. Then, to complicate matters further, we need to add another dimension to nonverbal communication— when people speak, they often say things that have hidden meanings.

In one of my previous books, *Metatalk* (co-authored with Gerard Nierenberg), we wrote about some examples of what people sometimes say and what they mean. Statements such as “Don’t worry about me” are usually problematic. When people say this, you better keep a close watch on them because they might do something unexpected. Or, when people

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say, “I’ll do my best,” it often means they don’t expect to do something well. And, when a person says, “trust me,” it would be wise to keep a sharp eye on him.

Not only do people unconsciously use words to conceal their feel-ings, they also unknowingly reveal what they feel through their body lan-guage—especially during times when they are under stress. In another book I wrote with Gerard Nierenberg, *How to Read a Person Like a* *Book*, we described in words and illustrations how individuals communi-cate their feelings in a nonverbal manner.

Before the expression “body language” was used in the early 1970s, it was the study of kinesics in the 1950s that clearly demonstrated the nonverbal content in body gestures and posture. (The word *kinesics* is derived from a Greek root word meaning “movement.”)

Psychotherapist Sidney M. Jourad, who wrote *The Transparent Self,* uses kinesics in his practice. When he conducts analysis with patients he uses what he calls a “wiggle chair,” which is a reclining chair equipped with a movement transducer. At times when his patients sit in the chair they will show an increase in body movement when asked to disclose personal information that is very sensitive. Using the chair, he has learned to what degree patients are withholding personal information that needs to be revealed.

**As interesting as body language and kinesics might be, this book is concerned with a much larger and broader subject of nonverbal communication, one that is considerably more complex than the mere movement of the human body.**

There is nonverbal communication in the clothes we wear, the styles and colors. In touching, tasting and smelling, the sounds we hear and the signs and symbols we see. Our dreams are full of nonverbal messages that we seldom understand. We encounter nonverbal communication in all as-pects of life, in nature and the environment. In reality, the things we speak

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**Introduction: Nonverbal Cues Are Critical**

or read ultimately take a back seat to the vast and incredible world of nonverbal communication. Most of what we know of our world and people is nonverbal—yet we pay little attention to it.

**Nonverbal Cues Help Get Messages Across**

Our awareness of nonverbal communication is vital not only for our survival, but also for understanding the needs, feelings, emotions and thoughts of others. Research has revealed that messages between indi-viduals are conveyed 55 percent from the body, 38 percent from the voice—inflection, intonation, volume—and 7 percent from the words.

Considering this, it is absolutely amazing nonverbal communication is not taught in our educational system. Every child should be given formal instruction to compliment what they already know subconsciously: Greater understanding of nonverbal communication will enhance the quality of our lives and also will give us the ability to relate to others with a greater degree of understanding, empathy, sympathy and compassion.

**It is important to be a good listener and to read and compre-hend the meaning of the written word; but it is equally im-portant to be aware of nonverbal messages that are con-stantly communicated. A person’s behavior when interact-ing with others can tell you as much as the words he or she uses.**



There are some groups of people who, for centuries, have relied on their nonverbal awareness to describe the conduct and behavior of indi-viduals and the characters in their novels and stories by describing their nonverbal action. Writers, poets, playwrights and philosophers have studied and written about human conduct that reflected a range of emotions, atti-tudes and feelings through their nonverbal movements.

The purpose of this book is to heighten the awareness of our senses to perceive nonverbal messages. This means awakening senses we’ve

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often taken for granted. To understand how myriad emotions, thoughts, attitudes and feelings are communicated nonverbally, we have to define some hazy terms and examine real-world examples.

Our fundamental function as human beings is to increase our exper-tise and to see ourselves in other people. Mastering the power of nonver-bal communication helps us in our daily working lives; but it also helps us achieve these more profound goals.

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**Chapter 1: Touch**

**Chapter 1**

**Touch**

Humans are in constant physical contact with the outside world through the tactile sensations of their skin. Touch may be the most primitive of our senses. It is the most *essential*.

That’s why I think it’s the right place to start.

How, where and when you touch people—and I mean *physically* *touch* them—may well be the thing they remember most about meetingyou. If it’s decisive, pleasant and nonthreatening, you can seem like a strong, warm and open person. If it’s hesitant, awkward or inappropriate…well, things will probably go downhill from there.

**So, some argue, the safe play is to avoid touching people alto-gether. Better to avoid the matter entirely than do it badly and come off like a neurotic or a creep. But that attitude misses a critical element of nonverbal communication. It also breeds a sterile approach to dealing with people that, frankly, isn’t effective.**

People *want* to have physical contact with the world. They just don’t want to be invaded, molested or abused; and every person has his or her own notions of what these words mean. A savvy person looks for the

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signs of what the other feels about physical contact and the right opportu-nity to make this contact simply and well.

Before it is born, a fetus feels not only the amniotic fluid that sur-rounds it, but also the mother’s heartbeat. And, immediately after birth, an infant is exposed to nonverbal communication when touched by others.

Humans have approximately 20 square feet of skin on the body and millions of touch sensors that are connected to a brain that records plea-sure, pain, temperature, pressure and a variety of other sensations. A clinical research study conducted at the University of California estimates the number of touch sensors at 19,000 per square inch. And other studies have discovered physical pain may be reduced through mental activity.

The physician and author Lawrence K. Frank wrote an article en-titled *Tactile Communication* in which he stated, “a human’s skin is the envelope that contains the human organism.”

The power of touch is so effective that studies conducted at the Min-nesota-based Mayo Clinic have demonstrated premature babies grow 40 percent faster than those who do not receive the same amount of stroking. Others studies also reveal early tactile experience is crucial toward later mental and emotional development in humans.

Still other research indicates that children who have had little physical contact during infancy tend to walk and talk later in their development. Also, a large number of children who later became schizophrenic were found to have been deprived of handling and mothering when they were infants.

**How we are touched—as well as when and by whom—means more than most of us realize. Highly intuitive people realize this without thinking about it; the rest of us can use touch to our advantage if we understand its mechanics and practice working with them.**



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**Touch Is Complex, Often Changing**

That said, people also want to maintain a zone of physical indepen-dence that’s popularly known as “personal space.”

**What exactly is personal space? There’s no legal definition (though some courts have considered the question). And it seems to change, given different circumstances. But most mental health experts agree that it’s a zone extending between six and 18 inches in front of a person’s chest and face that raises ancient fight-or-flight responses when encroached upon by another person.**

A sense of personal space is based on both psychological and physi-cal factors. Recognizing the space—and the factors—is important to us-ing touch effectively.

There are certain parts of the body more sensitive than others, the fingertips being the most sensitive and our back and calves, the least. On the face, the lips are the most sensitive and the ear lobes, the least.

We feel more pain in the sensitive areas than in other parts of the body. Therefore, controlling the mind to feel less pain through hypnosis has proven its value as a pain reliever.

**Perhaps the greatest comment on the ability to communicate through touching was written by Helen Keller who wrote of an incident when she was touching her dog: “He was rolling on the grass...his fat body resolved, stiffened and solidified into an up-right position, and his tongue gave my hand a lick... if he could speak, I believe he would say that paradise is attained by touch.”**

One extraordinary aspect about touching is we are unable to tickle ourselves. We can only *be* tickled. Somehow the brain knows the differ-

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ence. Apparently, it is not the touch that triggers the feeling—but what is occurring in our brain.

Humans are not the only species on earth that has sensors on our bodies. Primates also have sensitive and less sensitive areas similar to humans; as do thick-skinned animals like elephants, rhinoceros and pigs. “Pachyderm” means thick skin; although an elephant may have very thick skin on most of it’s body, the end of its trunk is very sensitive.

It is interesting that humans, primates and elephants have similar sen-sitive areas of the body. The elephant uses the trunk in the same manner as humans and primates use their hands.

Our brains play tricks on us and fools the rest of our bodies. We seem to be sensitive to the slightest touch on some parts of our body, but are almost totally insensitive to the clothes we wear—unless of course we put on extremely heavy garments, then the sheer weight becomes appar-ent. And our brains also fool us by diverting our attention in some in-stances when we don’t feel any sensation whatsoever.



**A good example of this diversion is when a magician engages us in a conversation, distracts our attention and—in the pro-cess of the interaction—deftly removes our wristwatch with-out raising our awareness of the theft.**

The major difference between humans and primates with regard to touching is that in adulthood the touching does not cease with primates, as it does with humans. In fact, in some ways, it increases.

Primate studies reveal that adults spend a considerable amount of time each day grooming one another. Moreover, grooming is a way of communicating among primates about membership in a particular tribe. It’s also a way of developing friendship and reducing stress. Among pri-mates, touching is a nonverbal sign of inclusiveness.

The amount of touching humans do in life decreases considerably after infancy and childhood. Touching another person conveys many subtle

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nonverbal messages, love, caring, empathy, sympathy, concern, under-standing, authority—plus others.

A child starts early in life by touching things to learn and explore the world. The touch of a child discovers such things as cold, warm, hot, hard, soft, rough, etc. These tactile messages will later in life be very im-portant for protection and survival.

In most Western cultures, this experimental touching subsides as a child grows. That’s an unfortunate repression of natural human curiosity.

**Tactile Contact in Daily Life**

In many cultures, touching is reserved for those you know well— family, friends, neighbors, your favorite waiter or waitress, etc. Seldom will a person make physical contact with someone who is a total stranger. For example, when people are in an elevator they keep their distance from each other so as not to touch. And, if they’re so crowded that their bodies come in contact, you have a group of very uptight people.

Why should they be upset? We all started life being touched by com-plete strangers when we were born, what happened between that time and later in adulthood? If we did a great deal of touching when we were young, why didn’t it continue into adulthood?

The obvious answer: puberty and the development of sexual urges.

Sexuality involves many things—but touch is the central element.

There can be little doubt that sexuality and sexual expression cause a lot of trouble in work and business environments. Most business people feel that sex is so dangerous that anything that even *hints* at it should be avoided. But this can lead to puritanism and neurotic repression.

**In crowded conditions, there are many natural human responses that business people repress. They seldom *look* at each other. People crowded into an elevator or subway will look up or down, at the floor numbers… close their eyes. Anything to avoid direct eye contact. Why? Because looking at someone is a nonverbal message that means you may be interested in that person.**

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Not every touch is sexual. Common sense should inform tactile con-tact that you make in public. This means that you should:

* look before you touch—some people will signal their discomfort with any contact by crossing arms, crossing legs and buttoning or folding clothes when they meet you;
* keep it short—don’t cling, grasp or grope others;
* announce your presence by addressing a person as you approach him or her;
* keep any contact above the waist and outer shell of the body—hands, arms, shoulders and back;
* avoid touching someone’s face, head, chest or stomach;
* keep eye contact as much as possible when touching someone; and
* maintain physical contact only long enough to give a quick nonverbal cue, then step back and let the person re-establish personal space.

The point is that you can use physical touch to convey important nonverbal cues: welcoming, inclusion, sympathy, etc. You just want to make sure that you don’t surprise anyone in a bad way.

**Of course, anyone in business will know there’s a common excep-tion to this rule of reserve: At a convention—where people from various places come together over a common interest—it’s not unusual to see and hear individuals speak to others with a great deal of eye contact. Even in an elevator.**

**Why Some People Remain Repressed**

Most people associate touching from an early age with parents and immediate family members. It’s intimate. By the time we’re old enough to

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walk and start meeting other people, we have unconsciously learned cer-tain rules of touching and what parts of the body we are allowed to touch…and allow to be touched.

The rules we learned—nonverbally—an early age later became fun-damental principles concerning the act of touching and the rules usually last for an entire lifetime.

But there are some exceptions.

**The late comedian Flip Wilson once remarked that the only reason people went to sensitivity training sessions was to learn how to touch each other. During sensitivity or diversity training, partici-pants are often instructed to touch complete strangers, in the hope that they will learn to express their feelings more openly. Sometimes, this works.**

The rigid rules of touching may temporarily be forgotten during times of great sorrow such as a death, injury, hospitalization, etc. At such times, the rules are forgotten for the time being because it is a time when even strangers may touch or embrace to show their empathy, sympathy and compassion.

Physical contact may also occur among family members who tend not to be overly friendly with each other during times when there is grief in the family. The situation seems to dictate that it is an occasion to disregard the rules of whom to touch.



**A smart person who understands nonverbal communication can recognize the signs that someone is willing to lower ordi-nary inhibitions about physical contact. These signs can in-clude open or upturned palms, a slow head tilt, a slight shrug of the shoulders, a raised eyebrow and eye contact with a smile. But, even if you see the signs, keep the contact light and quick.**

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**A Personal Memory that Makes the Point**

When I was very young, a member of our extended family died and I attended the church service with my immediate family. The service was attended by many distant family members, in-laws and friends; some whom I had never met and others whom I had seen only once or twice. I barely knew anyone’s names. What I did know—from hearing my parents talk— was that several members of the extended family were not on speaking terms with each other.

Our family arrived early at the church and sat in a pew near the altar. During the next 15 minutes, many others arrived and sat in the rows be-hind us. Since I was curious, I occasionally turned around to look. They were definitely strangers: I didn’t recognize most of them.

After the church service, my parents invited everyone to our home for a big meal. I knew that my mother had been working for several days to prepare everything. This was going to be a big deal.

**When the family members and friends started arriving, I watched some of the people my parents had told me were mad at each other. Were they going to start yelling? Throwing punches? No. They didn’t move quickly or sharply. They didn’t cross arms or look away from each other. From the start, they moved calmly and made eye contact. They were open to one another. In fact, they shook hands and hugged each other.**

I received my own surprise when a very stout woman, whom I had never met before, picked me up and gave me a big kiss and a hug as though she had known me all my life.

At the end of the day, there was not a disparaging word heard in our household. All the conversation was warm and supportive. I joined sev-eral cousins about my age and we had a grand time gossiping about the adults and their strange behavior. We also discussed which one of them gave the wettest kiss.

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By the end of the day, everyone felt familiar. Very quickly, these people had gone from being complete strangers to being…well, family. What had done it? The hugs, kisses and close seating.

**Breaking through Awkwardness, Hesitation**

You may recall a similar occasion in your life, when you discovered that the rules of touching were thrown aside due to special circumstances. Sometimes it can occur among total strangers—like on VE Day, when the World War II ended in Europe, or VJ Day, when it ended in the Pacific. On those occasions, complete strangers hugged and kissed each other without much inhibition. Or constraint.

In many cases, people want to release these constraints. They seek relief and emotional expression. But they are conditioned to look for this relief only a particular times. A smart person sees those opportunities whenever they occur.

There is another example of such unusual behavior when the rules of touching are completely forgotten. It occurred in New York City in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The people who were in the city when the World Trade Centers fell later stated that visitors, workers and residents behaved alike. They helped each other in every way. They shared meals, drinks, accommodations, etc. The normally gruff manner of New Yorkers was gone. Everyone was in the same boat—and all the rules concerning touching and conduct were thrown out the window.

**The whole world, watching in fear at how New York would re-cover, was moved by the affection people showed one another. Even New York mayor Rudolph Guiliani—known to that point as cold, law-and-order type—saw that this was a time for something else. He hugged distraught people…men and women…and said simple, kind words to encourage them to hang on. Public opinion about him soared.**

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After New York dug out of the debris, most of the population re-turned to their *modus operandi* and the rules of touching and conduct were once again in effect; allowing sufficient space between individuals whenever possible on subways, buses, trains, elevators, etc.

Of these, the elevator is once again the most uncomfortable—be-cause of the small mount of space. People avoid each other’s gaze and stare at the ceiling or the lights indicating the floors in the building.

For years, I’ve been convinced that elevators should have the walls painted depicting the history of a specific city. Thus, when in such crowded situations, a person has something to look and at the same time learn some historical facts about the city. And, since a large number of people in hotel elevators are visitors, it would be worthwhile and educational.

**Seeing the Chance to Reach Out**

Whether we are in an elevator, standing in line at a fast food store, market, bank or other similar location, there are unwritten rules concern-ing the distance we must stand apart so as to not touch one another.

**Humans are not alone in this behavioral pattern; birds also follow the same rule. Just take a look at a group of birds sitting on a power line in any city and you can readily observe that birds also establish equidistance from each other—like humans. Sometimes the distance between them is so exact, it is within a few inches.**

A common situation in which you have to establish equidistance is when you are in a movie theatre. When you take a seat next to a stranger, you have only one armrest which both may rest elbows. In order not to let elbows touch, you have three options; allow the other person to have the space and you place your elbow close to your body without touching them. When you do this, you must keep your elbow from wandering dur-ing exciting parts of the movie.

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The second option is to become the dominant elbow and not leave any room for them to share the armrest with you. And thus challenge them whenever they attempt to do so. In many cases this will work if you were seated first and claimed the territorial rights to the armrest, the other per-son will be forced into the first option and let you have it.

Finally, the third option is sharing the armrest with your neighbor without touching one another. This is possible if one person takes the forward portion of armrest and the other takes the rear part. Most armrests are approximately 18 inches long and the elbow only needs a few inches on which to rest.

**Option number one indicates—nonverbally—that someone is shy, not aggressive and willing to let another person invade his or her personal space. Option number two suggests that the person is aggressive and not willing to share anything, including armrest space. Option number three suggests that the person is willing to share space…but perhaps not inclined to do so without some sort of negotiation.**

**Touch and Social Hierarchies**

There is another form of touching that does not communicate love, concern, compassion, sympathy or empathy instead it communicates power, status, domination and authority. It has its own established rules and if you don’t abide by those rules it may get you into hot water. The unwritten rules have been in effect since the earliest of times and in every culture. The rules are nonverbal communicators of the individual’s high status and power.

For example, have you ever seen a photo in which someone is touching the Pope or Queen Elizabeth of England? Or how about the President of the United States or the CEO of your company?

During my 30 years of research on this book, I have collected count-

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less photos from newspapers and magazines. I have discovered when a person of lower rank in a hierarchy touches someone of a higher rank, it is not to communicate authority—but for purposes of ingratiating themselves with that person.



**When individuals of equal rank meet, it is interesting to see which of the two is more dominant by touching first or shak-ing hands and touching with the free hand. I have several photos where two men are shaking hands and both grabbing the other person’s forearm with the other hand as each one tries to establish dominance.**

In my photo collection, I also have an interesting example published in a newspaper years ago showing the King of Jordan welcoming Queen Elizabeth of England as she walks on a red carpet especially laid down for her arrival. As the Queen disembarks from her aircraft, the King of Jor-dan escorts her and comes within inches of placing his hand on her lower back and touching her.

The photo caused quite a stir in England when it was published in the British newspapers. And the reason for the uproar was because no one in the world is entitled to touch the queen in public, not even her husband.

**Master and Servant, etc.**

There is an element of status connected with touching. A doctor is permitted to touch patients, but seldom do you see a patient touching the doctor. And if the patient did, I’m sure the doctor would be very sur-prised. This isn’t because the touch would be inappropriate…it would just be unexpected.

In most business environments and organizations, touching is also a nonverbal message that signals a superior/subordinate relationship. And in most cases it is the boss who does the touching. This can demonstrate who the decision maker is among a group of business people.

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Often while touching, it is not unusual for the boss to say to the sub-ordinate, “you did a good job on that project,” or uttering a similar state-ment. Whereas, a subordinate would surely never dare touch their boss and utter, “you’re a good boss.”

**Touching also plays a major role in the success of a politician who is seeking an office or running for re-election. The ability to “press the flesh” and to appear sincere and realistic is a great asset some politicians have—and others lack.**

As an example, Al Gore was a very cerebral individual who ran for the presidency of the U.S. in 2000; he was never totally convincing when mixing with American voters and shaking hands with them. Despite the coaching he received in his quest for the highest political office, he was unable to appear comfortable nonverbally and sincere in “pressing the flesh” with the public.

Gore compounded his awkwardness in front of large groups with some other confusing nonverbal cues.

* He followed the advice of one image consultant and wore casual, earth-tone clothes to convey confidence and strength. But this experi-ment clashed with his earlier image as a more formal politician—an image which Gore admitted was closer to his true personality. The brown outfits didn’t work.
* He made a point of kissing his wife passionately and lengthily after he accepted his party’s nomination. By all accounts, Gore and his wife share a close, passionate relationship (not as strained as some politi-cal marriages). But their kiss looked contrived to many of the voters who saw it.
* In one of his televised debates with George W. Bush, Gore approached Bush at several points in a manner that violated all of the common-sense guidelines for touch: he came unannounced, lingered too long and didn’t convey any message.

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None of this means that Al Gore is a cold or awkward person. His years in elected office, large and close family and his personal friendships in and out of politics suggest a decent, intelligent fellow. But perhaps he is *so much* a man of ideas and words that he ignores nonverbal cues.

**Al Gore is not alone in this plight. Another cerebral American poli-tician, Adlai Stevenson, was famously uncomfortable “pressing the flesh.” He admitted that his handshakes were unimpressive. Like Gore, Stevenson faced what many considered a weaker op-ponent for the U.S. presidency…and lost.**

Politicians who achieve the presidency—John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush—appear comfortable when mingling with crowds of potential voters, kissing babies and shaking hands. In fact, I have noticed that all of these men used what I call the “politician’s handshake;” that is, shaking with the right hand while touching the voter’s wrist or forearm with the left.

This small nonverbal cue conveys intensity and emotional closeness.

It draws in each voter, even if for just a second.

**An audience or market may not understand every idea that you articulate. But audiences and markets will both make decisions about your message based on how you behave around them. Intensity and closeness are good impressions to make; and making them requires connecting personally with at least some audience or market members. Eye contact and the “politician’s handshake” are time-tested tools for achieving this.**



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**Touching in a Larger Context of Status**

In addition touching others has also nonverbally communicated dif-ferent levels of wealth, power, status and authority. In the same manner as individuals who live on the top floor of a penthouse building probably see themselves as the wealthiest. A judge always is seated at the highest level in a courtroom as well as royalty sits in an elevated throne.

In the classic movie *The Great Dictator*, with Charlie Chaplin play-ing the role of Hitler and Jack Oakie playing Mussolini, there is an ex-ample of trying to use elevation as a sign of power and status. In one scene both of them are sitting next to each other in barber chairs that are at the same level. Then one of them elevates himself by cranking the chair higher that causes the other to do the same thing. This continues until both of them run out of height and wind up at the same level as they started.

**I have observed a similar nonverbal behavior when two men of approximately the same height, who don’t know each other very well, meet for the first time. They both stretch their bodies at-tempting to elevate themselves in order to appear taller. At times, a body rocking motion that I refer to as “the bank guard rock” may accompany the stretching.**

When I was a young lad and banks had one or more guards standing around for security purposes, I recall watching bank guards with a great deal of interest. What I vividly remember was how big they were and how they nonverbally communicated authority in the manner they stood and moved their bodies.

The guards stood very upright and didn’t slouch—thus emphasizing their height. And they communicated their authority nonverbally by putting both hands behind their backs like a commander addressing his troops just before sending them into battle—or like my first sergeant used to do when I was in basic training in the Army.

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And finally, to top off the nonverbal display of authority, the bank guard would occasionally rock back and forth in a heel-to-toe movement as he looked from side to side at the people in the bank. It was almost as if he was communicating, “I’m here to guard this bank and if you think you can come in here and steal the bank’s money, you have made a big mis-take.”

I have also noticed a similar nonverbal display in sporting events when officials’ react to criticism of the judgment calls they make. This usually occurs when an official makes a judgment call on a specific play and a player, coach or manager rushes towards the official to object.

**When the two of them are face-to-face, and much closer to each other than in normal situations, they both stand as tall as they possibly can. And, if there is a obvious difference in their natural height, the taller of the two will make it even more apparent by jutting his chin out and up in a manner of nonverbally saying, “I’m the authority here, you runt.”**

If the player or manager touches the official—in any way—the player or manager is ejected from the game…and may be fined, later. Posturing and yelling is allowed; but touching is strictly forbidden.

That’s an interesting metaphor for how touching is treated by West-ern cultures, in general. I think organized sports are full of useful clues about nonverbal communication; in fact, I spend a whole chapter on these connections later in this book.

**Conclusion**

Touching conveys numerous nonverbal messages constantly trans-mitted in our society. It’s important not only to your individual position in the pecking order of status or authority but also to the social acceptability of your actions, in general.

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**Chapter 1: Touch**

We also learn at an early age that there are some parts of our body that we are not to touch in public. And we are instructed at an early age by parents which parts of another person’s body we’re not to ever touch. The explicit reason for these lessons is practical—the maintenance of ba-sic physical (and, frankly but not exclusively, sexual) hygiene. But the im-plicit reason has more to do with norms of social behavior.

This implicit reason is what has caused the pop singer Michael Jack-son so much trouble. Even if he didn’t sexually abuse the young boys who visited his mansion and compound (the *explicit* reason for cultural rules about touching), he certainly violated the social norms about touching (the *implicit* reason).

In some cultures, touching is very important in relationships and de-veloping new friends. In others, touching in not encouraged. Regardless of which type you may happen to live in, it is nonetheless part of your life and an important nonverbal means of communication.

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**Chapter 2: Smell and Taste**

**Chapter 2**

**Smell and Taste**

Among the most reliable receivers we have for receiving nonverbal information about our world are what biologists call the *chemical senses*— smell and taste.

The two are linked and, in fact, may overlap. The science journal *Nature* has published various studies which conclude that most of whatwe think of as taste is actually smell. One of these studies estimated that three-quarters of the sensations people consider taste are actually smell.

**If you don’t believe this, try the following experiment: Before taking a bite of your favorite dessert, hold your nose so you will be unable to smell. Your taste buds will be able to tell your brain whatever you have eaten is sweet but you’ll be unable to identify the specific flavor of the dish—chocolate or vanilla, etc. Then let go of your nose. Your olfactory senses will kick in and you’ll be able to identify the flavor easily.**

Another key point, with regard to communication: It is impossible to explain how something smells if you have not smelled it before, which is probably the reason poets often use simile (the words *like* or *as*) to de-scribe how something smells, instead an actual description of the smell.

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Our taste buds provide four distinct sensations: sweet, sour, salty and bitter. Everything else that we taste—from the distinct tang of Louisi-ana gumbo to the subtle nuances of a high-end Napa Valley pinot noir— is really short range smell.

However, smell is not only short range; it’s long range, too. Your nose can identify anything from a woman’s perfume to what your next-door neighbor is cooking on the barbecue…to the smell of burning rubber from a car accident three blocks away.

**Smell and taste are important for human survival. Evolutionary biologists point out that humans developed their sense of taste as a protective mechanism—to save a them from eating food that’s rotten or poisonous. Taste can trigger the gag reflex, which liter-ally expels bad things from our bodies. Smell can warn of us of possible danger when something is burning, or if a fire that has not been completely extinguished.**

Any sense that can make a person gag or retch carries potent non-verbal cues. So, smell and tastes are fundamental channels for nonverbal information. But what does this mean to a person trying to master the power of nonverbal communication? True, you can’t use taste in exchanges with others as directly as you can the way you look or how (and whether) you touch them.

**You can use smell, though, which leads less directly to taste. And these channels have a subtle effect on how others per-ceive us. If you doubt that smell is important, keep in mind that it relates to the gag reflex. Anything that can cause such a strong response is worth managing carefully.**



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People sometimes say, “That person just isn’t my taste.” When they say this, they mean the person in question doesn’t appeal to them for many reasons—no single one of which may be easily explained. That’s often how people articulate smell and taste impressions: In broad strokes, with much focus on their responses.

While it’s true that “there’s no accounting for taste,” a smart person needs to be aware of the impressions smell and taste can make. In this chapter, we’ll consider those.

**Olfactory Mechanics**

Smell and taste work together closely. When we eat, chemicals are released from the food in the mouth and in the process of chewing imme-diately travel up the nose. The chemicals then trigger the olfactory recep-tors inside the nose as odors and the two senses create the true flavor of what we are eating, telling the brain all about it. The nonverbal message to the brain is, “I like it,” or “I don’t like it.”

Whenever we have a cold or an allergy and normal breathing is a problem, we notice the food we eat does not seem to have a great deal of flavor. The primary reason is the upper part of nose is unable to receive the chemicals that trigger the olfactory receptors creating the flavor sensa-tion. It is the same as if you held your nose while eating ice cream.

**To understand better how the two senses work, look in the mirror and stick out your tongue and you’ll notice a lot of little bumps on it. They are called *papillae* and contain taste buds; each one has as many as 100 receptors, or taste cells.**

Every person has approximately 10,000 taste cells that are replaced by the human body every two weeks. However, as people age, the body produces fewer of these cells—which explains why senior citizens often are unable to taste certain things in food they could when they were younger.

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This concept is also true with people who smoke and, therefore, have fewer taste cells.

When I was young, I couldn’t understand how my older brother, who smoked a great deal, could eat the spiciest foods on any menu with-out any problem. Now I know: He’d wiped out most of his taste buds smoking through pack after pack of no-filts.

**Is there really such a thing—mechanically—as “good taste?” In other words, do taste buds control how perceptive a person is about fine points of flavor? There’s some debate; the aesthetic refinement that we equate with the popular notion of *taste* is so subjective it’s impossible to measure. Scientists can’t measure whether one person’s taste buds actually make better impres-sions of fine or nuanced flavors than another person’s. Most con-clude that “good taste” is not a mechanical ability…it’s a learned judgment.**

On the other hand, there is such a thing as super taste. And it’s not necessary something that anyone wants.

Linda Bartoshuk of Yale University first discovered ultra tasting abili-ties in individuals while studying saccharin. While most people found sugar substitute sweet and palatable, others sensed a bitter aftertaste. She went on to test hundreds of volunteers with a host of chemicals found in food. About one in four, she discovered, qualified as having *super-taste*—a phrase she coined.

To find out what made super-tasters different, Bartoshuk zeroed in on the tongue’s anatomy. She found that people have different numbers of papillae, with resulting tongue topography that ranges from deserts waste-land to lush forest. A super-taster simply has more taste buds than most people. This is a genetically inherited trait; we are either born with such an ability to sense taste or not. It cannot be developed.

And you probably wouldn’t want to develop super-taste, even if you could. Bartoshuk found that the main result of super-taste was a bad re-

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action to bitter compounds and some spicy foods. It doesn’t actually in-crease the pleasure that super-tasters get from good food or fine wine.

The main point in all of this: Taste is a more subjective sense than the others. The mechanics of taste don’t explain the impressions that different people can take from fine food. Those people’s experiences, attitudes and focus have a lot to do with the results.

*That’s* where a smart person can use nonverbal communication.

**Smell Influences Moods, Emotions**

In addition to the thousands of cells we have for tasting, we have as many for smelling. And these olfactory (smelling) cells have a complex effect on our physical and mental conditions. They seem to influence moods, memory, emotions, the selection of a mate, the immune system, endocrine glands and are also believed to be a major health factor to our physical well-being.

People tend not to pay a great deal of attention the details of smells. We tend to accept most things as smelling nice or foul—without any addi-tional conscious concern.

Other mammals make more of their senses of smell. Famously, blood-hounds can pick up a familiar scent, even if the scent is years old. Animal behavior experts insist that there’s hard science to support the old saying that predators can smell fear in other animals.

And some psychologists argue that we humans gather the same im-pressions… but process them in an instinctual, preconscious manner.

**Separate studies conducted by the University of Chicago and the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia—both published in early 2002—were conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between men and women’s sense of smell. The studies agreed that women had a more acute sense; and that women are influenced in every thing from their moods to their sexual attraction by the smells around them.**

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Another study involved men and women watching happy and sad movies. It revealed that women could sense the different emotional reac-tions by those watching the motion pictures better than men: The research study used swab samples from the armpits of the subjects who were viewing two different movies and the women by smelling the swabs could identity which group was watching which film: While the men did not fare as well as the women when making their choice.

There are differences among various glands in the human body, es-pecially in those near the armpits and crotch. The hair in those areas are scent traps retaining odors, thus women who shave their armpits have less body odor than men, who ordinarily do not shave that part of the body.

In this context, women who claim that they undergo various image, makeup, beauty and spa treatments “for themselves” may be reflecting their keener sense of what they find attractive—even in themselves.

**Triggering Memories**

In terms of nonverbal communication, the most interesting aspect of the sense of smell or taste is how it triggers positive or negative memories and experiences. Memories that sometimes are temporarily forgotten and surface only when the smell or taste brings them back as a forgotten memory.

**This process has moved from the realm of hard science to soft science…to mainstream advertising. Old Spice sells a form of men’s cologne with a series of ads that show girlfriends put-ting up with their boyfriends’ rowdy behavior because the guys’ cologne reminds the gals of their more romantic mo-ments.**



I recall a friend of mine who could not stand to eat hotdogs. Years later, he told me the reason. When he’d been a young boy, he and his father had gone to a nearby drive-in for lunch. After they’d finished their

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hotdogs, they drove home; at an intersection, the driver of another car failed to stop and slammed into them. The other driver was killed in-stantly; my friend and his father were hospitalized for several months. Since the accident, my friend said, every time he smelled a hot dog and mustard, the events of that horrible day flashed across his mind.

The philosopher and critic William James once pointed out that people complain about the melancholy of remembering everything—but would be just as unhappy as if they remembered nothing. Forgetting, he be-lieved, was a mixed blessing. The real trick is to remember just those things we need to know at some later date and to forget the irrelevancies.

Many people use an imperfect version of this trick in their daily lives. If a bit of knowledge is important, it tends to reoccur again and again so that it is always fresh and new; while the irrelevant details do not recur and are soon forgotten.

**Using Smell and Memory**

Trying to manipulate people’s memories can be a dangerous propo-sition. Memory is so personal and so complex that you can’t ever be sure your actions will trigger the response you want. But, as I said in the chap-ter on touch, modern people have become so conservative about trigger-ing the wrong response in others that they miss the opportunity to trigger the *right* one.



**Just as you should observe how various people will react to physical contact and touch accordingly, you should think about how smell can affect people and respond accordingly.**

In the business context, using smell translates mostly into how—or whether—you use cologne or perfume.

It’s become a common tenet of modern business etiquette that using a lot of either is an old-fashioned and ill-advised practice. Of course, too

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much fragrance is a bad thing; it gives the nonverbal messages of vulgarity and even desperation. But the complete lack of fragrance (which some people prefer) leaves an undeniably sterile impression.

I think that fragrance, used subtly and chosen to fit the occasion, can be a great tool of nonverbal communication.

This means more than just splashing on your standby cologne, aftershave or perfume every morning, like you brush your teeth. It means keeping a small selection, with individual scents for times when you want to convey security, aggression, vitality or warmth.

But this leaves some big questions. What scents do people equate with personal qualities? What does intelligence smell like? Reliability? Experience? Warmth? As I’ve tried to show in the examples I’ve used in this chapter, these impressions can be completely subjective. One person’s whetted appetite is another’s nausea.

People who work in the cosmetics and beauty supply industries work with fragrances everyday, developing perfumes for women and colognes (or more recent body sprays) for men. Most agree that the basic fra-grance compounds—and there aren’t as many as you might think—that make up perfumes and colognes do convey rather consistent personality traits. Here is a brief, simple description of these:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Traits** |  |  | **Fragrances that convey them** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **intelligence,** | |  | **cedar, juniper, orange, lime,** | |
| **alertness** | | **rosemary, cinnamon, peppermint** | | |
| **kindness,** | |  | **chamomile, vanilla, jasmine,** | |
| **calm** | |  | **clary sage, lemongrass** | |
| **humor,** | |  | **pepper, marjoram, basil, mint,** | |
| **playfulness** | | **juniper, tangerine** | | |
| **safety,** | |  | **chamomile, orange, jasmine,** | |
| **reliability** | |  | **sandalwood, frankincense** | |

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I’ve left out the more florid traits—things like mystery, sexuality and complexity—that actually make up the bulk of the meanings that perfumes try to convey. Instead, I’m trying to focus on those traits that you might want to convey in the workplace or a business environment.

Of course, in western cultures, women are accustomed to talking bluntly to clerks and consultants at perfume counters about which fra-grances convey what meanings. Men might find this process a little more awkward.

This is one place where men can take some lesson from their friends or colleagues who’d be considered (or consider themselves) so-called “metrosexuals.” This key buzzword of 2004 refers to straight men who embrace some of the fashion sense—including fragrance choices— stereotypically associated with homosexuals.

**The European soccer star David Beckham admits happily that he buys and uses a variety of soaps, lotions, conditioners and colognes…all selected according to his moods, activities and goals at a given day or hour. Beckham is able to engage in these metrosexual concerns without seeming effeminate to his legions of fans. He believes that these effects give him “an edge” in business, sport and life.**

**Using Smell in Everyday Life**

We rely on our smell and taste buds greatly. It tells us a great deal in a crowded subway on a hot summer afternoon and about the passenger’s body odors, or the olfactory smell in an elevator when a person passes gas.

The great late comedian, Jimmy Durante, used to say, “The nose knows.” And indeed it does. Professional chefs and wine tasters trust their nose. And when it is combined with taste, it is a deadly combination that insures the quality of a product.

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However, most of us are not consciously aware of smell as we are of other things in our daily life, but like Jimmy Durante, we should trust that our “nose knows.” Most of us should realize what we smell is an impor-tant indication of what lies ahead or something we have to deal with. And we also all have a good “memory bank” of the pleasant smells we experi-enced in bygone days and the bad smells that we don’t want to remem-ber.

When I was young, a friend of our family claimed he could tell from which culture a person came from by the smell of the body and clothes. He said that not only the perfume or soap one used was a nonverbal clue to their identity, but also the food they ate. He believed the food after it was digested somehow managed to come through the pores of the skin. And as a result of this, the smell of which type of food was eaten indicated the cultural background of each person.

It wasn’t until I served in U.S. Army in the 1950s during the Korean War that I discovered our friend had a point. We had many young Korean men who did a variety of odd jobs for our artillery battalion; they lived with us and moved forward or backward with the battalion, depending on battlefield situations.

Occasionally, they would leave for a few days to visit relatives or friends in nearby villages or cities. And when they returned, we would always know they had been feasting on *kimchi*—because of the smell.

***Kimchi* is a staple of the Korean diet; it’s made from a variety ofpickled vegetables (including cabbage, cucumbers and onions) that’s pungent, spicy and often hotter than any Mexican chili you have ever eaten.**

These support troops would have the distinctive, briny pickle smell on their breathes…and in their skin…for days after their return. But they would gradually lose it after returning to our “standard” American GI ra-tions.

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To us GIs, the briny smell of *kimchi* was odd. To the Koreans, it was home.

**A Basic Issue: B.O.**

I’ve noticed many Americans are reluctant to get too close to other people, lest they smell the others’ body odor. In other cultures—for ex-ample, Europe—people generally stand closer to each other when speak-ing. Simply said, in those other cultures, people are less squeamish about body odors.



**A related fact: Americans purchase more body deodorants (even measured in *per capita* terms) than the people of any other nation. And each year manufacturers continue to in-troduce new ones that promise a more pleasant odor than last year’s best efforts.**

Why are Americans repulsed by how people naturally smell? Per-haps because we have been brainwashed by radio and television adver-tising. When we’re young, we’re impressed with the opinion that body odor is bad; and, once hooked on this concept, we load up on deodor-ants the rest of our life.

But there’s more to the nonverbal cues sent by B.O. than the effects of ads. There are some legitimate personal traits that body odor conveys.

First, and perhaps most important, bad B.O. sometimes implies poor health. People with certain chronic conditions—including high blood pres-sure, kidney problems and some kinds of cancer—will have more intense body odor than healthy people. And poor health is usually *not* a message that anyone wants to convey.

Second, sometimes B.O. simply means poor person hygiene. It’s a fact that people from some cultures and some people in any culture don’t bathe and wash as much as they should. This is not a crime; and it does

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not suggest poor health. But it does convey a lack of considerateness and attention to detail.

Third, B.O. implies poor breeding or upbringing. This is a harsh and possibly unfair fact; but, many times, a fact it is. In England, if a hereditary duke smells bad, he’s still Upper Class; in the U.S., a person who smells bad will be suspected of being born into trailer trash.

So, one cost of a socially fluid culture is that Americans have to con-cern themselves with smelling good—or at least not smelling bad. And that “at least not smelling bad” is what motivates most of our weighty deodorant sales.

**Smell Is Important, Even When People Sniff**

Arab cultures, by contrast, are not as phobic about body odor. Ar-abs will not hesitate to smell each other. But this less-inhibited approach still doesn’t mean it’s okay to smell bad.

Smell plays a particularly important role for the family of a prospec-tive Arab groom when it is first introduced to the prospective bride. Fam-ily members stand very close to the bride-to-be, taking deep breaths while they introduce themselves. The family may reject the prospective bride simply because she does not smell right.

What exactly constitutes this “right” or “wrong” smell is not so clear. My main resource for the mechanics (and they’re extensive) of Arab non-verbal communication is a Westerner who has lived in the Arab world for most of his adult life.

**When I asked him how the groom’s family knows that the in-tended smells right, he shrugged and said, “they just know.” Maybe it’s that expression again, “the nose knows.”**

Other cultures recognize human smells in other ways. One example:

On the island of Bali, when lovers meet they get very close to each other

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and inhale deeply, as though they were smelling the sweetest scent in the world. In New Guinea, when two individuals who are closely connected part, each one puts a hand in the other’s armpit—as a symbol of taking their friend’s odor with them.

**How the Sense of Smell Has Atrophied**

Our keen sense of smell was handed down to us by our primitive ancestors who used it in hunting game, locating a carcass some carnivore had left behind, but also for survival purposes. However, since modern man no longer has to track, hunt, kill or scavenge for food, the acute sense of smell for those purposes is no longer necessary.

When I was young, my family liked to sit and even eat dinner out-doors, during long summer evenings. The others all loved it; I didn’t be-cause mosquitoes loved *me*. Even if I wore a collared shirt with long sleeves, the mosquitoes still found certain spots on my body to bite. This problem became so pronounced that I simply refused to go outside at night with my family—and suffered through many a hot evening in a house without air conditioning.

A family friend (who didn’t attract the flying pests) told me the rea-son mosquitoes liked to bite me was my body smell. I smelled like a rich meal…a “blue plate special”…to the bugs. He suggested that, if I started eating certain foods, the mosquitoes would stay away from me.

Foreshadowing the *kimchi* experience I mentioned earlier, the family friend told me that if I started eating spicy pickled food during the summer months, I wouldn’t have a problem with mosquito bites. At first I laughed at his suggestion; it sounded silly. But, after a little while, I reconsidered. I was tired of suffering through the hot summer nights indoors, instead of sitting outside enjoying a nice breeze.

So, my mother—game to try the new idea—pickled cucumbers and other vegetables, as our friend had suggested. She also added a large of amount of hot chili to the concoction.

I have never been a great lover of spicy food. In fact, my friends and family members find it funny that, to this day, I’m not able to handle hot

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food without downing many glasses of water in the process of finishing a meal. Despite this lifelong aversion, I managed to eat the pickled dishes several times a week. Within a month, I was able to join my family outside without wearing long sleeve shirts to protect me from mosquitoes.

The first night I went outdoors I had no sooner sat down and I heard the buzzing sound of several mosquitoes flying around me. They must not have liked what they smelled because they buzzed away and didn’t re-turn.

The spicy food theory worked.

Human beings have scent glands that have survived millions of years of evolution for the benefit of mosquitoes. And some of us, more than others, secrete sweat and odors that attract them. The secretion is funda-mentally based on emotions and diet. Both of which are closely monitored by our winged, biting and buzzing friends, the mosquitoes.

**Certain emotions, like fear and stress, bring sweat to the surface of this skin. So, many people consider profuse sweating in social circles as sign that sweater is either lying or distorting the truth in what he says.**

Observing this sweaty behavior in your acquaintances can tell you a lot about a person’s experience and attitudes. Many people believe that, the more a person sweats, the less experience he has and more bigger trouble he’s likely to be.

**The Philosophy of Taste**

We all start out in life with a sharp sense of smell and the emotional feelings it brings. When I was small, my mother used to bath me in a large tin tub in the kitchen. When I grew older, I wanted to express to her how wonderful my memories of that experience were, but I always felt it was somehow inappropriate or unnecessary. Years later, I finally said some-thing to her and—to my surprise—she said, “I knew you liked how I

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smelled because, when I gave you a bath, you always smiled at me.” Until that moment, I hadn’t realized that it was my mother’s smell that

had made the baths so pleasant. But, as soon as she said that to me, I knew she was right. On a primal level, I equated her smell with *clean* and *warm*. And these were powerful impressions.

**People’s odors are like fingerprints: No two are exactly alike. So, in some ways, it’s a shame that we spend so much time, effort and money washing and perfuming these distinctions away.**

Smell has been a creative agent in the pursuit of discovery. The in-vention of some chemical agents would never have been made possible if it had not been due to an educated human nose discerning they smelled something different and investigated what was happening. For example: the discovery of Rockquefort cheese. The story, as told in France, is that a shepherd one day left his lunch that consisted of cheese and bread in a cave while he tended his herd of sheep. When several of the sheep wan-dered away, he spent the rest of the day bringing the stray sheep back to the herd and never ate the lunch he left in the cave.

A few weeks later, while tending his herd in the same area in which he had left his uneaten lunch, he remembered the meal left behind. He went into the cave and discovered the cheese and bread were still there. He smelled the cheese and his nose told him it smelled differently and when he tasted it, he immediately realized the taste was totally unlike any-thing he had ever tasted before. To this day, Rochquefort cheese may only be produced in one area in France that has special lime caves that some-how give the cheese its distinct taste and smell.

Smell also was a factor during one point of my life when I was a high school student. One summer vacation during World War II, I worked for Douglas Aircraft in southern California building the C-54 aircraft. I learned a great deal that summer, not only about people, but also about the re-sponsibility of doing a good job and being part of a team effort.

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My lead man was a concert violinist whose patriotic drive was so strong he believed he contributed more in building aircraft to defeat the Nazis than in performing in the concert stage. Although he would accept offers of playing at regional performances, he turned down those that in-terfered with his job of building aircraft for the war effort.

On the first day that I reported for work, I remember faintly smelling oranges in his presence. Strange, I thought, that a person smells like or-anges. And as time went by, we became wonderful friends discussing many subjects during lunchtime, especially music that was his career. And while he spoke, I continued to smell oranges. There were occasions I wanted to asked him is perhaps he had an orange in his pocket, but de-cided it would be silly to ask. Then, one day, he told me he was leaving the company because his agent had arranged a concert tour for him and he felt he could not resist the financial opportunity for his family.

It was an extremely sad day in my life to face the reality of not seeing his friendly, happy and encouraging face each day when I reported in for work. At first, my feeling was to quit my job, but soon realized it was not the right thing to do. A few days later I attended his going-away party and watched him leave with a great deal of sadness in my heart. The next day as I rode the bus to work, I reflected on how fortunate I had been to have met such a person and how much he had influenced my life. I’ve never experienced the smell of oranges in another person since then, but that the one experience was a great fulfillment in my life. Whenever I eat an or-ange, I always think of him, thus he is a dear friend and near me.

**More Sense Memories**

The best example of how smell can nonverbally trigger memories was written by Marcel Proust when he described in *Remembrance of* *Things Past* what happened to him after drinking a tea in which he hadsoaked a piece of cake the French call *madeleine*;

*An exquisite pleasure invaded my senses...with no suggestion of its origin...madeleine which on Sunday mornings...my Aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea...Immediately the old gray house on the street, where her*

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*room was, rose up like a stage set ...and the entire town, with its people and houses, gardens, church, and surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being from my cup of tea.*

It is unfortunate the sense of smell is something most Americans are not willing to admit is very important in their life. Yet we spend millions of dollars every year buying products that make us smell better. So why is there such a dichotomy? I believe the answer is obvious: vanity.

Humans want others in our tribe to acknowledge how we smell. Yet most would not admit we care how others perceive how we smell. If we were to ask most individuals how they might feel if someone said they smelt bad, the typical response would probably be defensive.

The most interesting aspect of all this talk of people and their smells is that most of us don’t notice how we smell. Even though we may know what is our favorite perfumes or colognes. Furthermore, even if we train ourselves to check how we smell, how we smell to ourselves might be different than what others smell.

**When you go out on a first date—or to a job interview—you need to smell good. Or at least neutral. This is essential, because the re-sponses people have to smell is so hard to predict. It’s hard to predict what someone’s nose “knows” about your personality, hygiene and health.**

**A Brief History of Perfume**

So, I think it’s appropriate to cover the nonverbal subject of body odor and fragrances that is thousands of years old. It is interesting that the word *perfume* comes from the Latin phrase *per fume*, which means “through smoke.” That is another source of smell.

Perfume originally grew from religious rites when cultures burned in-cense and aromatic herbs and gum from trees. The Egyptians were the

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first to use perfume in sacred rituals—followed by the Chinese, Hindus, Israelites, Carthaginians, Arabs, Greeks and Romans. At one time, during the first century A.D., the Romans imported 28,000 tons of frankincense and 550 tons of myrrh a year. And the earliest history of the use of bottles for perfume dates back to around 1000 B.C. when the Egyptians, who invented glass, used it to store perfume.

During that period, Egyptians used perfume for religious rituals such as embalming the dead, with “kyphi” as the most important fragrance. Some archaeologists have claimed when the tomb of Tutankhamen was opened, perfume could still be smelled that was used in the embalming process: Talk about a smell that lasts forever!

In addition to embalming, the Egyptians also used perfume in the process of anointing their bodies; it had a honey and cinnamon fragrance. This can be verified by the wall paintings that show servants applying the perfume to their master’s bodies—thus indicating that perfume was a non-verbal sign of wealth, prestige and power in ancient Egypt.

**However, the Egyptians were not the only ones who used perfume for this purpose, in Persia it was also a sign of rank. In their pal-aces, kings wore crowns of myrrh and, in their homes, one could smell other types of perfume. The gardens of the wealthy and powerful were full of sweet smelling flowers, jasmine, lilacs, vio-lets and roses.**

The Persians were experts in preserving the scent of roses by placing the buds in sealed earthenware jars that were later opened for special occasions. Those who were wealthy used perfumes after bathing and the smell of “civet” could be smelled on their bodies afterwards.

Another interesting aspect of the history is that some of the finest perfumes today have their roots dating back to the 13th century when they were originally produced and stored in Catholic monasteries: And if you wonder why the monasteries? The answer is not unusual because during

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that period of history monasteries were the places where scholarly writing began, plus the development of culinary arts and distilling alcoholic spirits.

There are many perfumes in use today. It’s a huge market based on satisfying sense of smell and nonverbally communicating something about the person who wears a particular fragrance.

Some of the finest perfumes on the market have their roots dating back to the perfumes created by the Carthusian monks during the 13th Century at the Monastery of St. Giacomo made from flowers. Legend has it the prior of the Monastery ordered a great floral arrangement to be made for the visit of Queen Giovanna D’Angelo. Several days after the Queen’s visit, the prior noticed the water had not been changed in the floral arrangement and that it had a scent he did not recognize. He asked the Carthusian alchemist living in the Monastery to discover the source of the smell and as a result of his analysis and investigation, the perfume known as “Garofilium Silvestre Caprese” was created. Today it is often referred to as the water that became the first perfume of Capri.

During medieval times almost every city in Italy had its own perfume based on different formulas. As a result, those with a certain sense of smell could easily be identified from which region or city a person came from To some extent this is still true today because throughout many parts of Italy, specialized perfumes are sold within limited geographic areas. Therefore, those using the perfumes are usually residents identified as to those areas where they live.

**As opposed to other products, the makers of perfume cannot pro-tect their specialized product because patents are not issued cov-ering perfumes. As a result, every manufacturer has a secret for-mula that is closing guarded and protected zealously.**

The ancient Greeks believed the gods invented perfume and used it as their personal calling card. They believed whenever a god was in their presence, they would be able to recognize that god by his or her fra-

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grance. And though the ancient Greeks did not embalm their dead like the Egyptians, they did anoint bodies with scented oils before the burial cer-emony. And the Greek culture contributed a great deal to categorizing the various flowers and plants that were used in producing perfumes.

Much of what we know today stems from their efforts centuries ago. The Greeks also influenced the Romans in the use of perfumes in women’s scented garlands and in religious rituals. The Romans are be-lieved to have started the practice of shaving the face, and then applying a scented fragrance, a process that is still accomplished by millions of men

throughout the world.



**Perfume is a nonverbal sign of esteem and welcome to visi-tors in Arabian homes. When guests arrive, they are sprinkled with rose water as sign of hospitality and care for them. Then when they leave, the men will have their beards and gar-ments sprayed with incense as a nonverbal sign of parting and best wishes for their journey.**

In India, perfume also plays an important nonverbal part in ceremo-nies. During Hindu marriages brides are rubbed with scented oils by the handmaid and later the married couples will sit beneath a sandalwood scented silk canopy. Perfume also is used to scent shawls in India. When the British began to produce similar shawls for sale, they could not be sold unless it was accompanied by the fragrant scent of patchouli.

Perfumes are also used extensively by Asian cultures. In China in-cense is burned in religious ceremonies and mourners carry lighted scented sticks during the burial procession. Early Chinese women wore their hair in a bun and had flowers wrapped in the hairdo, fragrance that lasted the entire day. And the scent of sandalwood is prevalent in Japan and used in many Shinto rituals.

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**Conclusion**

Although humans have a good sense of smell, it is poor in compari-son to certain animals fundamentally because smell in most of our life is not a matter of life or death: Whereas, in the animal world, the sense of smell is vital for survival. Our sense of smell is usually not given a great deal of attention most of the time, unless it’s a very distasteful like rotten apples, body odor in a crowded subway train on a hot summer day, etc. In some cultures, such as in France, the average person is more acutely aware of his/her sense of smell. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why France is associated with perfumes.

**After he became a hunter, prehistoric man understood the impor-tance of smell because it was necessary for his survival. Not only did he rely on smell to track game, but also when he killed and butchered it, the remains were stored for later consumption. The smell told him whether the meat was still safe to eat or not.**

Knowing the difference was most likely learned the hard way, when members of the tribe died as a result of consuming something that should not have been eaten.

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The island of Gomera—part of the Canary Islands archipelago—is 147 square miles in size and has a population of 19,000 people. In addi-tion to several spoken languages, its inhabitants use a nonverbal means of communication in which a series of whistles and chirps transmits sentences and entire paragraphs of information.

The residents of Gomera are believed by archaeologists to be de-scendents of an ancient people who came to the islands from Africa, per-haps as long ago as 2,500 years ago. The whistle language is probably as old as that migration.

The elders who live on the island have decided that, in order to keep the whistle language from vanishing, the educators on the island must teach all the school children over the age of fourteen to use it. At present, most of the Gomerans who use the language are elderly; and the elders fear reasonably that the whistle language will disappear from the culture unless the young are taught the techniques.

The language is known as “Silbo,” which comes from the Spanish word *silbar* meaning *to whistle*. Silbo has four vowels and four constants that can be strung together to form more than 4,000 words. When two people use the language to communicate, they sound like birds singing to each other.

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The language is used in a variety of ways; calling children, finding a friend who might be lost in a crowd, gossiping with friends—plus all the other reasons why people communicate with each other in ordinary con-versations, on the telephone or e-mail. Other whistle or chirping languages have been found in places as far-flung as Greece, Turkey, China and Mexico; but none of those cultures have developed a language as com-plex and complete as the Gomerans’.

**Because you’re reading this book, you’re not likely to ever learn or use Silbo. But people other than remote Canary Is-landers use whistles, shrieks, chirps and a wide range of sounds to convey meaning. If you’ve ever spent any time around teenagers, worked at a construction site or dealt with artists or performers, you know this is true.**



And the opposite is true: People also use silence to convey meaning. This is true in business, as well as romance. Philip Knight, the founder and chairman of athletic apparel giant Nike is famous for “answering” ques-tions from his executives with silence. On a more common level, anyone who’s been through a romantic breakup knows how much the “silent treat-ment” from a spouse or lover can convey.

In this chapter, we’ll consider the roles that sounds and silence play in nonverbal communication.

**Separating Sounds from Words**

We learn at an early age the nonverbal messages contained in sounds.

Growing older, we sometimes forget these.

Infants quickly learn to distinguish the voices of parents and family members from those of strangers. The whole purpose of the giggling gib-berish we know as “baby talk” is to help a very young child separate sounds that have literal, verbal meaning from sounds that don’t. This pro-cess is one of trial and error for the child; he or she sorts the sounds that have verbal meaning from the ones that don’t.

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But the sounds that don’t have literal, verbal meaning aren’t neces-sarily *meaningless*. Especially to a young child. And the sounds in his or her “discard” pile may stay with a child, either consciously or subcon-sciously, for a long time.

It has been said blind people (and animals) develop a greater ability in distinguishing sounds than those who have sight. Cultural myths—from the ancient Greek dramatic character Tiresias to Zatoichi, Japan’s blind samurai, to the U.S. comic book superhero Daredevil—are full of blind people who achieve “second sight” through their extremely sharp hearing. And through the insightful *understanding* of what they hear.

**The theory behind second sight is that the blind *have* to compen-sate by developing awareness of sounds for survival purposes, whereas those who aren’t blind don’t have such a need. And anecdotal evidence from various neuroscience researchers seems to support, at least to some degree, this theory and explanation.**

**You Don’t Need to Be a Blind Superhero**

But you don’t have to be Zatoichi or Daredevil to hear and under-stand nonverbal communication in sounds that most people miss.

I learned this in an unexpected way many years ago, when I was in the Army and lived on the second floor in a barracks building in Camp Beale in northern California (the camp is now a U.S. Air Force base).

All the Army personnel living in the barracks had specific daytime tasks and assignments to perform—as clerks, cooks, truck drivers, etc. Each morning, after roll call and breakfast, all of us would go to our re-spective jobs and return later in the day for dinner. Afterwards, we might go to see a movie, tell stories, play poker, listen to the radio, write letters, etc. On the weekends, those of us who had weekend passes would leave camp and go to a nearby city or, if a soldier lived nearby, home for the weekend.

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What I discovered during this time at Camp Beale was that every person in our barracks had a distinctive sound he made when walking up the stairs. I became aware of this on a late Sunday night when a friend was returning from a weekend pass. The rhythm and sound of his footsteps was like a signature of identity to my ears. I knew who it was and asked him in the darkened barracks if he had had a good weekend. He wanted to know how I recognized him in the dark and I responded by telling him his footsteps disclosed his identity.

**During my remaining months at Camp Beale, I sharpened my ability to distinguish the subtle nonverbal messages in each person’s footsteps to such a degree that I could recognize each person who lived on the second floor of our barracks.**

All of us have the natural ability of developing great capabilities in distinguishing nonverbal messages in sounds. However, we tend to subor-dinate that ability to spoken or written messages: A situation in which the verbal element is major and the nonverbal is minor. Most situations in our lives are like this; but not *all* are.

I had an interesting experience during a business trip to Paris in which sounds played a role. I arrived late at night from London; very tired, went to my room, undressed and went to bed. The hotel in which I was staying was built in the early 1900s and the walls between the rooms were not as sound proof as they are in newer hotels. As a result of this, I was awak-ened around 2:00 a.m. by the sound of two people expressing their physi-cal love for each other. Since I was in Paris, the first thought that came to my mind was that they were probably a young newly married couple and in a short while fell back to sleep. However, after a few hours of sleep, they woke me up again as they continued their energetic lovemaking.

I had placed an order for breakfast before going to sleep the night before, so the next morning when breakfast arrived, I walked out on the balcony through the French doors in my room and sat down to eat my

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breakfast. While I was eating, the French doors of the adjoining, noisy room opened and—to my surprise—out walked a man and a woman who were in their late 70s or early 80s. They bade me a hearty *bonjour* as they set into their breakfast.

The experience taught me that sometimes we hear sounds and make quick and false judgments. The sounds of what type of activity was going on in the adjoining room were true; my judgment of who was engaged in the activity was totally wrong. My image of young newlyweds was the result of my biases and preconceptions. Those biases skewed the data.

**What we need to realize is that we may not be receiving nonverbal messages because we’re not tuned in to hear them. To correct this condition, all we need to do is set the frequency on our “non-verbal dials” and those messages will start coming through loud and clear: Don’t worry, they will not block out the verbal mes-sages; in many instances they become clearer.**

The key to resetting your nonverbal reception is clearing your mind of preconceptions and listening without prejudice.

**How People Process Sounds**

When they hear a sound, people naturally follow a standard series of responses. They attempt to identity:

1. what the sound might be,
2. where it’s coming from and
3. who is making it.

This is all part of the system of instinctive responses that psycholo-gists call the *fight-or-flight impulse*. It’s an ancient self-preservation in-stinct that’s deeply embedded in human evolutionary development.

Next, people usually try to make a decision about whether they can or cannot doing something about the sound and its source.

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All of this response may occur in a few seconds—long before you’re conscious of what’s happening. For example, if the sound occurs in the middle of the night, your instinctive response will affect whether you bolt upright in bed or pull the covers over your ears.

**In many instances, when we hear a sound, there’s nothing we can do about it. Sounds made by nature—rain on the roof, thun-der, lightning, wind, etc.—are chief among these. Children may be bothered by these sounds; but adults tend not to be.**

Adults tend to be bothered more my the sounds that they think they *can* do something about…the situations to which they should respond.These include sounds made by people, animals, the interaction of man and machine—cars, boats, typewriters, computers, radio, television sets, etc. Sounds that wake us up in the morning and sounds that tell us our toast is ready. Sounds that alert us that someone is at the front door.

We have to do something about most of these sounds. But the smart person who masters nonverbal communication doesn’t rush to respond. Instead, keep these points in mind:

* Don’t rush to judgment or reaction to a noise you hear. Listen care-fully and investigate before you draw any conclusions about what you’ve heard.
* Try to identify the person or thing making noise. Often, this is biggest part of responding appropriately. The blood-curdling scream that you heard outside could be two eight-year-olds having fun.
* Assess the environment around you and the noise—the temperature, location, time. Consider the normal sounds in this environment.
* Check your emotions, as much as possible. Many people have *trig-ger noises*, which cause extreme emotional reactions in them. If thesound of a baby crying or the screech of a car’s brakes upsets you, realize this and try to curb your emotions until you know more.

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**The Meanings of Various Human Sounds**

The human body contributes many sounds to the nonverbal world. Most of these convey some information about the health or condition of the body making the sound. Burping, coughing, sneezing, belching, chok-ing, gagging, blowing the nose, swallowing, snoring, gasping for air, pass-ing gas and others all speak to temporary conditions of the human body.

The temporary nature of this information is why it’s generally a good idea to minimize these sounds when you’re trying to communicate with someone else. The point isn’t that any of these sounds are shocking—all human bodies make them at some point during the day or week. The point is that they draw attention to the fleeting condition of our bodies…and away from larger points we may be trying to make. They are distractions.

By the same token, if a body makes any of these sounds, no one should read too much meaning into them. A person isn’t sick or pos-sessed of poor manners because she burps; but her judgment may be questionable if she reacts poorly *to* the burp.

**If she draws more attention to the burp, by joking about excessively or bursting into tears, she may not understand the relatively minor importance of bodily functions to the goal of clear communication. If she makes a quick, courteous reaction—covers her mouth, says a quick “excuse me” and moves on—she probably does have communication priorities straight.**



Classical social etiquette, as described by the American Sylvia Post and others, is basically a code for showing good judgment about bodily functions (as well as family relations, social friendships, etc.). And, when you read the rules of etiquette in their full social context, you can see that they are designed to make communication in social or business settings as clear and distraction-free as possible.

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Now that I’ve reached the senior citizen status I have acquired oth-ers which I didn’t have when I was younger, they are sounds of wheezing and when the joints of my bones crack, plus the visual nonverbal signs of old age on my hands, age marks and pronounced blood vessels.

**There are human sounds made that express our feelings and atti-tudes, like a man whistling to a pretty woman or the satisfied sounds a person makes stretching or exercising. Those sounds are made to communicate a personal feeling and emotion without using the spoken language. They are totally nonverbal.**

Of course, many nonverbal sounds are bad manners.

A person who makes excessive noise when eating—even noise that indicates how much he like the food—is considered boorish. This is a matter of place and timing. Sounds of pleasure may be appropriate on the sports field, stage or even bedroom; but they are not good table manners.

There sounds made that communicate displeasure or dislike, such as the “Bronx cheer” when people sound off to express their dissatisfaction with the decision an official has made. In the United Kingdom, the same type of displeasure has a different sound; instead of “booing,” they whistle as a sign of their vehement disapproval directed towards the official.

There are also some sounds that may be very unpleasant to some, but welcomed by others. I discovered this difference during an outdoor conversation with a friend. As we spoke we heard the loud siren of an ambulance nearby. When the siren could no longer be heard I told my friend how much I disliked the sound. She smiled at me and said, “Hank, to you the sound an approaching ambulance makes might be unpleasant, but to me it is a blessing and beautiful music to my ears.” She then told me about her father who had survived several heart attacks solely because an ambulance arrived in time to take him to the emergency hospital.

If “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” the beauty of a certain sound is in the ear of the listener.

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**Nervous Tics, Stammers and Lies**

Perhaps the most important sounds in nonverbal communication are those that occur near and in midst of *verbal* communication.

Modern vernacular speech is full of sounds, noises, asides and ex-clamations that blur a speaker’s meaning—and often convey more about his intention, attitude or mental state than anything he actually says.



**The next time that you speak to a casual acquaintance, keep a mental tally of the number of meaningless filler sounds (including *um*, *ah*, *hmm* , *er*, etc.) that he or she makes. Americans are particularly bad about filling their spoken sen-tences with these sounds.**

Traditionally, experts in nonverbal communication held a hard line about these interjected sounds: They meant the speaker was, at best, uncertain about the truth of what he said or was, at worst, lying. It’s diffi-cult to keep such a hard line any more; filler sounds have become such a common part of casual…and even business…speech that they don’t mean as much as they did 30 years ago.

Experts no longer count on *um*s and *ah*s to indicate uncertainty or deceit; now, they look for the filler sounds in combination with facial ges-tures, posture and other tells (I discuss each of these in detail in other chapters). But there’s no doubt that filler sounds are distracting.

**A critical step in mastering the power of nonverbal communica-tion is eliminating filler sounds from your verbal communication.**

Filler sounds and other speech tics have interested observant people for a long time. They are important in the plot of Alexander Sozhenitsyn’s

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novel *The First Circle*. In that profoundly psychological story, Russian political prisoners with special skills are forced to analyze phone calls for purposes of determining the caller’s identity and psychological state.

The concept of psychological caller identification began much earlier than in the days of the Soviets. It started with Alexander Graham Bell’s father more than one hundred years ago when he developed a visual rep-resentation of what the spoken word would look like: It was the origin of “voiceprints.”

**Mapping the Sound of a Voice**

In 1941, the laboratories of Bell Telephone in New Jersey produced the sound spectrograph for mapping a voice onto a graph. It analyzed sound waves and produced a visual record of vocal patterns based on frequency, intensity and time. It was used during World War II in attempt-ing to identify enemy voices on telephones and radio. However, when the war ended, the need for the technology was more or less put in the closet from which it was brought out by the New York City police in the 1960s when they started to receive bomb threats by phone targeting the airline industry.

After more than two years of work and analyzing more than 50,000 voices, a senior engineer at Bell managed to build a system that could detect voices with an accuracy of 99.65 percent. During the develop-ment, he brought in individuals who were experts in imitating voices to try and fool the equipment he created. However, they all failed. The machine was able to distinguish the difference between the mimic and the original voice.

Voiceprint—although a verbal tool—has nonverbal implications. It separates the true person from the imposter by vocal inflection and tim-bre. It’s as accurate as a fingerprint or DNA. Voiceprint evidence was presented in court trials in the 1960s; but judges in the U.S. were divided on whether or not to admit it as scientific evidence. At that time, there were few judges who had the knowledge and experience to qualify as technical experts; and the linguists testified against each other on the valid-ity of the evidence.

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Now, in the 21st Century, voiceprint has been accepted throughout the world as a reputable means of identifying individuals and is used not only by intelligence agencies, but also in law enforcement and business situations.

Another nonverbal detection device is the polygraph, what’s com-monly known as a “lie detector.” Polygraph technology is not new—it dates back to the 1930s. But it has gone through much refinement in the decades since.

Today, most machines are quite effective at determining whether some-one is lying…or, at least, nervous about something he or she is saying. When the device is used, rubber tubes are placed on a person’s chest and abdomen, as well as blood pressure cuffs on the arms and metal plates attached to the fingers to monitor the subject’s galvanic skin response, blood pressure and respiration.

The polygraph machine provides a verbal or graphic display which can be used to identify nonverbal messages that contradict verbal ones (I discuss this issue in greater detail in its own chapter).

Before a polygraph examination, the questions are diligently prepared in order to get the maximum physical, psychological and emotional reac-tion. The examiner often uses multiple-choice type questions in order to observe any subtle difference in the responses. It is believed that a guilty person will react in a certain manner to questions regarding specific de-tails, especially if he believes he is the only one who knows them.

**The main problem with the polygraph is that some guilty parties pay very little attention to details when they commit a crime. And when asked questions relative to such details, may answer, “I don’t know,” and they’re telling the truth. And it can also be the case when a person has “guilty knowledge” because he was told about the crime—not because he participated in it.**

The examiner using the polygraph looks for deviations that occur from a baseline when the subject physically displays them in response to a

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question. Then the examiner interprets the data according to the magni-tude of the deviation and may also use his nonverbal observations of the subject under interrogation and comes up with three possible findings: The subject was truthful, was deceptive or the test was inconclusive.



**A polygraph measures specific physical responses—not the sounds that a person makes. But many law enforcement and intelligence veterans agree that nonverbal sounds, filler like the *um*s and *ah*s I’ve been describing, sometimes do coin-cide with the physical evidence of deceit.**

In short, while tics and stammering do not prove deceit, they remain a reasonable indicator that something—or someone—could use more detailed investigation.

As the former corporate security director of a *Fortune* 100 com-pany recently told me:

*I liked the polygraph for the formal atmosphere and baseline of response that it establishes. I didn’t read the precise print-outs; I usually didn’t have to. I’d just watch, as the subject got accustomed to a pattern of answers to control questions. Then, when we moved to the real questions, I could tell from the stuttering and tics whether we had a suspect. When we had one, they’d always start with the* ahs*,* ums*,* y’knows *and sighing and hissing. They say a psychopath can lie his way through a polygraph without any tells; but I wasn’t dealing with psychopaths. I was dealing with embezzlers, sexual ha-rassers, corporate spies and the like. They’d make noise.*

That description of noises serves as a pretty good list of things to listen for in people who whom you’re talking. If they make those sounds, beware. They may not be lying…but they are very likely uneasy about what they’re saying.

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**Silence as Nonverbal Communication**

Now that I’ve covered the nonverbal significance of sounds, it’s time to discuss the element of silence—which is rather difficult to describe other than the “absence of sound.”

When I was a teenager, I learned firsthand how silence can send messages to those who may not understand traditional verbal communi-cation. My family lived in a lower middle-class neighborhood in which there were many small gangs. (That word barely seems appropriate in this day of heavily-armed, ruthlessly murderous street gangs. Our *gangs* were really just packs of preteen and teenage bullies.)

I was faced with either belonging to a specific gang and being a target of the others or trying to be neutral and get along with all of them without joining any. I decided to do the latter and learned a great deal of negotiat-ing skills which served me well later in business situations, conducting executive seminars and writing books on the subject of negotiating.

Our neighborhood was near a cemetery. To the kids in the area, walking unescorted past that cemetery at night was *the* test of a person’s courage. If someone walked past silently, he was considered brave; those who whistled, sang or made other types of noise as they walked past were considered weak…and easy targets.

**The easiest targets were the rattlers—and those weren’t snakes. The cemetery was surrounded by a wooden picket fence; some-times, a scared kid with a stick in his hand would make noise by running the stick along the fence, making a “rat-tat-tat” sound. The local kids considered these the greatest cowards. The gangs would often jump out at these kids, terrifying them all the more.**

I avoided any dealings with the gangs by making a practice of walk-ing past the cemetery in complete silence. Later, I heard on of the gang members telling another that they left the quiet kids alone because, if you tried to scare them, they’d often came at you without any fear.

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So, at an early age, I learned that those who have a inner strength sometimes display it with silence instead of making noise.

Silence at night during the western exploration in the United States by settlers was reassuring. If the horses broke the silence by making noises, it was a nonverbal signal hostile Indians or perhaps an animal was ap-proaching the covered wagons. In most instances, it was animals because Indians seldom attached settlers at night because of their belief of not reaching the happy hunting grounds of heaven if they were killed at night.



**Silence can have many meanings—from guilty ignorance, nuanced opposition, complex hesitation to simple lack of interest. Many people believe in the old Irish proverb: “Better to keep quiet and be suspected a fool than to open your mouth and confirm the suspicion.”**

Indeed, in many cases and places, there’s a deep cultural significance to silence.

For example, in Japan, silence is used as time to think about mean-ing. In a Japanese conversation, individuals usually don’t tell each other what their intentions are. It seems to be a game of learning those intentions and needs by nonverbal exchange. Among older Japanese, this form of silent communication is highly valued; even the Japanese language is ori-ented towards this conduct. It includes the word *amae*, which has no clear English translation. Some linguists translate it as *silence*—but that’s not really its meaning; better translators make it *sensing* (what another person feels and needs). That’s closer to the mark.

The virtue of silence in Japan is still important. It is considered rude to be outspoken because the listener is supposed to figure out what the speaker wants or needs without these matters being said explicitly.

It is deemed better to keep true intentions inside. In Japanese cul-ture, it’s all up to the listener to unscramble the true message. Nonverbal communication is essential.

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Americans, on the other hand, like to be blunt in their communication and wear their feelings and needs on their sleeves. Or, at least, that’s how Americans like to behave. Nonverbal communication takes a back seat to eloquence and forcefulness.

But, even in America, silence has a role.

Silence is an inner choice, a decision of withholding statements or expressions under the mantle of discretion of personal beliefs, spiritual, religious, political, or other. In the Christian doctrine it is said, “silence is a fundamental discipline.”

Silence can be a very frightening experience. There are often occa-sions when it is embarrassing, humiliating or make us appear to be fools when we remain silent. At times if you are a public speaker and forget what you are about to say, silence can be mental torture.

Sometimes what you *don’t* say is more important that what you do say. Silence at times may turn out to be a wonderful non-response to a question.

**In my negotiating seminars I’ve often recommended count-ing to five before answering a question, especially if you are not sure how to answer it. It is amazing how often the person who asked the question will answer their own question sim-ply because they could not stand the silence.**



Perhaps the greatest enemy we have in trying to practice silence is the constant inner chatter that takes place within us. The mind is like a perpetual talking machine that does not want to rest or perhaps take a break. Once activated, it seems to run at full speed.

I believe the key to exercising silence is the realization that the mind is our servant and not our master. The worst decisions I’ve ever made in my life were at times when I allowed my mind to dictate decisions. And the best decisions were often made when I took a deep breath, looked at those around me and—finally—said, “I don’t know.”

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Then, I allowed them to convince me whey I should go along with their ideas or decisions while I was silent and listened.

**Conclusion**

If I were to become a master teacher in an educational system any-where on this planet, the first thing I would instruct my pupils would be to realize that silence is a display of great inner strength and something to develop and utilize during the entire course of a lifetime.

It is wise to remember that silence can convey confidence, honesty, forthrightness, strength, loyalty and dedication; but it can also convey in-decision, lack of interest or ignorance. Which traits it signals may be de-termined by other nonverbal cues—such as facial expressions, gestures and posture.



**If you’re going to use silence as a nonverbal cue, make sure that you stand tall. Literally. And don’t frown or wince. If you appear steady and determined, your silence will be inter-preted as strength.**

One of the earliest expressions I remember hearing was, “Talk is cheap, silence is golden.” The expression was true when I was very young; and is still true today.

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**Chapter 4: Facial Expressions**

**Chapter 4**

**Facial Expressions**

With this chapter, we move into the most useful—and best-known— elements of nonverbal communication. In some ways, writing about how things like facial expressions affect the information people convey is less of a challenge because it’s more self-evident than things like smells or sounds.

But, fine challenge or no, this chapter and the next one deal with the “sweet spot” of nonverbal communication: How the ways people carry themselves affect the messages they send to others.

In short, the faces you make when you speak or listen can tell an observant person more about you than any words you say. And, if you are an observant person, you can glean this information from anyone who’s speaking to you.

**The best advice: be careful of the looks you give…and pay atten-tion to the looks others give you.**

Facial expressions are a familiar theme in Western literature. Shakespeare wrote, “Your face, my thane, is as a book where people

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may read strange matters.” That quote was the inspiration for the title of the book *How to Read a Person Like a Book*, which I co-authored with Gerard Nierenberg.

Cervantes also touched on facial expressions, when Don Quixote said to Sancho Panza, “Note whether she changes color while you are giving her my message.” The change in facial color that we know as *blushing* is caused by the arousal of the sympathetic nervous system, which dilates the small blood vessels of the face, ears and neck—but not the rest of the body.

Paul Ekman, a professor at the University of San Francisco and the foremost researcher in the field of facial expressions, believes most facial expressions are blends of several feelings. As a result, they are by far the most difficult of nonverbal messages to understand clearly. However, when a facial expression is used as a signal—such as winking an eye as a ges-ture of approval, or sticking out the tongue to signify playful distaste— they are very easy to comprehend.

Ekman’s research also suggests we have the ability to become ex-tremely accurate in identifying facial expressions of emotion when a per-son is properly trained. He has proved this with his Facial Affect Scoring Technique (FAST) and more recent *Facial Action Coding System* *(FACS) Manual*.

The *FACS Manual* describes a system for measuring movements and expressions in each of several sections of the human face. Designed for scientists and law-enforcement investigators, it allows users “to cat-egorize facial behaviors based on the muscles that produce them, i.e., how muscular action is related to facial appearances.”

Ekman developed the original FACS in the 1970s by determining how the contraction of each facial muscle (singly and in combination with other muscles) changes the appearance of the face. He and several col-leagues examined videotapes of facial behavior to identify the specific changes that occurred with muscular contractions and how best to differ-entiate one from another. They associated the appearance changes with the action of muscles that produced them by studying anatomy, reproduc-ing the appearances and reproducing common facial gestures.

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The goal was to create a reliable system by which observers to de-termine the category or categories in which to fit each facial behavior.

The FACS system pays particular attention to movements in the fol-lowing parts of the face:

* **chin boss**: the skin covering the bone of the chin
* **eye aperture**: the degree to which the eye is open; the eye opening
* **eye cover fold**: the skin between the eyebrows and the palprebralpart of the upper eyelid (the part that contacts the eyeball), which folds into the eye socket
* **glabella**: the area of the forehead between the eyebrows
* **infraorbital furrow**: a place where a line or wrinkle may appear par-allel to and below the lower eyelid running from near the inner corner of the eye and following the cheek bone laterally
* **lower eyelid furrow**: a place below the lower eyelid where a line orwrinkle may appear. A line or wrinkle may be permanently etched into the face; if so, it will deepen with certain activity
* **nasolabial furrow**: a place where a line or wrinkle may appear whichbegins adjacent to the nostril wings and runs down and outwards be-yond the lip corners. In some people it is permanently etched in the face
* **nostril wings**: the fleshy skin of the side of the nose that forms theoutside of each nostril
* **philtrum**: the vertical depression in the center of the upper lip directlyunder the tip of the nose
* **root of nose**: the beginning of the nose between the eyes (also calledthe nasal root)
* **sclera**: the white part of the eyeball

Ekman points out that his systems are primarily mechanical mea-sures. They are not psychological profiling tools. However, they are used by psychologists and law-enforcement investigators who look for psy-

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chological signs in the people they interview. In Ekman’s own words, his systems are “the alphabet” for measuring facial gestures. How people use that alphabet can change in different contexts and at different times. In short, Ekman writes:

*We are reasonably confident that FACS is complete for scor-ing the visible…actions of the brows, forehead, and eyelids. FACS probably does not include all of the visible, reliably dis-tinguishable actions in the lower part of the face. The hinged jaw and rubbery lips allow a nearly infinite number of ac-tions. [But we] have included everything we could see, ev-erything anyone else has included, and what are probably the most common elements and combinations of actions in the lower part of the face among children and adults*.1

Ekman’s systems have provided a standard measure of human facial gestures. They are the basis for most of the scientific discussion of what constitutes an *expression*—and what each expression might mean.

**A Basic Skill, Developed Early**

Reading facial expressions is something we started learning as infants while lying on our back. Babies look at adult faces and when they start focusing their eyes, they have taken the first step in the process was learn-ing how to distinguish the faces of parents from strangers.

During that period in life, infants also learned to distinguish different expressions and sense the changes in a parent’s facial expressions when the parent is faced with a task that is unpleasant, such as changing a baby’s diaper. An infant starts noticing such minute differences in a parent’s facial expressions and begin the learning process of reading faces: Facial ex-pressions are to emotions as language is to thoughts—the mirror to how we feel.

Before an infant reaches the age of one, it has completed its basic training in reading facial expressions…and has usually accomplish the task

* The excerpts from Paul Ekman’s *Facial Action Coding System (FACS) Manual* that appear here come from the Internet Web site http://face-and-emotion.com/dataface/facs/ description.jsp.

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without any parental training. And, once a child has learned how to read a parent’s facial expressions, it expands this awareness to others in the fam-ily: The larger a family, the greater the resources for learning.

Later in life, a child learns how to read the facial expressions of her playmates, teachers and—ultimately—everyone she meets. (As I men-tioned earlier, it’s at this stage of early socialization that cognitive prob-lems like autism first manifest themselves.)

This learning process should continue throughout our lives. Unfortu-nately, it doesn’t always. As adults, most of us don’t pay a great deal of attention to strangers and seldom make eye contact with them: Except when a stranger poses a threat.

**Another essential part of mastering the power of nonverbal communication is to take the time, on a regular basis, to practice studying people. You don’t have be a certified mas-ter of the Ekman system to spend one lunch a week eating by yourself and watching people in a fast-food outlet, cafeteria or public space. Practice looking at people’s facial gestures while they talk. Do they roll their eyes? Look around rapidly? Look at the ground while speaking? Do they bite their lips? Sigh a lot? Smile or frown?**



Don’t assume that you know what standard facial expressions mean. If the people are strangers whom you’ve randomly picked from a crowd, there’s little change you know enough about them to draw useful conclu-sions. But that’s not the point of this exercise. The point is to recognize the expressions…and patterns of expression…in people’s faces.

You’ll probably begin to notice that laughers laugh, frowners frown and eye rollers roll their eyes. What’s noticeable over time (and maybe more time than this exercise allows you) is how often they make these expressions—and pronouncedly. Intensity or uncertainty will ratchet up the expressions; calm and resolve will dial them down.

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In the 1980s, a clinical psychologist conducted several tests with students for purposes of understanding the degree of awareness students had of a stranger’s facial expressions. He divided his class into small groups and had them ride an elevator from the first floor to the top of an office building that had 30 floors. When they reached the top floor, they pressed the “down” button and went back to the first floor. They repeated this four times and then went back to the classroom. The psychologist asked each student to describe the facial characteristics or expressions of people who were on the elevator during the ascent to the top floor and descent to the ground floor.

**The psychologist conducting the test concluded that even those who believed they had a high awareness seemed to be blind to strangers and could not adequately describe a stranger’s facial expression or characteristics when asked to describe it.**

The idea of conducting the test in an elevator became more realistic because people tend not look at each other or make eye contact in close quarters as are experienced in an elevator.

Perhaps the clinical psychologist should have exposed his students to Paul Ekman and his FACS system. If he had, than more of them would have been able to describe facial characteristics of the people in an eleva-tor—at least in terms of the parts of the strangers’ faces that the students noticed, even if they didn’t get the specific expressions right.

**Gamblers Look for Tells**

It has been said, “the eyes are the mirrors of the soul.” Than perhaps that is the first place to start understanding the nature of facial expressions. If the eyes are the most revealing aspect of facial expressions perhaps that is why professional poker players often wear dark glasses in a game.

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Professional gamblers know that subtle facial expressions may give away their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, they make an effort to con-stantly maintain a “poker face” throughout the course of game, and as-sume the same posture while minimizing their gestures. The players are especially careful in the manner they handle the chips when betting or calling, using the same speed and motion so their enthusiasm isn’t dis-closed.

The reason so many poker players wear dark glasses is more com-plex than merely because they don’t want other players to read a *tell*. Tells are what a poker player looks for in a game. They are nonverbal clues that reveal if a player has a good hand, or if they’re bluffing. The outstanding poker players are those who can read a tell very well and take advantage of it.

For example, it is common knowledge that, when a person sees some-thing that is attractive or pleasing, his pupils will dilate. Elsewhere, I’ve mentioned the drug belladonna, which causes the pupils to dilate, means *beautiful woman* in Italian. A poker player’s eyes will do the same thingwhen he sees a pair of aces as the hole cards in a game of Texas Hold’em.

**As a result of the pupils dilating, a player with light colored eyes may give away those aces in the hole. And it is also impossible to keep the pupils from dilating if a person has drawn a straight, flush, or full house later in the game. Therefore, to conceal the dilation, some players wear dark glasses.**

Besides the dilation of the pupils, two other reasons must be consid-ered concerning wearing dark glasses in a poker game. The second rea-son is dark glasses conceal other players from others reading a blink rate. We all have different blink rates and when we are in a stressful situation, lying, or very insecure, the blink rate always increases. That’s a “tell” pro-fessional poker players look for, and the third reason is dark glasses en-ables the person wearing them to turn their head in one direction while looking in another. Since poker tables are round and have as many as

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eight players in the game, a player may want to sneak a glance at someone without making the person aware of it. So they will turn the head as though they were looking to the right, while they glance out of the corner of the eyes to the left.

The nonverbal message in the blink rate is also a clue when a person arrives from an overseas trip in the United States goes through customs. The first question a person is asked when reaching the customs inspector is, “Do you have any thing to declare?” Considering that you have already completed a customs declaration form and have it in your hand, the ques-tion appears to be foolish. However, it is asked for a specific purpose: To see how you react to it.



**If a person’s blink rate increases immediately after the ques-tion is asked, the customs inspector will thoroughly search every piece of baggage you have. If however, your blink rate remains constant, you will most likely pass you through with-out any further search.**

Police inspectors and interrogators also ask a lot of questions to those who are under investigation. And they always look for a change in the blink rate that might signify areas where the person is trying to cover some-thing up or might be lying. And psychiatrists are also aware of the signifi-cance of the blink rate when they attempt to get personal disclosure from a patient who is trying desperately to conceal it from them.

The blink rate is a significant nonverbal facial expression and aware-ness of a rapid blink rate may be worthwhile not only in playing poker, clearing customs, but also reading facial expression for purposes of deter-mining if a person is telling the truth or lying.

However, we must take in consideration though facial expressions are indicators of our emotions, attitudes and feelings, individuals often consciously attempt to mask them. As a result, the experts in reading facial expressions believe there are individuals extremely capable of masking

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single emotions very well, which is a major requirement in the art of acting. Good actors have studied the art of facial expressions as part of their craft and are masters of communicating their emotions by means of facial ex-pressions. To them portraying emotions is as simple as turning a water faucet on and off.

There are some instances in which an actor psychologically becomes the character so completely he finds it difficult to turn that faucet off. The actor Anthony Quinn described one such experience that happened to him. He was traveling to Europe on a ship to perform the role of Quasimodo, the title character in a film version of *The Hunchback of* *Notre Dame*. The morning of the second day of his ocean journey, hewoke up and looked at himself in the mirror and was shocked to see the entire side of his face distorted. It was as if he had suffered facial neuralgia overnight. He quickly contacted the ship’s doctor who gave him some medication and told him not to worry, advising him that everything would be all right the next day.

However, when he woke up the following morning and looked in the mirror, his face still distorted. He saw the ship’s doctor for the second time and the doctor wisely came to the realization that something beyond his medical control was taking place. So he contacted a psychiatrist on board the ship for assistance with Quinn’s facial problem.

Quinn spent an hour with the psychiatrist, during which he explained the purpose his trip and how much time he had spend trying to get a psychological mind-set of the character he would portray in the film. The psychiatrist smiled and said, “Tony, apparently you have done a great job of getting into the character because you are starting to look like him without the aid of any makeup. Now just relax and enjoy the rest of the voyage, tomorrow morning when you wake up and look at yourself in the mirror, everything will be all right.”

The doctor was right. The following day Quinn’s face wasn’t dis-torted. The moral of his story was that a person is capable of altering his facial expression if he puts all his mental energy into it.

This is exactly as the great acting teacher, Stanislavski predicted, “you should think about the emotion as hard as you can, the result will produce itself.”

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**A Good Negotiator Controls His Visage**

I once knew a business negotiator who was brilliant in his acting ability. He could distort his face at will, like someone who had just taken a bite of a sour lemon. And he would do it whenever an offer was made, even if he *liked* the proposal. The other side would read his expressions and the negotiation would continue. On several occasions, his contrived facial expression squeezed extra dollars out of the negotiation.

I also recall another negotiator whose emotions could be read by a vein on his forehead. When he was calm, the vein was no different from the other veins in his face, however, whenever he became very angry or frustrated, the vein on his forehead swelled so that it was very prominent. One didn’t need to read his overall facial expression; the vein on his fore-head was the nonverbal sign his emotions. It was a clear signal; if the vein was prominent take it easy because he was ready to blow up emotionally. If the vein was not prominent, it was possible to push him harder.

Here are some other tips and tells to consider:

* Follow their eyes. People’s eyes travel to good news and flee from bad news. People usually can’t help but stare at good news; they literally turn away from bad news. If you follow their eyes, you can sometimes see what people think are their strongest tools.
* Look for darting eyes, which mean anxiety. People usually get anx-ious when they are confronted or expect confrontation. As I’ve men-tioned before, psychologists call this the “fight or flight” response. Someone who won’t challenge you looks calm; the one who might fight looks nervous.
* Look for blinks. People blink more often when they are excited than when they are calm. (This is the main reason that professional poker players wear sunglasses when they play.) But remember that the blinking doesn’t mean nervousness or anxiety—it just as often means happi-ness and positive excitement.
* Look for facial touches. If a person touches any part of his face, he’s nervous about something. This goes for rubbing his forehead or eyes, touching his chin, biting his fingernail our touching his nose.

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* Look for blushes. No other part of the body reacts more dramatically to a flow of blood than the face. Simply said, when a person is ner-vous or embarrassed, he will blush. Some simply blush more notice-ably than others. However strong or weakly a person blushes, the meaning is the same: He’s anxious about something
* Watch changes in posture. Some people are so unaware of their pos-ture that they let it betray their thoughts. Their shoulders drop or slump when they are not confident; conversely, the same person may be-come attentive and sit in an erect position when thinks he’s strong.
* Watch for inversion. You may also notice that a person who’s bluffing or exaggerating his position will lean forward in a confrontational way. This posture is part of the bluff—strong is weak; weak is strong.
* Don’t read too much into a single expression. By itself, a twitching eye or a flared nostril may not mean anything. And, sometimes, it’s an act designed as part of a bluff. What you should be looking for is patterns of expression or behavior; these are the best indicators.

That last point is worth some further comment. Some people be-come so fixated on the specific meanings of individual facial expressions that they overreact. Don’t let your judgment be warped by your efforts to “read” people at the negotiating, poker or dinner tables.

Facial expressions and tells do suggest things about the people mak-ing them. But mastering nonverbal communication means more than just memorizing Ekman’s *FACS Manual*. It means observing and retaining a range of information—from facial expressions to posture to gestures to odors…and processing it all.

**Conclusion**

This chapter should have whetted your appetite for reading facial expressions and the nonverbal messages they communicate. Facial ex-pressions are probably the most essential part of nonverbal communica-tion; and the amazing thing is that so few people understand how trans-parent their expressions are.

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While a facial expression won’t describe objective facts in technical detail, it does say a lot about what a person thinks about his or her posi-tion in a negotiation or argument. And knowing that can help you a lot.

To repeat what was written earlier, when Shakespeare wrote, “Your face, my thane, is as a book where people may read strange matters,” was not only true in the days of the Bard’s life, but also true today in every aspect of our existence.

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**Chapter 5: Gestures and Postures**

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**Gestures and Postures**

An interesting theory about the origin of language in the human race holds that speech movements imitated gestures normally made with the hands, arms, legs and head.

Suppose, for example, one of our early ancestors wanted someone to come closer. But it was dark, or his hands were holding something, or perhaps a person was not looking at him. At some point in the evolution of mankind, someone must have thought of uttering a sound instead of mak-ing a gesture. When the other person responded, the first words were born.

Once *that* occurred, additional sounds quickly followed communi-cating everything from “let’s go hunt,” to “I’m the alpha member of this tribe.” Primitive humans soon realized that words were better than sounds or gestures in critical situations. It took a great number of gestures for someone to warn the tribe they were about to be attached by an enemy; but only one or two words accomplished the task.

If these theories are right, gestures are the parents of words. And the remain important partners in making words work.

Despite the development of the spoken and written language, non-verbal communication remains and will probably be with us for centuries in the future—until such time as humans become telepathic. (At that point, there will be no need for either the spoken or a silent language.)

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**In the study of kinesics and nonverbal communication, by far the greatest difficulty—according to those who are conducting re-search on the subject—is the specific meaning of gestures and posture and arriving at a consensus on the stimuli from the mind that triggers such movement.**

If what the British psychologist Simon Baron-Cohen alleges is true, humans have 412 distinct emotions. Complicating that number, the book *Mind Wide Open* by Steven Johnson suggests every emotion is connectedto its own “emotional toolbox,” which contains scores of representative words, sounds, expressions, gestures and images.

So, the possibility of connecting a specific emotion to its own gesture or posture seems very remote.

We equate a bowed head with solemnity—but it can also mean ex-haustion or despair. To some people, a hand to the heart means fear—to others it means excitement. And those are just two emotional gestures.

**Trying to Quantify Emotions**

Beginning in the 1980s, researchers in the United States and Great Britain have spent a lot of time and money studying the emotional content of gestures and posture. They observe stimuli from the interaction among several people…or from an action directed toward a single person.

Advertising agencies, *Fortune* 500 companies and law enforcement agencies would all like to know what particular gestures or movements mean. This would be a way to apply consumer tells to the industrial world.

But the conclusions are always sketchy; the connections between certain emotions and certain actions are just too complicated and indi-vidual to support broad conclusions. Some studies say that certain body movements occur only in expressive activity of specific emotions; others say there’s no connection and that the same movements are meaningless.

Then, the scientists ask for additional grant money to go on chasing psycho-kinesthetic ghosts.

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Still, the idea that gestures have regular meanings seems right, in-stinctively. Linguists, who work more with words than actions, make an excellent point that the voice and the gestures that accompany talk pro-vide a richer kind of communication than cold print or handwriting. But there’s a big difference between something that seems right at the gut level and something that has been scientifically proven.

**There are a vast number of body movements; some are single, while others are multiple. And the movements can be per-sonal, interpersonal or multi-personal—effecting three or more individuals. This may readily be observed in a meeting in which one person may say or do something that divides a group into two separate camps of opinion.**



**Hand Signals**

By far, the largest number of gestures people produce are made with the hands. The hands are used to accentuate what is being said, and at times act like a metronome keeping time with the words spoken. The hand gestures occur when an individual is standing up or sitting down, and the more excited a person is, the greater the number and more intense the gestures become.

Hand gestures may be used solely, as when someone waves the hands and arms like windmills while speaking, or makes “karate chops” with them like former U.S. President Harry Truman often did as he empha-sized a specific point. Or the hands may be used in conjunction with other parts of the body, such as when the hand is placed on the head as they gently rub the forehead, or touch the end of the nose. In either case, some-thing is being nonverbally communicated.

In the classic movie *The Sting*, touching the side of the nose with the index finger was a signal among the con men that everything was “jake” or all right.

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However, in most cases when people touch a part of their face, they do so unconsciously. And, as the classic television comedy *Seinfeld* fa-mously stated, when someone touches her face the gesture usually means something unpleasant is about to happen.

So let’s look at some differences in touching any part of the face because something itches, or if it represents an inner emotional feeling being expressed by an unconscious gesture.

When an itch occurs that needs to be scratched, a person usually uses the fingers in an intense rubbing manner. That is to say, they scratch the spot that itches rapidly and with vigor. However, when there is no itch and the gesture represents concerns, doubt, suspicion, concern, etc., the person’s hand movement will be slower and less vigorous.

**There is a difference in the intensity between an itch and an inner nudge. Perhaps it might be that an inner emotion or thought needs to be scratched in the same manner as a skin surface itch: And the reason for the unconscious gesture.**

In *How to Read a Person Like a Book*, I listed a series of emotions that triggered gestures, postures and facial expressions: The emotions ranged from confidence to frustration. During business seminars on nego-tiating I conducted worldwide, those attending often asked questions about how confidence, doubt and truthfulness might be nonverbally displayed during the course of a negotiation.

I’ll cover those issues in that order.

**Confidence and Steeples**

Confidence may initially be displayed when a person enters a room, exchanges greetings and sits down. It starts in how people walk, the de-gree of eye contact they make, the tone of voice, and the overall way they

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carry their bodies. However, confidence—like other emotions—may un-dergo changes depending on conditions.

I’ve seen individuals who were initially confident quickly change emo-tions like a deflated balloon. And the principal reason for this was be-cause they discovered their initial negotiating leverage position was not as solid as they thought and hurriedly had to retreat to a fallback position.

Conversely, I’ve also seen individuals who entered into a negotiation thinking they didn’t have a very strong position and were not nonverbally overly confident. And, suddenly, they discovered their position was on much firmer ground. The increased confidence could easily be seen as a result of their nonverbal communication at the negotiating table.

Seminar attendees often ask how to identify specific gestures that nonverbally communicate confidence. And I usually start with the so-called “steepling” gesture, in which the fingers of the hands are joined together to form a triangle, or the shape of a church steeple: Which is where it gets the name. The gesture might also be called it a “teepee” or “tent” like gesture by the geometric shape it creates.

It is not unusual to see a person using a steepling gesture when speaking comfortably about a subject she knows very well. Politicians, teachers, professors, accountants and attorneys are very fond of using the gesture when they speak. However, of course, the gesture is not limited to those professions; it’s just more common in those because people in those pro-fessions study each other’s gestures carefully.

**For years, authors of novels have used the steepling gesture to describe characters speaking with great confidence. And these writers may not use a specific word for the gesture—they just describe it. Agatha Christie often used it in her novels when de-scribing how joining the fingers of both hands formed a “pyramid shape” that signaled confidence.**

The steepling gesture can also communicate a *change* in feelings and attitude. For example, a person who has a high level of confidence may at

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one moment speak with the fingers joined in a steepling position, elbows resting on a table and arms and hands away from the head and body. Then, as his confidence level decreases (say, horrible fourth quarter sales numbers are announced), the fingers remain joined in the steepling posi-tion—but the hands, instead of staying away from the face, are brought to the mouth. Perhaps both thumbs or index fingers touch the lips.

**People who are truly confident seldom bring their hands or fingers to their lips. Confident people may do nothing with their hands—just leaving them at their sides or folded in their laps. But, in most cases, even confident people like to find some activity for their hands.**



At other times, you notice the change in confidence by the height at which the steepling gesture is made. Some individuals place their hands so high that, when they speak to you, they look at you through the triangle formed with their hands. And later, as their confidence subsides, the hands are lowered and the fingers are tightly interlocked—a nonverbal sign of tension.

The difference in the height of the steepling gesture may be observed when looking at the interaction between a superior and subordinate who are both very confident and accustomed to using the gesture.

There seems to be an unwritten principle that regulates how the ges-ture is used when a superior and subordinate speak to each other. A subordinate usually will lower the height of their steepling gesture when interacting with a superior using the same gesture. They allow the superior to hold the hands higher.

I had a very interesting experience years ago during a business trip to Hawaii. On the flight to Oahu, I met the late actor Steve McQueen. Dur-ing a discussion with him, I mentioned that I’d co-authored *How to Read* *a Person Like a Book* and that I’d seen his latest movie, *The Cincinnati Kid*. I asked him why he’d used the steepling gesture in a particular gam-

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bling scene in the movie. I told him the gesture was unprofessional—for a poker player—and that a person who made his living playing cards would never send such an obvious nonverbal clue. Professional players work hard to minimize the signals they give…especially tells that they’re confi-dent about their cards.

As soon as I finished talking, McQueen said, “You know, some of my friends thought *The Cincinnati Kid* was a pretty good movie. But they thought I wasn’t very convincing as a poker player.”

**Some Things People Just Can’t Hide**

Confidence is a very difficult feeling to hide. It seems to ooze through the pores of our skin—a sort of “anti-sweat” that comes out when we’re under stress.

While there’s no certain way to hide confidence (and you may not always *want* to hide it), a confident person should be careful not appear too cocksure…and act like a rooster in a barnyard. Again, the best ap-proach here is minimize unnecessary gestures.

Steve McQueen may have thought his steepling gesture was a way to seem casual while playing cards. Many rookies do. He’d have seemed more like a *rounder*—a seasoned card player—if he’d done less.

**As an educated observer, you should look for the “too many” gestures. Specifically, look for incongruent signs that contradict what on the surface appears to be confidence.**

I recall a friend of mine who owned a racehorse running in a race for the first time. His horse had had fairly good workouts prior to the race but was a long shot at 20-to-1 odds because this would be its first race. Just before the race, I asked my friend what *he* thought the horse’s chances were of winning. He smiled at me and said, “I just bet another $1,000 to win on him. Does that give you a clue?”

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At the same time as he said that, he gave me a doubt gesture by touching his nose. I didn’t bet on his horse because of the incongruent gesture. That gesture made my friend’s bold statement sound more des-perate than confident.

The horse finished last.

After the race I asked him what had happened. He responded by saying “the horse didn’t get out of the gate and lost the race before it started. Just wait until the next one.”

I don’t know if his horse ever won a race afterwards.

**Of course, confidence may be demonstrated by means other than the steepling gesture. Sometimes, business people hook their thumbs in the vest of their suit to reflect their confidence. Or they may hold the lapels of their suit with both hands in what I call “the Churchill gesture.” Sir Winston Churchill was very fond of that particular gesture whenever he appeared in public.**

More recently, a new gesture of confidence has come into main-stream culture: the head sway. People who believe they’re in the right— especially in a public forum or confrontation—will sway their heads from left to right or in a shallow circular motion.

This gesture doesn’t have a fine pedigree. It seems to have started on lowbrow television “talk shows” in which lower class people (sometimes actors doing broad caricature) confront each other about vulgar misdeeds. Surprisingly, it’s drifted up the socioeconomic scale, so that it sometime occurs in boardrooms.

An acquaintance of mine offers one timely example. He was in the midst of selling a technical subscription journal that his company owned to a trade organization in that technical field. The negotiations had been go-ing on for a long time but were near the end, so the parties agreed to meet in a conference room at the buyer’s headquarters to close the sale:

*The buyers believed that they had the upper hand. They had pressed for a couple of small points, and we’d agreed. They’d*

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*asked to have the closing take place at their place. And we’d agreed. The truth is that we’d gotten what we wanted from the deal in the earliest stages; they were paying our price, in cash. The small points—minor credits for some liabilities the buyer would be assuming—were of trivial importance, if we could close the deal as agreed. My concern going into that boardroom was that someone would raise a fundamental ques-tion about the sale price that would scotch everything. The buyer was a very bureaucratic organization and I knew that bureaucracies are most comfortable with inaction and delay. When I got there, I was greeted by the CEO, his main outside counsel and the division manager who would be running the journal after the acquisition. The CEO and the lawyer played it cool; but the division manager couldn’t stop swaying her head. That gesture told me two things. First, the division man-ager had pressed for the small concessions we’d agreed to make; second, she was confident that the deal would close that day. I can’t tell you how relieved I was.*

The deal did close, as agreed, that day.

**Recognizing Signs of Compromise**

Besides looking for nonverbal signs of confidence when starting a negotiation, the other signs to look for is if the other party is looking for a settlement or compromise.

There are times when people arrange meetings to discuss differences with the intent of reaching some sort of solution or compromise. And, then, there are times when they are merely going through the motions and not really serious of reaching any compromise.

It is important to read the gestures, postures and facial expressions that give you clues of these two different attitudes. Besides reading the confidence level at the beginning of a negotiation, it is important to sense how the other party feels about the possibility of making concessions and a compromise: Because, without such feelings, the entire process may be a waste of effort and time.

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The National Hockey League—North America’s premier circuit in that sport—cancelled its entire 2004/2005 season because of a labor dispute that was made worse by a virtual symphony of misunderstood gestures and nonverbal cues. NHL team owners made it plain to the play-ers’ union that they would demand net reductions in player salaries. The head of the players’ union apparently told his membership that, in private meetings with league officials, he’d “read” their gestures to mean that the league would back away from its demands. He was wrong; and his mem-bers lost a full year of salary.

**One of the most important elements in a business negotiation is being able to read the nonverbal clues when a person is getting reading to make a compromise and/or disclose information. Mis-reading these cues can be extremely expensive.**

In my work as a negotiation consultant, I have recorded hundreds of negotiations on videotape—and focused on the moment when individuals are getting ready to reveal information or are inclined to make compro-mises.

When this occurs, people often move the upper torso towards the center of the table. At times, they even move the chair they are sitting in forward. If they had previously been sitting towards the back of the chair, their upper torso will move forward and place the hands on the table while expressing such words as, “Tell you what I’m willing to do,” or “I think you should know that...” And the words that follow always tend to make compromises, offers or disclosures.

Early on in my research, it became obvious that the upper torso move-ment was an important nonverbal clue. Therefore, I instructed the person who was recording the negotiation to record the individual who moved in that manner, so that we could later see the head, upper torso and hands. After several years of recording, it became clear that people whose upper torso moved forward were truly getting ready to make disclosures, offers, compromises, etc.; and those who sat back in their chairs with arms

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crossed over their chests were not interested in making any kind of com-promise or disclosure.

But seasoned negotiators sometimes blurred these easy distinctions. They might alternate between the torso postures…or even use one pos-ture when their words suggested the opposite attitude. At some level— maybe conscious decision, maybe not—these boardroom rounders real-ized what postures meant and were mixing up their signals.

**Hands, Feet and Honest Disclosure**

I studied hours of video tape and, in order to get at the truth of what the seasoned pros meant, I realized the importance an individual’s hands. If a person was about to make a sincere disclosure, both hands were usually on the table and the speaker would gesture with them when he spoke. While those who were not going to make disclosures usually kept the hands hidden under the table or close to their body.

Another important nonverbal observation we discovered was the sig-nificance of “locked ankles.” This discovery was made in a very interest-ing manner. My role, during the time when negotiations are recorded on videotape, was observing and taking notes for later discussion. I put all my attention on what was being said, the tone of voice and all the nonver-bal messages that accompanied the words. Therefore, my complete focus and attention on what was occurring during the negotiation.

One day, while taking notes at a negotiation that was being recorded, I happened to drop my pen and—as I reached down to pick it up—I noticed for the first time a person sitting at the table with both ankles locked together. There were six people negotiating, three on each side. I checked to see if any others might have their ankles locked and found none. Since it was the first time I had observed locked ankles, I didn’t pay a great deal of attention to it with regards to any possible nonverbal sig-nificance. However, I didn’t forget the incident.

Several months later something unusual happened at my dentist’s of-fice. As I was getting ready to leave, he brought up the subject of locked ankles. He was aware of the research I had been conducting on nonver-bal communication and felt I might have some thoughts of what message

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“locked ankles” might communicate. My dentist explained that in all the years of his medical experience that more than 90 percent of his patients immediately locked their ankles as soon as they sat in a dental chair.

My dentist gave me valuable information that day which was later confirmed by another source, a nurse who worked for the Red Cross. She repeated the exact words uttered by my dentist: After many years of experience at blood donation sites, she had noticed the majority of people who donated blood would immediately lock their ankles when they were lying on their back on a table. And then she said she would separate the ankles to insure better blood circulation.

As a result of these two observations, I had the necessary informa-tion to understand the nonverbal significance of locked ankles during the course of a negotiation.

For several weeks after, whenever I saw a person who was seated with locked ankles, I paid attention. I no longer accepted locked ankle had no meaning and started believing such a gesture might be covertly sending a hidden emotional message.

During this period, I came to the realization how often *I* locked my own ankles during business meetings. I started looking at locked ankles not only in negotiations recorded during our seminars but also when I watched news or talk shows on television.



**I began to see that individuals who were not revealing infor-mation often locked their ankles and, when they allowed the emotions to flow, they would unlock their ankles.**

In addition to looking for locked ankles on video taped negotiations and in personal relationships, I looked for photographs in magazines and newspapers. I collected such photos over a period of years and added them to my library of nonverbal gestures.

In my collection, I have several photos of Joseph Stalin taken during the time he attended major conferences with Winston Churchill and Franklin

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Roosevelt during World War II. In each photo, Stalin is the only one who has his ankles locked, a personal nonverbal expression of his basic nature of being very secretive.

It has been written that Stalin seldom smiled and, as a result, people around him didn’t know whether to be frightened or happy when he did. Even his own daughter has written that the Soviet “man of steel” was a very difficult person to read nonverbally. Perhaps, if he’d been more open, his system of government would have lasted longer.

**Conclusion**

All of us gesture as we speak: Some of us more than others. Ges-tures are either used for purposes of emphasizing spoken words or to express feelings and emotions. And they are either consciously or uncon-sciously made. University of Chicago professor, Susan Goldin-Meadow, has written on the function of hand gestures accompanying speech. She states, “Gestures play a part in the thoughts we think. And the interesting aspect of gestures is people who are born blind and have never seen anyone use gestures, will gesture as they speak.”

We gesture in our dreams and when speaking with others even though they may not be present, as when making a telephone call. If you were to look at three men making separate calls using a public telephone and ana-lyzed their individual gestures, you might determine whom they are calling. If two of them stand with the body relaxed and gesture freely, they prob-ably are talking to someone with whom their relationship is well estab-lished, such as a wife, friend, a business associate, etc.

However, if the third caller’s posture is more rigid and uses very few gestures and the back is turn from viewers, he might possibly be placing a gambling bet, talking to some person with whom he has a secret associa-tion, or communicating a nefarious message with another person.

During hundreds of seminars I’ve conducted, I’ve demonstrated the three callers and more than 90 percent of the attendees have correctly identified the different callers and whom they were talking to which indi-cates to me how aware the average person is to reading nonverbal com-munication.

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A person who’s mastered nonverbal communication may look to facial expressions first in people he meets. But I would argue that posture and gestures can tell as much—or more—about a person. In fact, the longer you know someone, the more you should look past her facial ex-pressions (which most people make some effort to control) and look to-ward her posture and gestures.

Even smart people have a hard time manage these things completely.

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**Verbal/Nonverbal Congruence**

Whenever people speak, we combine the things we say with non-verbal messages. In every case, our verbal and nonverbal communication is either congruent or incongruent. When they are congruent—in agree-ment with each other—the listener tends to believe…or at least under-stand… what we say. However, if the messages are incongruent—if they disagree—the listener will doubt what we say without fully knowing why there is doubt in her mind.

**The problem: Your verbal message may be getting through slightly, but your contradictory nonverbal message is getting through more. This doesn’t mean your listener thinks you’re ly-ing; more often, it means she’s confused. And she may conclude that *you’re* not sure about what you’re saying—even though your words are clear.**

Two familiar expressions reflect this phenomenon: *What you are* *speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you say* and *actions speak louder than words*. On a more technical level, I’m often reminded of SigmundFreud’s quote:

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*He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince him-self that a mortal cannot keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips, betrayal oozes out of him at ev-ery pore.*

This quote illustrates what occurs during a conversation between two individuals when the verbal contradicts the nonverbal. The spoken words undergo an unconscious analysis when matched with the speaker’s facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and posture. If the verbal and the nonverbal messages are congruent, the message is credible. If the two are incongruent, the speaker will create a doubt in the mind of the listener— and the message will be questioned.

The individuals in our society who best understand the importance of verbal and nonverbal congruence are professional actors and politicians. Without congruence, both of these professionals would fail in their at-tempt to persuade and convince voters or an audience of their sincerity. For a professional actor to play a role convincingly, he must speak the words and use the appropriate *congruent* facial expressions, voice in-flection, sounds, gestures and posture in order for the audience to believe in his portrayal of a character.



**One of the fundamental rules of acting is that an actor should never bring his hand to his head unless he wants to commu-nicate a nonverbal message of worry or doubt. Many politi-cians, who take acting lessons to become more convincing speakers, also understand this acting principle.**

During my lifetime, I’ve heard and seen 10 different American presi-dents on radio, movie screens and television—and only one of them truly understood the importance of keeping the hands away from his face while speaking. That president was Ronald Reagan, who was not considered a great actor while in Hollywood but knew the importance of getting his message across to the public.

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There was only one occasion in which I saw Reagan bring his hand to his head during a media conference on television. A reporter asked him a question regarding his prior knowledge about the weapons transfer dur-ing the so-called “Iran-Contra” arms deal. He paused to consider his re-sponse and, in that brief moment, his right hand slightly brushed his nose. Then, he answered that he had had no previous knowledge.

Subsequently, the public has learned that the president knew consid-erably more than what he said he knew about weapons being supplied to the Central American rebels.

**Some psychologists believe that a patient touching his or her nose during analysis communicates doubt, concealment or lying. In thousands of negotiations that have been videotaped during the executive seminars I’ve conducted, I see evidence that concurs with those psychologists.**

In many instances, negotiators will touch their nose at times when they are unsure of what to say of are trying to cover up something.

**Congruence Can Be Learned**

Maintaining congruence in verbal and nonverbal communication is a skill actors, politicians and certain kinds of crooks and confidence men practice in order to attain a high level persuasion. They need to be able to convey congruence, regardless of the truth or legitimacy of what they say.

This is no easy task. I’ve studied congruence for decades and, when I turn the video camera on myself, find more than a few nonverbal signs that conflict with statements I know are false or doubtful.

Some people are simply good at congruence. They’ve mastered most of the following points:

* Understand what your audience expects to hear—and whether your words are going to agree with those expectations or disagree with them.

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* Don’t worry about words themselves. Focus on how a conversation, speech or exchange will end. Many people send mixed signals be-cause they haven’t considered how they want an exchange to end.
* Realize that a single conversation or exchange rarely defines a busi-ness or other relationship. If you establish or maintain a good connec-tion with someone, you can always resolve a bad exchange later.
* Strong eye contact goes a long way in making any message under-standable; conversely, weak eye contact can muddy an otherwise clear message.
* Be aware of your posture and gestures and try to match them to your message. If you’re there to be aggressive, stand aggressively. If you’re there to be conciliatory, lean back and keep the palms of your hands as open as possible.
* Modulate your voice to the content of your message. Many people speak in the voice—either loud or soft, fast or slow—that’s comfort-able to them. People who’ve mastered nonverbal communication think about the person with whom they’re communicating and pick the voice that will make sense to that person.

**An example of this last point: If you make an apology in a loud, hurried voice, the person with whom you’re speaking may not believe the apology is genuine.**

Of course, the ability to manage congruence in a value-neutral skill.

In the wrong hands, it can be put to bad use.

Over my four decades of research into nonverbal communication, I’ve studied thousands of speeches given by hundreds of politicians. The two who still impress me most are Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Their skillful use of gestures, facial expression and posture may seem ex-cessive to today’s voters but were absolutely mesmerizing.

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Hitler was a masterful speaker. He seemed intelligent, honest, intense and determined; watching him, you have little doubt that he believed ab-solutely in what he was saying. He seemed to believe so sincerely that, as a listener, you’re drawn into that belief—regardless of its objective truth or validity. And so were the German people drawn in.

After World War II, many Germans said that when Hitler spoke they felt like they “were held in the palm of his hand.”

It’s been widely reported that Hitler studied gestures, facial expres-sions and posture—including his own. Well into his political ascendancy, he recorded himself on audio tape and film for review. His strong gestures often overwhelmed the relatively broad and nonspecific words of his speeches (he rarely mentioned the details of his military aggressions in central Europe or his plan to exterminate Jews).

When Hitler spoke about using force to accomplish his objectives, he closed his right hand and made a fist. Then, as he emphasized that action needed to be taken, he used his fist like a hammer pounding a nail and driving it home. Watching him, you have no doubt that this man will take action—though precisely *what* action, you’re not so sure.

When he said that his country would not allow any nation to dictate terms to Germany, and the audience applauded loudly, he would swipe his hair with a swift movement of his left hand…as if wiping sweat from his brow. Then, while his audience was still cheering his talk of standing up to other countries, he would tightly cross his arms in a gesture of defiance.

**These actions may sound like cliches in today’s era of more natu-ralistic public speaking, just as Hitler himself has become a cliche of a ranting madman. But they were undeniably effective.**

Hitler’s Italian ally, Benito Mussolini, was not to be outdone in his use of rococo gestures and poses. Mussolini also crossed his arms when he wanted to convey his defiance of other nations. But he didn’t copy Hitler’s hammering fist; instead, Mussolini preferred to thrust his chin up-

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ward and slowly nodded his head as if approving every word he had said. Unlike other politicians—even Hitler—Mussolini actively embraced the image of an arrogant leader, with hubris flowing from every pore in his body. Apparently, he believed this linked him in his people’s minds with the Caesars of the ancient Roman Empire. And these tactics worked, for a time. Many Italians, who did not have the greatest confidence in the direction their nation was heading, went along with *Il Duce*’s nonverbal performance.

Of course, *Il Duce* ended up hanged and his body mutilated by an-gry Italians. But, for a short time, the carefully managed congruence of his verbal and nonverbal communication created a message so charismatic that it swept up a nation.

**The Political Cost of Incongruence**

Shifting gears dramatically, we can see an example of how incongru-ence of verbal and nonverbal messages can affect political results.

The first televised debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy during the 1960 U.S. presidential campaign was the forum. Nixon was the incongruous candidate; and he lost the election.

**The Nixon/Kennedy debate remains an essential case study in nonverbal communication. People’s impressions of the debate were widely divergent—and the split depended largely on whether people watched it on television or listened to it on the radio.**

On television, Kennedy appeared more relaxed and confident than Nixon did. Some historians emphasize the makeup and grooming that Kennedy used. But his gestures and posture also conveyed sincerity and calm. Kennedy kept his hands rested on the surface of his podium and used them in clear gestures to stress points he made verbally. He kept his eyes steady and moved his head slowly; he smiled often and held the smile even while his opponent spoke.

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Nixon—who declined makeup and, infamously, seemed unshaven— relied on performance tactics that he’d used in live debates. His gestures were faster and less emphatic than Kennedy’s; his eyes darted around the room. He maintained a stern look throughout most of the debate, smiling only in brief flashes when it was his turn to speak.

Nixon answered his questions effectively and challenged many of Kennedy’s points; but people who watched the debate on television gen-erally concluded that Kennedy seemed “more presidential.” And most political analysts agreed.

However, a survey of people who’d listened to the debate on radio and not seen it on TV came to a different conclusion. The majority of listeners believed Nixon had made his points more effectively than Kennedy…and seemed better informed on the specific issues. They thought Nixon had won the debate.

If you watch that debate today (it’s widely available on tape or in digital form), you see clearly that Kennedy’s verbal and nonverbal mes-sages were congruent. The substance of his answers many have been less detailed, but the combination of his actions and words was very strong.



**Nixon’s actions and words were, at times, incongruent. His answers may have been more substantive, but he delivered them in a manner that seemed uncomfortable and not quite believable.**

American politics has seen this process repeated numerous times since the 1960 Nixon/Kennedy debates. As I’ve mentioned, Ronald Reagan was master communicator who maintained a disciplined congru-ence between his verbal and nonverbal messages.

And even the less-articulate George W. Bush is effective at convey-ing a sense of calm and self-assuredness. Many Bush supporters acknowl-edge—as the man himself does—that he is neither an artful speaker nor a master of policy details. But most believe Bush is a “decent guy” who

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speaks honestly, if not smoothly. How does a relatively inarticulate man convey a sense of trustworthiness? He follows a few basic guidelines:

* Make steady eye contact—with people in a live audience or with the camera on video (some television experts advise people not to look straight into the camera; *this is bad advice*).
* Wherever you make eye contact, keep it there. If your eyes dart around the room, you will seen shifty to the audience.
* Don’t move your head too much. Even carefully planned gestures with the neck and head can look jerky and sudden to audiences. Sud-denness (in verbal or nonverbal communication) confuses listeners.
* More specifically, avoid looking down (at the floor) or up (at the ceil-ing or lights). The first strikes most people as dishonest; the second strikes most as unprepared.
* Don’t smile too much. Keep smiles for the first few seconds of a statement and to emphasize particular jokes or comments. Smiling constantly will seem artificial and dishonest.
* Use open gestures. When possible, keep your hands open and visible to your audience. When a speakers’ hands are visible, audiences tend to trust him more.
* Don’t rush. Using silence—at least occasionally—doesn’t make you seem unprepared as much as staring at the ceiling does. Audiences tend to interpret a moment or two of silence as thoughtfulness.
* Don’t touch your face while you’re talking. This may seem like a quibble, but this gesture is a sign of doubt.

**Looking for Incongruence**

Congruence—and incongruence—between verbal and nonverbal messages isn’t only about performance. Careful listeners need to under-stand these dynamics, so they know what to look for in a speaker who asks to be trusted or believed.

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What should you look for? What are the tells that someone is making a tell?

To answer these questions, I go to those people who practice the art of seeing and hearing incongruent messages—psychologists, psychiatrists, policemen, interrogators, negotiators, or anyone who needs to separate the truth from lies on a regular basis.

Interrogators often simplify their jobs by looking for quick and simple cues that suggest incongruence in the people they interview. These cues include:

* Saying yes while you shake your head no.
* Saying that you’re not in a rush while you look at a clock.
* Saying you don’t mind being interviewed while frowning.
* Saying you’re not upset while speaking in one-word grunts.

**Some professional interrogators (in law enforcement and mental health fields) actively look for these signs of incon-gruences early on in an interview. They may ask trick ques-tions like “Do you feel all right being here?” simply to look for congruence or incongruence. Once they’ve asked a series of these qualifying questions, they move on the substance of their interview.**



Interrogators often repeat an old saying about verbal/nonverbal con-gruence: “Treat all words as rumors, until they are backed up by nonver-bal cues.”

Incongruence doesn’t necessarily mean people are lying. It can sim-ply mean they are nervous, distracted or hiding some minor type of guilty knowledge. The importance of incongruence for you, as the person com-municating, is that it confuses listeners and undermines your credibility.

I once saw Ralph Gomory, President of the Alfred P. Sloan Founda-tion, testifying before a U.S. Senate committee on the effect of outsourcing

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jobs and free trade with other nations. He spoke eloquently in favor of continuing the policy; his speech had been written well, with great clarity and emphasis.

However, his nonverbal communication clearly stated that he had doubts not only about what he was saying but also about the policy.

**His left hand quivered constantly as he spoke; and his right hand seemed unable to control itself. He picked it up and twisted it in what looked like a painful manner.**

To me, this was a classic demonstration of someone who was saying something with a great deal of conviction, while contradicting it with his nonverbal messages.

**We Don’t Learn What We’re Never Taught**

Most people are never formally taught to manage their verbal and nonverbal messages…to make them congruent.

So, where and when do we unconsciously begin the learning pro-cess? It begins at home, when we are very young and don’t understand the meaning of words. At a time in life when each word is nothing but a sound without any specific meaning, we look at the faces of people around us and connect their expressions and movements to the sounds they make. We soon start to distinguish if the sound and the facial expression are congruent.

Once we become adept at recognizing facial expressions and con-gruent sounds, we progress to noticing how people move their arms and hands. It isn’t very long before we recognize whether the movements are threatening or not.

As a result of this early training, we learn a great deal about the non-verbal world we will live in for the rest of our lives. The first few years are a period in our life where we learn what people do is as important as what

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they say. And that a nonverbal message can be more revealing and truthful than a verbal one.

This knowledge may remain in the unconscious or subconscious mind, but it’s part of our reaction wherever it lies.

Unfortunately, the nonverbal learning process usually comes to a halt when we began the process of learning how to speak. When our parents start teaching us the meaning of specific words—and the first words start flowing from our infant mouths—nonverbal communication takes a backseat to the verbal. The new words we learn each day are added to those we already know and soon we have a fairly good vocabulary. And once our verbal tool chest is sufficient, nonverbal awareness fades.

What a strange switch, from total dependence on the nonverbal to total dependence on the verbal. Yet each person in every culture under-goes the same transition.

The American novelist William Kennedy writes eloquently about this forgetting-by-learning process in his group of books known as “The Al-bany Cycle” (the best-known of which is the novel *Ironweed*). In these spiritual stories, children who haven’t learned to speak yet can communi-cate with animals, the dead…and each other.

**Remembering What Most People Forget**

It is possible, regardless of how old you are, to revive your ability to recognize nonverbal messages and how they support—or contradict— people’s verbal messages. You start by realizing that there are more non-verbal messages than verbal ones in everyday life.

The verbal messages, which we spent most of our time and effort trying to understand are really a small part of all the communication going on in a given moment or during a given day.

For some people, just making this realization is enough to allow all of the nonverbal perception to come rushing back from their unconscious or subconscious minds. They are the intuitive ones.

Other people have to revive the perception more methodically, work-ing it back into shape—as you would a muscle that hasn’t been used for many years.

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The gym for working out your nonverbal perception is…everywhere. Home, the workplace, stores, elevators, the street, television—anywhere people gather and talk.

As with any exercise, this practice can give an invigorated feeling that, frankly, a kind of high.



**A word of warning, though: When some people make a break-through and find exercises that make them feel invigorated— and high—they want to go out and convert the entire world. Recognize this impulse…and let it pass. Don’t think that just because you have recovered your perception of nonverbal cues that you can automatically see everyone’s “real” feel-ings and emotions. You can’t. No one can.**

Even the most keen listener only ever knows part of what a speaker really thinks. Congruence and incongruence help us make astute judg-ments about how individuals behave; but congruence can involve factors beyond what even the most perceptive listener can glean.

Incongruence between word and deed can mean a speaker is with-holding or uncertain; but it can also mean he just had a fight with his wife and is generally unsettled. Sometimes people cross their arms because they’re defensive or have tuned you out; sometimes they cross their arms because they’re cold.

In other words, to quote Freud again, “Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.”

In order to understand properly another person’s feelings, emotions or attitudes, you need to look for more than one gesture, facial expres-sion, sound or posture. This “clustering” of nonverbal messages is illus-trated by the words of G.S. Sullivan in the comic opera *H.M.S. Pinafore* describing a proper British sailor:

*His nose should pant and his lips should curl,*

*His cheek should flame and his brow should furl,*

*His bosom should heave and his heart should glow,*

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*And his fist should be ready for the knockdown blow.*

Those lyrics are a classic example of clustering nonverbal signs in order to make a better judgment. If you think someone sitting across the table from you in a business meeting is defensive because she just crossed her arms, you had better look for additional “clusters” of nonverbal infor-mation to corroborate your judgment.

Individuals who are truly defensive always send out more than one nonverbal sign. They might also have sat up straight as the arms were crossed and have a “stiff” back. (That’s where the expression, “getting your back up” comes from.)

In addition to the crossed arms and stiff back, they may hold their heads straight up, at right angle to their shoulders. When people are inter-ested in what they’re hearing, they often tilt their heads slightly to one side or the other; which is often a sign of someone who is listening.



**If you’re ever speaking to a large audience and want to know how well you’re getting your message across, all you have to do is look at look at the heads: If most are tilted, your message is being well received with interest. If, on the other hand, the majority of heads are bolt upright, stop talking or change the subject—because you’ve lost your audience.**

Finally, we have two more nonverbal signs to look for in judging whether a person is defensive or not. First, someone who crosses her arms because she’s cold or uncomfortable rarely makes her hands into fists; someone who’s defensive usually *does* made fists…and may hide them under her armpits. And the last clue is facial expressions: A person who dislikes what you’re saying will seldom smile at you. If you see crossed arms, look in the person’s face. If she smiles back at you, you can wave off the crossed arms; if she doesn’t smile back, you have an opponent.

So, before you make the judgment a person is defensive simply be-cause they crossed of the arms, look for more evidence of other nonver-bal messages. The stiffening of the angle of the head, the hands made into

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fists and the facial expression, these additional signs all added together make your judgment more valid.

**Adding Up the Various Clues**

The congruence of nonverbal communication is difficult to measure when the various elements are separated from the verbal content. How-ever, when they are fitted together into their composite positions, a clear answer appears.

Each gesture, posture, facial expression, sound or action is like a word in a language. In order to understand the language, we must have sentences and paragraphs to complete a thought or message. Understanding the congruence of the elements that communicate nonverbal messages is the difference between making a false assessment and a correct judgment on needs, emotions, feelings, attitude and overall behavior.

During the course of a day, you may hear and see some of these incongruent messages from family, friends, co-workers or strangers when they say something with confidence, yet contradict it with nonverbal signs.

**When there’s an inappropriate throat clearing just before a per-son says, “Don’t worry that shipment will arrive on time,” you’ll probably want to get a tracking number. When a man swallows so hard you can see his Adam’s apple move up and down, you should take the words that follow with some skepticism.**

Another incongruent message is the nervous laugh—a rather insin-cere “ha-ha-ha” type either before or after the person has made a de-clarative statement. And, if one of these incongruent signs are accompa-nied by rapid blinking of the eyes, you had better get someone else to do the job.

There are also incongruent signs that reveal when a person may be lying or attempting to cover up something. I recall an episode of the clas-sic TV show *Columbo* that such signs. The story concerned a doctor

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whose nurse had been missing for several days. The doctor and members of her family were very concerned something had happened to her since the nurse was the type who always informed them where she was going and when they might expect her to return.

The doctor called the police and Columbo showed up wearing his usual frumpy topcoat while munching on a hardboiled egg. During the process of asking the doctor the usual investigative questions regarding the nurse’s disappearance, the telephone rang in the doctor’s office that was answered by the doctor. During the course of the conversation he said, “What? Are you sure? Where did it happen?”

The telephone call informed the doctor that the nurse’s body had been found and the doctor’s voice inflection was attempting to communi-cate surprise and shock. However, when the doctor asked the questions in a shrill voice attempting to act as if he was surprised, Columbo noticed the doctor turning a page on his desk calendar. From that moment the doctor became the number one suspect.

Eventually, the doctor confessed to murdering his nurse with whom he had been having an affair. He asked when Columbo first started sus-pecting him and the detective said, “I first started suspecting you when you received the telephone call that your nurses body had been found. Someone who is surprised by such a call would not have been turning a desk calendar like you did. From that moment I knew you did it, all I had to find out was how!”

**Contrived Gestures**

Sometimes a contrived gesture will stand out quickly as incongruent with the words a person says.

A contrived gesture may result because the individual doesn’t know what to say or how to react and merely wants to “buy time” in order to figure what to do next. An example of this might be a psychiatrist during analysis who is caught completely off guard by something his patient has said, and rather than responding contrives a gesture by taking off his glasses and wiping them clean, or picking a piece of lint of his clothes, looking out the window, etc.

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Many contrived gestures result when a person disapproves of the statements or actions of another person. And they use the gesture as a ploy of slow reaction before responding or reacting. It may be a worth-while gesture to consciously develop at such times when a person needs to gather their wits before saying or doing something. It is a gesture that many would do well to use at a time when control is needed to hide emo-tions and not allow them to take control.

A business negotiator I knew had a series of contrived gestures he used when someone became extremely agitated or angry with him. Espe-cially if the person resorted to using “four lettered words” during the course of the negotiation

**His contrived gestures was to take off his glasses, look away from the angry speaker, take a long breath, then move toward the angry speaker and, with a wide smile on his face, say, “I didn’t realize you loved me so much.” On two occasions, I saw him use the contrived gesture; each time he was able to get everyone in the room to smile or laugh, including the belligerent individual.**

This gesture was incongruent. But it was *meant* to be incongruent— to unsettle the angry speaker.

**Conclusion**

Trust your ability to hear and see incongruent messages. We knew how to distinguish the two when we were very young. All we have to do is return to the time when we had the ability to see the contradiction.

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*Culture* is a word that has many meanings and can’t be reduced to afew glib phrases or hyphenated-adjectives. It’s a system of learned and a shared behaviors that occurs from the process of living with other people in a common environment. If this sounds familiar, then you’ve been paying attention.

Culture is, itself, a form of nonverbal communication.

Each culture establishes its own accepted and not-accepted behav-iors. Different cultures can be completely different in what they accept and don’t. Because of these differences, there are often misunderstand-ings between cultures. It’s not enough for a traveler to learn to speak a different language, she must also learn and understand the customs and nonverbal aspects of the new culture.



**Perhaps the biggest cultural miscue many Americans face when they travel (and I’m thinking primarily of business travel) to other countries is how they regard time.**

Americans tend to think of time as a fixed measurement—something rigid, a master from whom we cannot escape. To an American business

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person, being late for a meeting is a sign bad planning (at best) or unpro-fessional selfishness (at worst).

However, other cultures don’t think of time as such a rigid master. Central American and Mediterranean cultures consider time a negotiable commodity. To them, time should not dictate how fast or slow a person conducts business…or eats a meal. Punctuality is a virtue among business people everywhere; but it’s not unusual for a meeting in Athens, Rome or Mexico City to start half an hour later than scheduled.

**You might be tempted to read nonverbal meaning into a late meeting, especially if you’d had several in a few days. You might want to fume that the locals don’t respect you. Resist that im - pulse. First, lateness (as frustrating as it may be) is too broad a trait to convey specific nonverbal messages; second, lateness can be a cultural norm.**

On the other hand, the American notion of time translates as child-ishly impatient to some other cultures. Those who’ve done business with Asian firms can attest that, when Americans hear the phrase *long term*, they think of something in the range of 10 years—but Asians think of hundreds…or even thousands…of years.

Japanese and Korean executives assigned to America often marvel at the immediate and explicit responses that American business people expect from just about every meeting. The Asians are used to more gradual, consensus decision-making.

Neither the aggressive American nor oblique Asian approach is bet-ter. Each is simply different. On this matter, Edward Hall—author of the book *Silent Language*—quoted one of his business colleagues saying something I’ve always found useful when traveling abroad:

*Time is like a museum with endless corridors and alcoves. You, the viewer, are walking through the museum in the dark, holding a light to each scene as you pass it. God is the cura-tor of the museum and only He knows all that is in it.*

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**Differences Beyond Time**

Besides the element of time, during my first few years in business conducting executive seminars in different countries, I discovered other cultural mistakes American businessmen and women often make when they are unaware of the nonverbal messages communicated during busi-ness transactions.

As an example, during a negotiation in Japan it is not unusual to hear a business person make a sound as though he is sucking air through his teeth. And, then after making the sound, he’ll say something like, “That would be very difficult.”

That air sucking sound means anything from “I don’t like it” to “I don’t know.”

**The Japanese consider it rude and offensive to say *No* and avoid saying it at almost all cost. (Of course, many people *outside* of Japan are the same way, but the aversion to *No* is a distinct—and almost universal—Japanese trait. Consider the controversy caused some years ago by the publication in that country of a bestselling book titled *A Japan That Can Say No*.)**

If an American negotiating in Japan hears the air sucking sound fol-lowed by the words, “That would be very difficult,” it might be wise to switch to another issue and return to the first at a later point, when both parties have reached agreement on other matters.

If that American is insensitive to the nonverbal message, she will prob-ably be perceived as being pushy and overly aggressive. Such behavior may cause a meeting to end on a negative note, simply because the Ameri-can was insensitive to the nonverbal messages sent.

Another common Japanese nonverbal message are periods of si-lence during negotiations. A silence longer than 30 seconds makes some Americans uneasy—because they are used to having individuals respond quickly when offers, proposals or alternatives are stated. However, in

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Japan, offers, proposals or alternatives are almost always followed by a prolonged silence. This silence doesn’t necessarily mean that the listeners don’t like what they’ve heard; they are simply accustomed to taking time to formulate a proper response.

Of course, if the long silence is punctuated with an air sucking sound, your proposal may be in trouble.

**Asians Master Nonverbal Communication**

Asian business people use a lot of nonverbal communication; and Japanese business people may be the most nonverbal of all. The person who is doing most of the talking is not necessarily the decision maker. Therefore, reading the nonverbal signs in very important and it begins the moment the Japanese walk into a meeting room.

Traditionally, the person with the most authority is usually the first one to walk through the doorway and will also carry the least paperwork with him (and it is still, almost always, *him*). Then, when introductions are made, Japanese executives who use a Western handshake method may also un-consciously bow slightly. The most senior members will bow the least, while those in junior positions will bow more noticeably.

**You may also notice that, when Japanese business people stand in a room before being seated, the person with the most authority may stand with his hands behind his back—like a drill instructor standing in front of a new group of recruits. This is what I call the *Ichi ban* (number one) position.**

Japanese business people will be very conscious of your appearance and what you wear. In the States, the unspoken rules of business attire make allowances for casual and even eccentric dress; it conveys creative or maverick sensibility. Not so in Asia. Leave your blue jeans and Con-verse All-Stars in the suitcase. Dress conservatively in Japan, if you want to make the plane ticket and hotel stay worth their steep prices.

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If you must make a pop culture fashion statement with your clothes, think of the hipster thieves in the film *Reservoir Dogs*—white shirts, dark suits and ties.

**Japanese business people will also focus on the fine details of any product you are interested in selling them. A label that’s slightly askew is a major nonverbal cue to them that your firm is not very well organized and does not pay attention to details.**

Years ago, a bra manufacturer that I knew was unable to sell its product in Japan because, when the prospective distributor inspected a sample, he found several tiny threads along one seam that had not been cut. The manufacturer’s rep hadn’t even noticed the threads. That inatten-tion to detail cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars…and maybe more.

In other Asian countries, an American businessman may have sched-uled a meeting and made the necessary travel arrangements; then, a few days later, the prospective client telephones to request a change in the date of the meeting.



**This kind of change in schedule is not necessarily a bad thing. It can be a positive nonverbal sign, indicating that the Asian side is trying to find a date that’s auspicious for the meeting, not trying to put it off.**

There is a great deal of nonverbal significance with regards to meet-ing Asian business people when they arrive in the United States (or any foreign destination). Usually, when Americans travel abroad, they don’t expect to be met formally at the airport—especially if the purpose of the trip is to sell goods or services. On the other hand, Asian business people

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may expect to be met by their hosts when they arrive in the U.S. If they are not, it sends a negative message to them.

As an example, a leading U.S. security firm neglected to send execu-tives to an airport to meet a group of Chinese officials upon their arrival in New York. The Chinese delegation spent the night at a hotel near Kennedy Airport and were so offended they took an early flight home *the next* *morning*, killing a large sale simply because of the U.S. firm’s culturalunawareness.



**It’s worth noting that the Chinese often express acceptance or *yes* in a manner that may seem unusual to Americans. They do it by making the sound *mmm* and, sometimes, sit-ting or leaning back from a table. Don’t misread the sound to mean “I’m thinking;” it’s more positive than that.**

Also: In Mandarin, the word for *no* is *bu*. And the Chinese are more willing than the Japanese to say *bu*.

When doing business in Korea, you must be aware of two important matters. First, the color red is considered unlucky; second, don’t ever give a Korean person a Swiss Army knife as a gift. A knife given to a Korean means you want to sever your relationship with them.

**In Arab Countries and the Middle East**

In the Middle East, a business deal may be lost if a person is seated and crosses his legs, displaying the sole of his shoe. This is a grave insult in the Moslem world. And, since Americans are fond of crossing their legs in a “figure 4” manner that displays the sole of the shoe, they can offend others without being aware of their action.

You can also insult Middle Easterners when dining by using the left hand while eating because the right hand is used when eating and the left one is utilized for toilet purposes.

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In most cultures, there is a certain amount of uneasiness about turning one’s back to others when leaving a room.

In western culture, when approaching an entrance to or exit from a public place, we have a standard nonverbal message of hospitality to-wards visitors and guests. Common courtesy dictates that the host—or person closest to being host—allow others to walk through a narrow en-trance first, to avoid getting caught up in an “Alphonse and Gaston” act.

**“Alphonse and Gaston” was a favorite comedy routine in vaude-ville theater. Two effete Europeans would become paralyzed try-ing to decide who should go through a door first. One would say, “After you, my dear Alphonse,” and the other would respond, “No! After *you*, my dear Gaston.” Often, several other people would walk through in the meantime.**

Another Middle Eastern custom that has nonverbal implications is the use of “worry beads.” No one knows for sure when or where the tradition started, but most scholars believe the beads are very old. And they may be the original source of Catholic rosary beads, which were introduced to Western Europe in the 13th Century—after two centuries of contact between the crusaders and Arabs in the Middle East.

In Arabic, the name for the worry beads is *masbaha*, which roughly translates as “to glorify God” or “to praise God.”

The original *masbaha* had 33 beads to recall the many names Mos-lems have for the Almighty—“God the merciful,” “the compassionate,” “the all-knowing,” etc. In later times, strands were doubled and tripled to accommodate more prayers. Today, the “worry beads” come in sets of 33, 66 or 99. The smallest is the one most used by men who wrap them around one hand.

Worry beads are a nonverbal language unto themselves. Experts can tell from the rhythm and sound of the beads clicking whether the user is highly agitated, slowly angering, merely impatient or killing time.

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The beads are also used in making decisions. A person simply picks a bead at random, and counts to the end of the string. An odd number indicates a negative answer, an even number a positive one.

You can put this information to good use if you are in a negotiation or other business situation in the Middle East. If someone has “worry beads” in his hand, pay attention to the rhythm of how they are being handled. Generally, a slow clicking sounds means calm and a fast click mean anxi-ety; but, most often, what you’ll notice is a change in tempo—which sug-gests the direction of the holder’s changing mood.

**History and Nonverbal Cues**

Humans have given and observed nonverbal cues throughout their existence. Historical proof of how nonverbal communication was used traces back at least as far as the Sumerian period in the ancient Middle East. The earliest artistic depictions of people suggest stylized gestured and rituals that conveyed everything from family relationships to wealth, power, social status, etc.

The fewer words and less literacy a people have, the bigger a role nonverbal communication plays.

There is a Greek medallion made sometime in the 5th Century B.C. that depicts Oedipus listening to a Sphinx riddle. In the image, Oedipus leans forward and raises his hand toward his forehead. The first time I saw this ancient piece, I was amazed at its modern manner. The prince’s gesture is exactly the same as a 21st Century business person, listening to someone making a presentation in a boardroom. It’s a timeless example of a hand-to-head evaluating gesture.

**Historians have largely ignored the genealogy of gestures through the ages and the influence they had in communication from cul-ture to culture. This is worthy of study. I think scholars would find that, with a few exceptions, nonverbal cues remain largely the same from culture to culture and across time.**

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Although scholars have been able to trace the influence in art, archi-tecture, language and other cultural influences from one period to another, we know very little about the evolution of gestures in the history of man-kind.

What specific gestures or signs did the Sumerians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks, Etruscans, Aztecs, Mayans and other an-cient cultures use? Was there any similarity between them? How did one culture influence another? Are there present day gestures that can be traced back to ancient history?

Some basic themes emerge from even a quick study.

Paintings, reliefs and statues that come to us from ancient times in-volve many gestures that we would recognize on the streets of New York today:

* an open hand means honesty and welcoming,
* a closed fist means violence or confrontation,
* a smile conveys happiness and satisfaction,
* figures in power tend to stand straight and hold their heads high,
* figures in deference tend to bow their heads,
* sex appeal and sexual relations are critical concerns,
* figures in power dress noticeably,
* eye contact and vision are essential signs of strength.

These are the basic tenets of nonverbal communication. They tran-scend history—present from the pyramids or ancient Egypt to the tabloid media of the current day. And the seem to be trans-cultural, having the same meaning in Nairobi, Damascus, Dusseldorf, Leeds, Montevideo and Marin County.

**Differences Persist**

Of course, most people know some of the basic differences in cul-tural gestures today. Without stumbling into crude stereotype, we can out-line them quickly.

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People from warmer regions tend to use hand gestures more—and speak more quickly—than people from colder ones. In Europe, this means people form the southern countries (Greece, Italy, France and Spain) ges-ture more than people from northern ones (Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany). Some night when you can’t sleep, try scanning C-SPAN for coverage of the European Union’s parliament or parliament members. Their nonverbal messages fairly reek of cultural stereotypes.

The reason for these persistent cultural differences can be as simple as the overall weather conditions. The hands are the primary source for gesturing; therefore, it’s simple enough to assume that in extremely cold climates a person might speak and keep her hands in her coat pocket. While, in more moderate and warmer climate, a person doesn’t have the problem. She can use her hands freely to emphasize what she’s saying.

Of course, in the United States, our stereotypes seem to invert this model. Southerners tend to speak more slowly, and with fewer gestures, than Northerners. But a good linguist or anthropologist will tell you that, in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Northern Europeans tended to migrate (with a few exceptions) to the southern United States while Southern Europe-ans tended to migrate to the northern U.S.

So, again, the American experience inverted European tradition.



**A caveat: Signs or gestures have different meanings in dif-ferent cultures, So, be careful of assigning the meanings you know to a gesture—especially when you travel abroad.**

Even the simple facial expression of sticking out your tongue as a sign of rejection may have a different meaning in another culture. In an area near the Himalayan mountains, sticking your tongue out is taken as a friendly greeting. In that part of the world, there is a prevailing superstition that a person who poisons a guest’s food has a dark tongue. Therefore, when you are greeted by someone who sticks out his tongue, it means that he does *not* have a dark tongue…and will not poison your food.

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Many years ago writer Judith Morgan, who at that time was a travel columnist for several publications, wrote about her experiences in India and the custom of head nods. She wrote that, while staying at a hotel in New Delhi, she inquired about a ticket on the morning train to Agra and a visit to the Taj Mahal.

The man behind the counter at the hotel where she was staying shook his head from side to side and she took the gesture to mean *No*. Then she asked if perhaps she could rent a car and driver. The man gestured in the same manner then she asked if perhaps there were other means of getting to where she wanted to go. The man calmly answered, “Whichever you prefer,” while still moving his head from side to side.

During the next few days, she saw the same side-to-side head shake in many street conversations and a few more formal meetings. She dis-covered, as many others have, that—while the head gesture in western cultures signifying *yes* is nodding up and down—in India, the head gesture for *yes* is shaking from side to side.

**Even Finger Pointing Has Different Meanings**

Of all the hand gestures, the use of the index finger is the most com-mon. It may be used for pointing, beckoning, giving directions or empha-sis. When used for pointing, it is simply done by extending the index finger in a certain direction. The thumb may either be pointed upwards, as if the hand were a pistol, or rest on the middle finger. This gesture is used when someone asks another person a question as to which direction to take to find a train station, hotel, or some other location.

Whether or not the person making the gesture can speak the lan-guage, it’s generally understood that a person pointing is asking direc-tions.

However, finger pointing in some cultures is considered inappropri-ate and vulgar. In those cultures, the head is used to point instead of the index finger. The entire body is turned in the direction and the head is jerked forward indicating the route to take. Areas with cultures that don’t like finger pointing include many parts of Africa, some parts of South America and in the United States (particularly with American Indians).

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There are also two hand gestures that are often misunderstood: the “thumbs up” versus the “thumbs down” gestures used in ancient Rome. Anyone who’s read *I, Claudius* or watched *Gladiator* knows that Cae-sar or the local potentate used his thumb to reflect the crowd’s choice for whether a gladiator should be killed or live…to fight another day.

**That’s ancient history. A world traveler should also be aware “the thumbs up” sign in some cultures is an obscene sign. In Iran, Australia and other places, it’s best not to gesture like Caesar.**

Another hand gesture that has cultural differences is beckoning an-other person to come towards you by using one or more fingers of the hand. The cultural difference is in the position of the palm of the hand. In some cultures the palm is upward facing the person doing the beckoning, and in other countries, the palm is downward. In most European countries and other parts of the world the gesture is given with the palm upward— except in Italy and Spain, where the palm is often kept downward.

There is a garden scene in the movie *The Godfather* where Marlon Brando’s character gives his grandson the beckoning gesture with the palm held downward (just before he suffers a fatal heart attack) that illustrates the Italian side of this cultural difference.

In Thailand, you might see a person extend his right arm parallel to the ground and flick his hand in what you might consider an effeminate gesture of good-bye. In fact, this is a Thai sign beckoning you to join him.

Don’t beckon someone using the fingers in the Middle East because it is considered very rude.

Another gesture that causes some problems for Americans abroad is crossing two fingers of the hand, signifying *good luck*. In South American countries like Paraguay, the gesture is offensive—meaning something closer to what the extended middle finger means in the States.

You should also be aware that counting or signalling numbers with fingers can be tricky business in different places. Many years ago in Bonn,

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Germany, I went into a pub and ordered a beer while holding up my index finger. The bartender promptly poured two beers and placed them in front of me. I had said *ein*—one—so I was confused why had given me two. Perhaps the noise of the crowd? Before I could ask, he sternly looked back at me holding up his index finger and said *swie*, meaning two. Then held up his thumb, saying *ein*.

**I quickly learned that in most European countries when counting with the hand, the number one starts with the thumb and the number five ends with the little finger. (In the U.S., we usually start with the index finger and end with the thumb.)**

**Corporate Cultural Follies**

People aren’t the only ones who make such counting mistakes when in different cultures; large companies and their advertising agencies do, too. An example: Years ago, the Boeing Company had an ad that showed 16 people from what appeared to be 16 different countries holding up their index fingers while seated in a Boeing plane. Underneath the photo ran the caption, “More people fly Boeing. The number one aircraft in the world.”

The advertising agency didn’t realize that the models from those cul-tures where the index finger means *two* were sending a confusing nonver-bal message.

During one of my executive seminars, I showed the ad on an over-head projector and a Boeing executive attending promptly got the mes-sage and contacted the advertising agency. The “number one” Boeing ad was subsequently discontinued.

Another finger/hand nonverbal communication that has caused Ameri-cans problems is the “OK” gesture, in which the thumb and the index finger form a circle. In the early days of NASA, the astronauts were fond

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of giving the gesture as a sign meaning that everything was working well. It was also commonly used by the ground crew at an airport as nonverbal communication to the pilot of an aircraft that all is well in the final stages before disembarking.

The sign is also used on the loading docks at major seaports to com-municate to the crane operator in the loading and unloading of a ship with containers, as well as in many other situations. It always conveyed the same nonverbal message, “all is well.”

However, the gesture in other cultures in South America is consid-ered a very obscene sign. And if you are in a culture where you do not speak the language, my suggestion is not to use the “OK” gesture unless you are absolutely sure how it will be received.

**Cultural Influences Are Always Around**

Cultural will always play a defining roles in nonverbal communica-tion. Gestures, expressions and signs are particularly important in cultures that forbid or restrict free speech.

An 11th Century monk by the name of Bernardos recorded that at the monastery where he spent most of his life in silence, there were 296 different gestures used daily to communicate a variety of thoughts, ideas and needs.

**A more current environment in which hand gestures are com-monly used in lieu of speaking is a radio, television or film studio. The program director, producer or stage manager uses nonverbal messages advising the individuals and the camera crew where to point the camera and whether to hurry up or slow down, accord-ing to the amount of time that remains in the program.**

Nonverbal communication is also used in the Hawaiian hula dance. Spectators are told to watch the hands and not the wiggling hips of the dancers, in order to understand the nonverbal message in the dance. Similar

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communication exists in dances performed in India, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. And, finally, secret societies and fraternal groups also use nonverbal communication in a variety of hand signs, handshakes and other symbols.

The universal cultural means of nonverbal communication we know of as “sign language” is taught to the deaf-mute by spelling words through the use of letter signs. But what is less known is the shorthand gestures that communicate entire words, a phrase or even an entire sentence. This language is rarely committed to textbooks or taught in schools because instructors for the deaf frown on it. They prefer the practice of reading lips. Instead, deaf people learn the shorthand informally—from one deaf person to another.

Another area of cultural nonverbal communication is how men of various countries respond when they see a beautiful woman and signal their appreciation of female beauty. An American may lift his eyebrows and give a slow appreciative whistle or just exhale dramatically.

An Italian male may press his right index finger to his cheek and then rotate it with an appreciative look on his face. The drug which causes the pupils of the eye to dilate is named *belladonna*, which in Italian means “beautiful woman.”

**The pupils of a man’s eyes often dilate when he sees an attractive woman—or anything that stimulates him. This is one of the rea-sons that some serious poker players wear dark glasses during a game. They don’t want their eyes to disclose they have a pair of aces as “hole cards” to start the game.**

Many cultures seems to take a politically-incorrect pride in how their men respond to attractive women. Greek men will stroke their cheeks gently. Brazilian men will make a telescope out of either hand as they take a long hard look at the beautiful woman. The French will bring their finger-tips together and kiss them and then utter a long sigh of appreciation.

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What do women make of all this roguishness? An American busi-nesswoman who’d just returned from a trip to the Middle East told a friend of mine, “I felt uncomfortable talking with Arab males. It wasn’t because of what they said it was because of what they did with their eyes. Instead of blinking, they lowered their eyelids very slowly. It was almost as though they were falling asleep while I spoke to them.”

Eye contact is another nonverbal cue that means different things in different places. In America, we are often suspicious of people who do not make a great deal of eye contact. And as a result of this, we make judgments about their motives and intentions. However, in other cultures— Japan is one example—too much eye contact is considered confronta-tional and disrespectful.



**This also holds true when shaking hands or bowing. Ameri-cans may continue to have a high eye contact ratio, but they shouldn’t judge the Japanese or other cultures because they happen to have a considerably less eye contact when they meet and communicate with each other.**

Another sign that has a similar nonverbal meaning in many cultures but will cost you money if you use it in Germany is the sign that indicates a person is “crazy.” The hand is placed to the side of the head and the fingers are rapidly rotated indicating that all is not well inside the head. It is against the law in Germany to use that sign when driving on the autobahn. If used, the offended motorist may take your license number and report you to the police.

A few kilometers to the north, in the Netherlands, people will tap the sides of their heads to indicate a sign of intelligence—but tap the centers of their foreheads to indicate a person is stupid. It’s a subtle distinction that makes a big difference.

And, while we are on the subject of cultural gestures that communi-cate a demeaning message, let’s consider the one sign most Americans

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means the same thing everywhere: The extended middle finger of either hand.



**In many parts of the world, giving someone the middle finger will hardly raise an eyebrow because it means absolutely nothing. And the reason is because that culture may have their own hand or finger sign that conveys the same obscene message in a different manner using different fingers.**

In Great Britain, the gesture that has the same meaning is using two fingers, the index and middle finger—roughly the same gesture as the American “peace sign,” though usually made with the knuckles facing to-ward the recipient.

There is a story told in the U.K. about the origin of this nonverbal sign. In one of the many battles fought between England and France dur-ing the Hundred Years War, the King of France proclaimed before the armies met that his would emerge triumphant. And he boasted that France would defeat England so ignominiously, all Welsh bowman (by reputation, the Brits’ best) would have the first two fingers of their right hands cut off—so that they would never fire an arrow at France again.

The battle was subsequently won by England, and the defeated French king had to endure having to watch as the victorious English army pa-raded in front of him. When the Welsh bowmen marched past, they raised their fingers…which *le roi* would have lopped off.

From that time forward, the gesture of showing those two fingers nonverbally communicates in the U.K. what the middle fingers does in the U.S. It has been said that when Winston Churchill originally made his famous “blood, sweat and tears” speech in Britain during World War II, he aimed that sign at Hitler—later it morphed into Churchill’s famous “V for victory” sign.

According to legend, Churchill first made the sign with the palm of his hand was facing him. If so, that would indicate he used the obscene ver-sion. The story continues that, the following day, the news media made an

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issue of the Prime Minister using an obscene sign. As a result of this, Churchill gracefully reversed this hand showing his palm and the two fin-gers and said, “I was merely giving the ‘V’ for victory sign to encourage our lads.”

I don’t know if the story is true or not, but it makes for a good tale.

One finger, then two fingers. How about all of them?

In Greece, you might see two men arguing at a sidewalk café as they sip their coffee or tea, then suddenly one of them gets very angry gives him the *moutza* gesture by thrusting his open palm towards him. The gesture communicates the message “go to hell.” And the other man reacts by giving the same sign back using both hands, meaning “go to hell twice.” Whereupon, the first one shows him both open palms and raises his foot and shows him the sole of his shoe. The message is: “go to hell three times.” And so on. A little while later, having run out of hands and feet, the Greeks end their nonverbal cursing and both get up and walk away.

And on our continental journey, we travel to Italy and see another two men also sitting at a sidewalk café leisurely drinking some wine. Their conversation also suddenly becomes very loud and they raise their voices. One of them makes the same sign with his right hand as the students at the University of Texas do at a football game—the “hook ’em, longhorns” sign. However, in Italy the sign means the recipient’s wife is sleeping with another man—the cuckold sign.

The oldest obscene gesture that is still used in some cultures today, especially in China, is the *fica* sign. It is given when the thumb is placed between the index and middle fingers and the hand is cupped slightly. Evidence of the *fica* sign has been found in the ancient ruins of Rome, in Greece, in the Mediterranean islands plus many other sites. There are some analysts who believe that when a patient of theirs is undergoing psychological analysis, the unconscious *fica* gesture is indicating inner conflict.

There are various gestures that send a threatening message, such as:

* thrusting the forefinger at someone and using as if it were a dagger,
* fist-like gestures waved in air,

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* flipping an extended thumb out from the chin or front teeth,
* using the index finger in a throat slitting sign,
* grabbing the crotch,
* closing the hand and jerking the forearm upward while the other hand is holding on to the inside of the elbow.

The last gesture is common in Italy.

And, as a sort of dirty-gesture bonus, in Saudi Arabia when the tips of the fingers are joined with the thumb, it means you “have five fathers and are the son of a whore.”

**Conclusion**

In summary, whenever you travel to another country do not take for granted that the gesture you use and understand may have the same mean-ing in another culture, if you do, you may receive an unexpected response and wind up losing a business deal or possible friend in the process.

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One area of life where nonverbal communication plays a major—but underappreciated—role is social gatherings with family, friends or even strangers. You can see the effects in these situations right away, with the initial greeting process. People generally greet each other with verbal salu-tations: “hi,” “how are you?” etc. These greetings may also be accompa-nied with an embrace, a kiss or both.

When a man greets a woman whom he knows well, but is not sexu-ally involved with; he usually gives her a “sexless kiss.” It is a slight kiss on either side of the face that nonverbally communicates a warm greeting with some affection. Often, when it occurs, the man holds the woman’s shoulders with both hands making sure there is no other physical contact with the lower body: Otherwise, the “sexless kiss” may be judged by others as sending certain nonverbal signals.

**There are occasions when a man may kiss a woman on the lips instead of the cheek; this is still a sexless (perhaps slightly *less* sexless…but still not amorous) greeting. The lips are usually closed; otherwise, the kiss would be misconstrued as having a specific sexual meaning.**

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And, when a woman kisses another woman it is seldom on the lips, usually on a cheek. A woman may also give another woman an “air kiss” where there is no physical contact.

What do all of these kisses mean to the smart observer?

Perhaps not so much, in themselves. They are familiar gestures of social friendship and welcoming. But the smart observer can pick up a lot of meaning in their absence.

Watch people—a group of six or more is often the best size—wel-come each other in a social setting. Who *doesn’t* greet the other people with a warm salutation and embrace?

A person who doesn’t greet other warmly and conventionally may do so for a number of reasons. He might be a friend who’s distracted by something outside of the social setting—some trouble at work or at home, for example. He might be a newcomer among longtime friends or ac-quaintances. He simply be a reserved character who doesn’t like hugging.

In a mix of business and social meeting, he may consider himself either above or below the others in the organizational structure.



**Whatever the reason, a person who avoids familiar greet-ings—even in a quasi-business setting—is a person who holds himself apart from his colleagues. And, in my experience, noticing the odd person out can be an extremely useful thing in a piece of business or negotiation.**

**Other Social Signals**

Another important nonverbal cue in a social setting is when it’s ac-ceptable to join a conversation. Everyone finds himself or herself mingling or circulating in a crowd at some point during most social events; it’s helpful in these moments to recognize the right chance to step into a con-versation with other people.

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At a party or other social gathering, any group of people sends out nonverbal signals to others in the room if their conversation is private— what I call “closed”—or open for others to join. They do this in the man-ner of how they face each other. If two people are standing face-to-face, a closed position, they are sending “please don’t interrupt” signals. And, if they’ve moved away from everyone else (or put an obstacle like a table, doorway or hedge between them and everyone else), it’s a strong signal they would like to keep their conversation very private.

However, people are standing in an open position—facing each other at oblique angles, while occasionally looking around the room—they are nonverbally saying, “it’s all right to join us.”



**A group of three or four can also communicate the same type of nonverbal message by forming a closed circle or triangle. But if the group has a gap in the circle it is an opening for anyone to join them in the conversation without receiving unfriendly glares.**

These points may seem obvious, but—when you’re circulating in a room full of people—your first impulse may be to look for faces you recognize and rush toward those. The impulse is understandable; but it’s a bit egocentric. You’ll have better success navigating social settings if you focus instead on the nonverbal cues sent by people or small groups.

In many cases, you’ll socialize more easily with an “open” group of people that you know only slightly (or even not at all) than with a “closed” group that you know well.

**Flirting and Bantering**

Despite decades of sexual harassment lawsuits, social and mixed social/business settings often include a lot of flirting and bantering. Usually, this is a harmless process by which people can communicate less formally

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than they do in strict business settings. Occasionally, it’s something more…real sexual communication.

I’ll leave aside a detailed discussion of whether it’s a good idea to look for sex partners in a mixed business setting (it’s not, no matter what Donald Trump, Jack Welch or other celebrity business types imply with their behavior). Your priority should be to tell the difference between the simple flirting or bantering and more serious “come-ons.”

**Some people are more attuned than others to nonverbal cues of a sexual nature. Some people look for these cues, while others don’t care to. But everyone needs to pay some heed.**

If you’re the kind of person who doesn’t look for sexual subtext in every glance, you may feel slightly intimidated about these cues. You might image they are an art perfected only by suave, James Bond types. Relax. They’re not. And you don’t have to practice seduction to notice it.

In most cases, people follow familiar—even stereotypical—patterns of behavior when they move from banter to bedroom talk. And there’s a gender component to all of this: Men tend to focus intensely on the single person they are serious about seducing.

So, a man will tend to look around a group or room when he’s merely flirting or bantering, even if there’s some sexual element to the talk. But he will stop looking at others in the group when he’s serious about one per-son. Even if he’s only serious for that moment.

Women follow a different pattern. They tend to be more forceful and even intense when they are bantering…but often become less direct (and more coquettish, to heap on the stereotypes) when their intentions are more than just talk.

Even the most self-realized woman will use traditional nonverbal cues of availability: tilting her head slightly when she listens, stroking her hair and giving sideway glances when she talks. She may breath deeply. She may laugh more often than usual.

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(While these familiar roles are gender-specific, they know no bound-aries of sexual orientation. Gay or straight, open or illicit, people fall into traditional cues when they express real sexual interest.)

**Culture and Public Nonverbal Cues**

Of course, these traditional cues involve some generalization. There are exceptions. In fact, some people make a point of inverting the tradi-tional cues when they’re just bantering or being serious. But the traditional cues have centuries use behind them…and they are nearly universal among cultures.

For example, in a Moslem country, a woman may partially drop the veil she is wearing revealing her face. Such gestures were also seen during the Victorian era in the manner women used their fan while glancing at a man.

In ancient China, women accomplished the same coquettish gesture by using a handkerchief. During that period, it was considered ill man-nered for a woman to look at a man when talking to him; therefore, at a certain point in their conversation, a woman would remove a handker-chief hidden in her sleeve, cover her face and give the man a quick glance.

**At social functions, some men aren’t searching for nonverbal cues from women—instead, they are sending them. They enter a room like a “cock of the walk” nonverbally saying, “Look at me,” and then posing like a proud statue when they come to a stop. Often, in a central location of the event.**

These people have usually internalized a system for identifying the women (or, occasionally, men) who respond to their routine. While scan-ning the room for the right response, they won’t have much interest in banter…or talk of any sort. They are casting their intensity around the place, looking for a recipient.

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Some of these characters at a social gathering are as obvious as a gunslinger in a Western movie, walking into a saloon with both thumbs tucked under his gun belt and slowly looking over everyone. After reading everyone, bringing one hand to his cowboy hat and tipping it upward slightly, the gunslinger walks to the bar expecting everyone to move out of his way.

In the business context, you’re most likely to find gunslingers among young executives or leaders of small businesses or units. Preening is the habit of the inexperienced and the insecure. But it is a fact of life in social settings.

**If you’re in the company of a gunslinger at a social event, there’s not much reason to hang around. Let him (or her) play out the role. Literally, leave them on their own—for a time, at least. Find a group that’s more opened…and more interested in conversation or even a little banter.**



**Other Quirks in Groups**

There are also some people who want to appear taller than they are when they're in large groups of people; they may actually stretch their bodies as far as they’ll go. While doing so, they extend their chest like a rooster getting ready to crow in the early morning; if they happen to be wearing a three-piece suit, they may hook their thumbs in the vest pockets while observing the people in the room.

They may also give a few preening gestures—such as straightening a tie that doesn’t need straightening or a quick look at their manicured fin-gernails. These people aren’t necessarily gunslingers on the prowl; they are more often just uncomfortable in crowds. You may be able to draw them into conversation.

Occasionally, at social functions, you might observe what I call “own-ership signals”: Signs that a man or woman sends to others in the room

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saying, “he/she is mine—hands off!” Such subtle messages are given when women arrange a man’s tie or shirt collar or when a man picks a piece of lint from a woman’s dress, suit or jacket or perhaps brushes the hair away from her face.

This ownership isn’t always part of a marital or even sexual relation-ship. In some cases, people who work together very closely will exhibit ownership signals toward each other in a mixed business/social environ-ment.

Some workplace experts call this phenomenon the “work spouse.” It can make other colleagues a little uncomfortable; they’re usually unsure of how to treat the work spouses. So, consider your own behavior at business/social events and be aware that things which may feel comfort-able to you may not be to others.

**Small Talk and Social Niceties**

During a conversation, a scope of topics may be discussed, every-thing from sports, family, business or books which have been read and movies seen. It is very interesting to notice the congruent or incongruent verbal and nonverbal communication that takes place.

Conversations at social gatherings are different from those conducted at home or the workplace for two fundamental reasons: Most of them take place while individuals are standing and people are usually holding something in their hands ready to eat or drink. Therefore, they are limited in the amount of hand gestures made while talking.

**Some find it very difficult to communicate properly without the use of hand gestures; it is almost as if they are verbally handi-capped. Many people will spill a drink or two when talking be-cause of this.**

I’ve noticed that, when people are holding a drink in their hand dur-ing a conversation, they sometimes engage in interesting, different behav-

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iors. (As you may already know, at social gatherings there always seems to be a split between those who are telling you something they truly are excited about and those are not overly enthusiastic and are merely passing the time with some small talk.)

A sincere person excited about what they are saying often will set their drink or food down in order to use their hands to emphasize the message. Perhaps they do so because they need to use the entire body in communicating complete interest and excitement in what they’re saying. Their gestures, posture and facial expressions are merely exclamation marks punctuating the spoken words.

A person who is just passing time talking nonsense will seldom put down a drink or whatever they’re eating. On the contrary, they may use the glass in their hand as a shield and place it in front of their mouth as they speak. When observing this, I’ve thought of the old Western expression of a person “talking through his hat.”

**Mating Rituals in Social Settings**

Of course, not every person at a party is Marshal Dillon or the rap-pers from 2 Live Crew. A certain amount of mating ritual is normal in any social gathering. And I find the nonverbal cues in these exchanges end-lessly interesting.



**In most instances, it’s the man who makes the first move in a conversation with a woman; but it’s the woman who deter-mines how far the interaction will go. One starts it, the other stops it. It’s an astute man who quickly realizes that a woman has signaled a “get lost” message and promptly starts look-ing for other prospects.**

When a man is seated next to a woman, the male looks for positive nonverbal signs, not only the female’s facial expressions, but also how she positions her body and crosses her legs. If she turns her shoulder slightly

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away from him she is giving him the well-known “cold shoulder.” On the other hand if she turns her upper torso towards him, she is inviting him to join her and perhaps finds him very interesting.

And then if a woman gives a man not only the “cold shoulder,” but also crosses her legs away from him, it is a strong nonverbal message that she does not want to continue any further discussion. But if she turns her body towards him and crosses her legs in the same direction, it is a very positive sign especially if she reveals more of her thighs in the process and does not make an effort to cover them up with her dress.

**It helps to notice how a woman positions her closer forearm when seated next to a man. If she places it close to her body, she’s usually discouraging his interest; if she places her forearm in an open position or on the back of a chair or couch, she’s open to it.**

It is also worthwhile looking for additional clues that signal she may be interested—such as stroking her hair and giving sideway glances, clues the female might be interested in something more than a friendly chat.

**Cultural Cues**

During international travels while attending social gatherings, I be-came aware of the cultural difference in the distance between people when they are standing and engaged in a conversation. Those who have lived in Middle Eastern and Latin American countries are accustomed to standing closer to each other when talking than Americans or Canadians.

The first time I realized this, I was attending a party in Mexico City. Several people whom I had just met where talking to me about their fam-ily and stood at a distance much closer to me than I was accustomed to. And one of them, who had consumed a great amount of alcohol, had a breath that was unbearable. No matter how much I kept moving away from him, he kept narrowing the distance between us as we spoke.

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At this party, I also realized that when someone uses his hand for purposes of demonstrating the height of a child, it is very different than the gesture used in the United States. If an American were asked to use his hand to measure the height of his child, his palm would face downward toward the floor. However, in Mexico, that’s the way of measuring an animal’s height. In that country, a child’s height is measured by the edge of the hand with the palm facing the body—not the floor.

A few months later at a social function in London that was attended by many individuals from Middle Eastern countries, I experienced the same closer conversational distance as I had experienced in Mexico City. The observation of what happens when the two different cultures meet in a conversation is very interesting.

Americans and Canadians step backward to adjust to the distance with which they’re comfortable; people from other cultures move for-ward. From a distance in the room, someone who sees this happening might wonder what is going on between the two individuals, as one moves back and the other moves forward.

**Being a Good Host**

Another aspect of nonverbal communication at a social gathering is the host of the function has not only to identify the various personalities of the guests, but also to intercede in order to insure that a certain behavior will not get out of hand and disrupt the social function. In other words, the host has to play the role of a behavioral “watchdog.” The job starts the moment individuals enter a room or wherever the gathering is taking place.

Being a good host requires a decent eye for nonverbal cues. Some behavioral characteristics are displayed immediately, while others will take a while before you are able to discover them.

**For example, an extrovert usually enters a room differently than an introvert. The extrovert is apt to take a few steps into a room, then stop and look around at everyone in the room as though sizing them up before taking another step.**

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Individuals who are engaged in a conversation with another person are usually unaware of being evaluated by a person who has just entered a room. Therefore, the nonverbal analysis is one-sided with the newcomer doing all the reading.

Another nonverbal clue that might signal behavior is when a person uses “preening” gestures, such as when they straighten themselves upright appearing to be taller than they are. Or checking their clothing, tie, suit, dress insuring that everything is in place. On such occasions men and women also arrange their hair as if they were making sure every strand is in place. Sometimes all of this preening often takes place just before they make their move towards one person in particular.

There are additional subtle ego gestures that might indicate clues vanity: men fingering their expensive cuff links while talking with the opposite sex, a gesture that they seldom do when talking with other men. Another mes-sage is looking at their manicured fingernails immediately after citing some personal accomplishment of which they are very proud.

**I have noticed on occasion, some married men who are at-tending social functions without their wives performing very interesting gestures. If they are attracted to a woman while engaged in a conversation, they will play with their wedding rings. If however, they are merely enjoying the discussion and have no other thought in mind, they seldom touch their wedding band. I have not observed the same reaction with married women.**



Besides male extroverts there are those who are introverted at a social function. They usually enter a room looking somewhat like the late comedian Jackie Gleason did when playing the character he called “The Poor Soul.” As they enter a room, they also stop and look around like the extrovert, but instead of sizing up the people in the room and going through “preening” gestures, the introvert appears as though they would like to melt into the wallpaper. Literally.

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Instead of reading the people in the room for possible conquests, an introvert is probably the person who will later remember the style of wall-paper, color of the walls, plus other information about the room the aver-age person will not recall. While a extroverted guest often enters a room, unbuttons his suit coat and places hands on his hips ready for action, an introverted guest will seldom unbutton his coat and may position in what I call the “fig leaf” gesture—placing his hands in front of his midsection.

Great artists have a keen understanding of this gesture and use it to depict people in uncomfortable social or public situations. I’ve seen hun-dreds of paintings of Jesus during his ministry, and only one (in the Prado museum in Madrid, Spain) depicts him standing in the “fig leaf” position.

**The artist who painted it had a keen awareness of nonverbal com-munication and how a man might react to a situation in which he was uncomfortable. The title of the painting? *The Marriage at* *Cana*. It was the one time in his public life when Jesus was unsureof his role.**

If you are the host of a social function, you may have to greet the introvert personally and literally take them by the hand in order for them to meet other guests. Without taking such action, the introvert may spend most of the evening standing close to the nearest exit, accept food or drink if it is offered, but make very little effort to get acquainted with others attending the gathering.

As host, it is also your challenge when an extrovert guest may be-come too domineering and aggressive. A nonverbal clue in identifying such a person is how she occupies space. Many extroverts tend to be territo-rial. As an example, if she is standing in line with others waiting to be served at a counter, or to serve themselves, she might put both hands on her hips with elbows sticking out—making it difficult for other people to get around or in front of her.

If she’s seated in a couch that has the space for three or more people, the extrovert may cross her legs in a “figure 4” position, taking up more

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space while seated—as opposed to crossing one leg over the other and taking up less space.

Another personality you may encounter at a social gathering is the obnoxious character, the person who enjoys telling “off color” jokes, or stories that have a demeaning or negative message. He might also ask the host inappropriate questions about the size of the home and the purchase price, the amount of money spend for the event, etc. Sometimes he drinks a lot; but often he doesn’t. He may not be the “life of the party,” but he’s laughing and talking the loudest.

Another person attending social functions is the argumentative per-sonality, who may also be obnoxious. However, he achieves it in a differ-ent manner. This character likes to question you further on anything you might say. If you say, “Eskimos have 21 words to describe snow,” he might immediately want to know what the words are. In short order, this type of person makes other guests uncomfortable, not only in the ques-tions they ask and in the methods they use.

There is often a passive-aggressive element to both of these obnox-ious types. In many cases, they feel awkward or insecure in the social setting and compensate for these feelings playing a stereotypical part. If this is the case, you may be able to blunt the obnoxious behavior by intro-ducing the person to many others. Giving him a responsibility at the party also minimizes the acting, too.

Other times, the obnoxious guest is simply clueless about social be-havior. There’s less you can do *that* situation.

**So…What’s Normal?**

The term “normal personality” has a very complex meaning. Some psychologists suggest that it is a personality that has patterns of behavior that are common or typical of a specified group. Or, perhaps stated in another way, normal behavior can be seen as a class of acceptable re-sponses that are expected by a group with which we are associated.

I have also observed on some occasions at social functions that “normal personalities” have a tendency to change during the course of an evening depending on the amount of alcohol a person consumes. This is something

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the host has to be especially aware of because it may change the atmo-sphere of the gathering.

**Social gatherings are a wonderful place to observe the myriad nonverbal messages that occur. If a person was able to take a totally detached point of view observing everyone who was attending the function, the individual might see many inter-esting nonverbal interactions between individuals.**

Unfortunately, most of us are unable to take such a position. We have to interact with guests and listen to what they have to say and what they’re doing. Most of the talk is superfluous and meaningless. Despite this, a host has to keep a look on their face that appears to show interest despite all the verbal nonsense.

I’ve often thought how interesting a social gathering would be if the host, prior to the function, told everyone attending the basic ground rule of the party would be that no one is permitted to talk: An event in which all the communication between individuals would be strictly nonverbal. And only when the host lifted the ban could people start a verbal conversation.

Let’s examine the interaction at a typical party that has no verbal restrictions. When two people meet for the first time, there is a great deal of nonverbal communication during the usual stages of being introduced, shaking hands, and engaging in small talk. It is during a period when the two people are communicating on two levels: verbal and nonverbal.

Women in general are easier to talk to initially at a social gathering than men. And they also are more sensitive in asking questions. They also tend to be less secretive than men and have a tendency to disclose more about themselves than males whey meeting a person for the first time.

When a person first speaks the other individual not only hears what is said, they also consciously or unconsciously observe the nonverbal mes-sages which accompany the words spoken. Most of us are unaware of how well we can analyze congruent or incongruent messages. Especially

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when making a judgment whether another person was sincere in the com-pliment they made.

Another interesting aspect when meeting a person for the first time is that discussion usually lasts longer when the other person asks you ques-tions instead of making statements or comments. Questions show interest in you and when you answer them, it establishes a foundation for the con-versation.

**Sometimes, questions beget questions. And, as a result of the dynamic interaction, conversations usually last longer than when two individuals are making statements or comments. This is espe-cially true if the questions require someone to disclose a minimum amount of personal information and if they are nonthreatening.**

After questions have been asked and answered, the topic chosen for discussion is very important; otherwise the conversation may end at that point with a person saying, “glad to have met you,” turning their back on you and walking away.

I’ve also noticed an interesting gesture some men use when they are wearing suits: When they are asked a question, if they want to disclose a minimum amount of information in answering it, often they button their coats in the process of answering the question—as if they are nonverbally covering up something. On the other hand, if their coats are buttoned and they unbutton as they give an answer, they usually reveal considerably more information.

As you are probably aware, some people are willing to disclose ev-erything about their life at the drop of a hat: Their marriages, divorces, children, medical history, etc. While others behave as though they had just been taken as a prisoner of war and are ready to give the smallest amount of information possible.

When people meet and disclose a limited amount of information to each other, the next phase in their conversation is the degree of involve-

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ment: It will either be important or unimportant and the nonverbal clue that tells you which it is are the eyes. If the amount of eye contact is more than 50 percent of the time, and the other person seldom looks around the room, it is an important nonverbal sign. However, if it is less than 50 per-cent and they have a tendency to look around as though they are looking for someone, it is a sign that you the conversation are not very important.

**Nonverbal signs that you are boring them is when they pick lint of their clothes, take quick glances at their watches or inspect their fingernails. It is a nonverbal way of saying, “the conversation has ended, why are you still talking?”**

There are times when we might attend a party hosted by the com-pany we work for and the strangers there are other employees whom we haven’t met. The amount of disclosure and involvement is even more im-portant because of office politics, gossip, etc. However, the same nonver-bal rules of behavior apply regarding sexual conduct, alcohol consump-tion and superior-subordinate relationships. At these gatherings a person may clearly observe if another person’s “body language” is either the same as during working hours; or if it is totally different.



**There are often times when the introvert, during business, becomes an extrovert after a few drinks and wants to talk and dance with everyone of the opposite sex. Individuals who are not physically expressive during working hours may want to hug and kiss everyone.**

During my journeys around the world, I’ve observed the interesting nonverbal signals of people who are traveling alone, either for pleasure or business purposes. These silent messages start from the moment they ar-rive at the airport terminal until they return home. After many years of

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reading their nonverbal communication, I am able to distinguish those who are *lonely* from those who are simply alone.

One of the most noticeable signals of a person traveling alone is when he is having a meal. In many instances, he will bring a book, newspaper or magazine with him as a substitute companion and read at the table while waiting for the meal or while eating. Since I spent more than 25 years traveling around the world (averaging 100,000 miles a year) and seldom left on a trip without one or two books to read, I was one of these fellows.

If the traveler didn’t bring any reading material, he would usually sit at the counter—where the service is quicker and he could leave without having to glance around the room at others.

**In some places, a solitary diner who looks around the room at others is perceived as someone who is looking for company. Even professional company. If you’re in such a place, be aware that you might be sending nonverbal cues that you don’t intend. And, if the wrong person sees these cues, you might end up attracting attention that you don’t want.**

**Crooks and Cops**

I remember a funny story I heard about a Catholic priest who was taking his morning walk and passed a man who standing on a corner leaning against a building. The priest read the nonverbal signs and as-sumed the man was homeless. The priest walked up to him and gave the man some money saying, “Never despair,” and walked away.

The next morning the priest walked by the same man leaning against the building at the same corner. As he passed by, the homeless man beck-oned to the priest with a “come here” gesture. The priest walked up to the man who looked right and the left, like someone trying to hide something, and pulled out a roll of bills from his pocket and said, “Never Despair won at 20 to 1 odds.”

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Those in our society who are very aware of nonverbal communica-tion in public places are the police. In most neighborhoods of every major city in the U.S. they are aware of the nonverbal interaction by those who live there and the ones who are strangers.

**The police are capable of monitoring places for suspicious looking individuals: Places like Grand Central Station in New York City and other locations that might attract pickpockets who spot tourists by their nonverbal messages and relieve them of their wallets or jewelry.**

I recall reading an article in the *New York Times* about a policeman who patrolled certain locations late at night. During his beat, he looked for those who had books in their possession. He noticed, after many years reading nonverbal signs, that a person who carried books usually wore glasses or appeared to be reasonably prosperous. However, he noticed that seldom did a pickpocket carry a book. Instead, they usually had rolled up newspapers or magazines.

**As a result of his keen observation into the nonverbal cues left by crooks, he apprehended more pickpockets in New York City than any other policeman.**

In mystery novels I’ve read, most writers do a good job of describ-ing their characters’ nonverbal actions. Writers seem to know the exact gestures and posture book characters need to use in order to conceal their identity such as stopping to look at the display in a store window, lighting a cigarette, or checking a train schedule.

The writers also do an excellent job of describing the way in which nonverbal messages are communicated by their characters when follow-

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ing another person. The signals they send are “I’m not interested in you-therefore not following you.”

**Conclusion**

Etiquette books give information on nonverbal behavior in public places. People should never remove something that is stuck in their teeth and men never clean their fingernails or adjust their trousers.

Furthermore, when a man is seen drunk in public he’s rarely ridi-culed; however, if a woman has had an excessive amount of alcohol and displays the same behavior as a man, she’s criticized. Society has many other double standards concerning the behavior or men and women.

The next time you attend a social function, put your nonverbal think-ing cap on and see how many of the foregoing “silent messages” you can observe.

And don’t be distracted by the words spoken. Remember the old saying, “Action speaks louder than words.”

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Throughout history, clothing has had nonverbal significance. Julius Caesar (before he became a politician) wore a purple tunic when he led his troops into battle—so that everyone from frontline soldiers to senior officers would know where their general was. A thousand years later, during the Middle Ages, people of wealth wore bright colors, better ma-terials and longer length coats, so that they could recognize one another. A thousand years after *that*, fashion designers like Jean-Paul Gautier and Versace make clothes so colorful and impractical that they imply wealth…if not taste.

In the celebrity culture of today’s America, a common element of being famous is developing one’s own clothing line. Popular actors or singers like Jennifer Lopez, Gwen Stefani and Sean “Diddy” Combs— without professional design background and while virtually incoherent when speaking—capitalize on their fame by selling expensive clothes.

**While success in this field is fleeting, it can be lucrative. Combs’ clothing company is the biggest hit; it sold more than $350 million of everything from blue jeans to business suits in 2004.**

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These celebrities translate the intangible qualities that make them fa-mous into profits from markups on what would otherwise be commodity products. Clearly, some people are willing to pay extra to own part of the nonverbal “it” that makes Combs more than just another rapper. And, if you’ve ever heard the pretty pop singer Gwen Stephani speak, you know that her communication must be primarily nonverbal.

So, what is the “it” that these people convey nonverbally through the clothes they sell?

Some culture critics claim that Combs’ success comes from selling a so-called “ghetto fabulous” sensibility to middle-class people. *Ghetto* *fabulous* is a short-hand phrase for the flashy dress favored by poorurban blacks in America. But a quick check of his biography shows that Combs *himself* hails from the middle-class (and he attended elite Howard University); so he’s an unlikely herald of ghetto sensibility.

Besides, the silk ties and three-button suits that make up part—albeit a small part—of his clothing line don’t suggest lowbrow flash.

A better analysis would be that people want to buy a piece of the confidence that Combs conveys, having achieved success in a field (popular music) for which he has few demonstrable skills. While some music jour-nalists have compared Combs to Frank Sinatra, the comparison is lim-ited. Combs lacks Sinatra’s baritone and distinctive vocal timing. What the two share is an outward confidence, a maverick reputation and sex appeal to women.

*That’s* what people want to get when they buy Combs’ sweatshirts.

And they don’t seem to mind paying extra for it.

**Color Is—and Always Has Been—Key**

The weaving of clothing dates back to perhaps as early as 5000 B.C. and cultures such as the early Celts were fond of bright colors in the garments they wore. However, among members of the tribes, there ap-peared to be no distinction concerning the clothes worn between those who held powerful positions and others of lesser rank and position. And since there were many Celtic tribes scattered throughout Eastern Europe,

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Gaul and the English Isles, the individual tribal difference in the clothes and colors worn identified the different members.

Some scholars believe the Roman legions had their hands full while fighting battles with ferocious Celtic tribes and kept records of their en-counters with each tribe. Furthermore, the Romans identified the tribes by the color of the garments worn. And as a result of this system, the Romans managed to keep track of the different Celtic tribes and their movement on the continent of Europe.

And Europeans have kept that awareness of color. The two main religious orders of the medieval Catholic Church were designated and identified by color. Benedictine monks wore black, while Cistercians wore white made from wool that was not dyed.

**The phrase “black and white”—meaning simple moral clarity— comes from this ecclesiastic fashion line.**

**Clothes and Class Distinctions**

The color of clothing may also carry a nonverbal message, during my first visit to the U.K. I wore a brown suit to the seminar I was conducting on business negotiating.

Before the program started, the woman who was the administrator for the program greeted me with a very strange look on her face. I per-ceived the nonverbal message and since we had just met, I knew it wasn’t anything I might have said or done.

I waited a few minutes to see if she might do anything that might give me a clue about her strange look. However, she didn’t utter a word and started setting out the seminar handout materials on the tables. While she was engaged in her work, she glanced at me several times with the same strange look on her face. Those additional glances told me something was wrong and I had to find out what it was.

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I waited until she had finished setting out the program materials, then smiled at her and asked if anything was wrong. Before responding she looked away as a person often does when they are not sure how to an-swer and said, “Well, Mr. Calero, it’s the color of your suit.”



**She then informed me that in England men who wear brown garments are usually tradesmen. It’s unusual in business to find a person other than a tradesman in a brown colored garment. Wearing a brown striped suit in the course of con-ducting a business seminar for executives was culturally in-appropriate in the U.K.**

Because I was fully dressed and ready in begin the seminar, I didn’t go back to my hotel room and change clothes. Instead, I decided to com-ment on the color of my suit in the opening program remarks thinking it might be an excellent subject on how negotiators must be prepared for surprises when a negotiation begins and how often surprises tend to affect the process.

So, at the beginning of the program, I explained to the attendees that I was unaware of the nonverbal significance in the U.K. concerning wear-ing brown colored garments and explained the suit was one of my favor-ites. The seminar attendees laughed at my explanation and we all proceed to have a great time together that day.

The next day, I wore a blue suit.

In later business trips the U.K., I never packed my brown suit.

**Details and Fine Points**

I’ve spoken before about so-called “metrosexuals”—straight men who emulate homosexual men’s attention to fashion and personal appear-ance. The soccer star David Bechkam, who wears androgynous clothes and facial makeup, may be the best-known example of this trend.

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**While Beckham may bend more than most, the rise of metrosexuals in the early 2000s has meant that men increasingly pay attention to the fine points of fashion.**

What does this mean to the smart person mastering nonverbal com-munication? Well, it means paying more attention to fashion details and fine points than you might have before.

Other nonverbal messages expressed by clothing include the differ-ence in how a person buttons a man’s or woman’s shirts, blouses, jackets and coats. Men’s shirts and coats are buttoned from the left to the right, and women’s clothing the opposite, from the right to the left.

Buttoning from the left to the right is traditional going back to the days when men carried swords. And, since the majority of them were right-handed, it was easier to place the sword on the left side of the body for a quick withdrawal of the weapon, if needed.

**On the other hand, women who had babies to breast feed often did so on the left side because it was easier to unbutton their garment using the right hand. It also covered up the feeding process in public.**

During trips to Europe and Great Britain conducting executive semi-nars on nonverbal communication, I often passed by men sitting at side-walk cafés. On several occasions, I noticed men whose clothes told me they were Americans. To confirm the judgment, I would approach them and start a conversation by saying, “How are things in the States?” The men usually would give me a surprised look and respond, “How did you know we were Americans?”

I would answer, “You’re wearing striped ties that have the stripes running from the right to the left—and not from left to right which are often

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worn in Europe and the U.K.” And when I made reference to their ties, they usually looked at them as though they had never noticed in which direction the stripes were slanted.

The left stripe is called the *bar sinister*. (The word *sinister* in Latin is “left.”) According to the strict rules of English heraldry, only firstborn sons of noble lords could use tartans that included stripes running from right to left. Everyone else had to wear stripes that ran from left to right.

Some elite private schools would use the aristocratic right-to-left stripes. Otherwise, tie makers in the United Kingdom and Europe used the left stripe in ties manufactured for a general market.

I would further mention to the men sitting at a sidewalk café of an-other cultural sign by telling them the manner in which they crossed their legs also gave me a clue they might be Americans. A large percentage of males from “new world” cultures such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, etc. tend to cross their legs in a “figure 4” style where the ankle of one leg rests on the thigh of the other leg. Whereas men from European and British cultures tend to cross their legs in a non “figure 4” manner.

During World War II German Gestapo agents looked for American secret agents in cafes, restaurants and bars. And in their search, if they saw men who were seated with their legs crossed in the “figure 4” posi-tion, the men were immediately interrogated as possible secret agents. Gestapo records indicate more than a few American agents were appre-hended as a result of way they had crossed their legs in public places.

**Perhaps the agents also observed the manner in which the sus-pects lighted their cigarettes and smoked them—because Ameri-cans are accustomed of lighting a cigarette with paper matches by striking them away from the body. Europeans, who have for many years used wooden matches, strike them towards the body.**

Also, the way the cigarette was held was also a clue. Many Germans during World War II held the cigarette between the thumb and the index

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finger as they smoked: Whereas, Americans held the cigarette between the index the middle finger.

**Hats and Headgear**

Besides the direction of the stripes in men’s ties and how they cross their legs, there are other articles of clothing that give clues to the culture and part of the world an individual comes from: In some instances, it ear-marks the specific area, tribe, group, etc. Such an example is the head-dress men wear in the Middle Eastern countries. Some of them are col-ored white, others red and white, and some black and white; the color of the headdress signifies which tribe or group of people they belong to.

Until the early 20th Century only two type of headdress, or “kaffiyhs,” were commonly worn in the Middle East: black and white, typically by Bedouin, and pure white worn by men who lived in cities and villages. During World War I, the British Army introduced red and white “kaffiyhs” for the Jordanian Army. The red and white headdress subsequently spread throughout the Middle East and is now worn in other areas besides Jor-dan.

The “fez” worn in Egypt is another headgear that signifies cultures. It has is a very long history originally worn by Pharaoh Khufu who built the first of the great pyramids in Giza. The only likeness of Khufu ever been discovered by archaeologists is a small three-inch statue in which he is wearing a “fez” like headgear.

**Another article of clothing that clearly communicates cultural ori-gin is the “burka” worn by some Muslim women as part of their religious dress code. An attempt by Middle Eastern students in the Netherlands to wear the burka was forbidden because the school prepares students for professions to read facial expres-sions. And the garment not only covers up the entire body, but also the face.**

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Some religions orders also wear symbolic headgear, none more elabo-rate than the Catholic Papal Tiaras. The most famous of which is the three-tiered tiara formerly worn by popes from Pope Clement V to Pope Paul VI—although not worn by either of Pope Paul’s immediate successors, John Paul I and John Paul II. Still, the tiara remains a symbol of the pa-pacy and the Holy See.

The nonverbal significance of the triple tiers has been disputed. Some have linked it to the threefold authority of the Supreme Pontiff (top), Uni-versal Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (middle), and Temporal Power (bottom). While others have given a spiritual interpretation, the threefold office of Christ, who is Priest, Prophet and King.

Although people talk of the papal tiara, there have other tiaras do-nated to the papacy by world leaders or states, Napoleon, Empress Josephine, Queen Isabella and the King of Belgium.

**One of the tiaras carries the title of the “666 Tiara”—so named by the Seventh Day Adventists. *That* story centers on the widely made claim that the words of the tiara have a numeral value when added together and produce the number “666,” described as the Antichrist in the *Book of Revelation*.**

Pope Paul VI was the last pontiff to wear a tiara. At the end of the Second Vatican Council, he descended the steps of the papal throne in St. Peter’s Basilica and laid the tiara on the altar in a dramatic gesture of humility and as a sign of renunciation of human glory and power in keeping with the renewed spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

Another place in which headgear sends a nonverbal message is the military where the headgear indicates different branches of the service. Even within one branch of the military, sometimes there is a difference. During World War II in Europe, pilots in the Air Corps who had flown more than 25 combat missions crushed their caps, indicating they be-longed to that illustrious group. The others—especially those who had *not* completed their 25thmissions—knew just what this meant.

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**Headgear has been worn for centuries by various cultures for protection in battle, against the elements and insects. They have been used to contain the hair on the head and for deco-rative purposes. The headgear communicates group and team identification and lastly, for reasons of modesty, to cover up baldness: All of them communicate nonverbal messages.**

There are museums throughout the world that display the many dif-ferent helmets worn during warfare dating back to the Roman Empire. They range from protecting the top of the head, to others that protect the entire head, face and neck such as those worn during the period of Knight-hood in Europe and the United Kingdom.

The style of women’s headgear can also date the period in which it was worn: From the elaborate headgear worn by women during the Middle Ages, to the bonnets and beehive of modern times.

**Cultural Cues of Head Gear**

During my travel around the world, I’ve enjoyed collecting caps, hats other headwear, each which nonverbally represents different cultures and nationalities. The interesting part of my headgear collection is that when I show it to someone, they usually know precisely which country a certain headwear comes from. From the beginning of time, headgear has been one of the foremost nonverbal communicators of authority and reli-gious rank: From the Pharaoh in ancient Egypt, to the crown worn by royalty to the Pope in Rome.

**The Yarmulke is the most commonly known and recognized piece of Jewish garb and is actually the one with the least religious significance. The word “Yarmulke” according to some Orthodox scholars comes from the Aramaic words “yerai malka” meaning “fear of or respect for the king.” The Hebrew word for this head covering is “kippah” (pronounced key-pah).**

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**Kilts and Other Cultural Dress**

Another article of clothing that also nonverbally communicates the tribe, group or origin of the person wearing can be found in Scotland, where the “kilt” clearly signifies the family origin, be it MacDonald, McGregor or other illustrious Scottish clans.

Many Americans with Scottish surnames are unaware of the specific colors that nonverbally communicate their traditional heritage. However, when they travel to Scotland and do a little shopping, they usually do become aware of their surname’s connection with the different colorful kilt designs.

Another key example in which clothing identifies different groups is when the National People’s Congress in China has a meeting. The del-egates attending need not where a badge designating which part of the vast country they come from because the clothing they wear identifies them. The Tibetan delegates wear leopard skin details, Muslims from the far northwest have knee-high boots and Thai minority participants have silver curlicues in their hats. The type of clothing and articles the delegates wear nonverbally communicate which district of China they represent.



**The sight of an Englishman in America wearing long socks and sandals is a source of amusement. However, the Austra-lian wearing short shorts, long socks, shirt and tie in the U.S. would be considered an unusual sight to Americans. And an American wearing long shorts, and tennis shoes without socks, is equally amusing to the English and Australians.**

The clothing we wear is as distinctive of the culture we live in as our speech. It marks us clearly as if we were to wear our country’s flag on the sleeves of our garments. Whether it is the shoes we wear or our head-dress, our clothing sends nonverbal messages to others of where we come from. And even dressing in the clothing of another culture will not com-pletely disguise the identity.

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I remember the time I was in Switzerland and bought the “lederhosen” type of clothing worn by the residents of a small mountainous city near the German border.

No sooner had I left the hotel where I was staying and walked a short distance than a Swiss businessman, whom I had met the night be-fore, saw me and said, “Hank, who do you think you will fool with those clothes? *Made in U.S.A.* is stamped all over your body, despite the clothes.” In Japan, vendors selling beer in the baseball stadium of the Yomiuri Giants Dome can easily be identified by the neon-bright uniforms they

wear.

The next time you leave the U.S. on a trip, remember this: Nationals of other countries are very aware that the type of clothing a person wears clearly stamps a person’s national identify. It is not only Americans who are identified by their clothing, but others as well. Perhaps this chapter on clothing will motivate you to become a better observer.

**Fashion as Time Capsule**

Clothing and hairstyles also nonverbally communicate time periods. If I were to wear a polyester leisure suit to a party and walk into a roomful of people, I would probably cause the conversation to stop. And if I had a hairstyle with long sideburns in the 1950s style, those attending the party might think I had just stumbled into the 21st Century.

**This would also apply if a woman walked into a social function wearing flowers in her hair, as was customary in the 1960s.**

As a very young boy in the 1930s, I recall the male movie stars hairstyle with slick back hair that was fashionable and remember how my older brothers who also copied the style. They applied a hairdressing called “pomade” that was like axle grease and kept every single strange of

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hair in place. It was one of the few men’s hairstyle in history where males could walk out in a windstorm and not ruffle a single hair on their head.

**Jewelry and Accessories**

Other objects that we wear that have nonverbal significance are ear-rings. Earrings are believed to have originated in Western Asia about 3000 B.C. From the earliest days there were two different types, the simple loop and the more elaborate pendant. And the two different types of ear-rings exist to this day. The oldest earrings discovered were found in Iraq, which was once Persia, dating from 2500 B.C: Ancient earrings also have been discovered on the island of Crete dating to 2000 B.C.

During the New Kingdom of ancient Egypt (1550 B.C. to 1085 A.D.), earrings that looked more like earplugs came into fashion. This type of earring can be seen in the sculpture that was discovered in King Tutankhamen’s tomb in the Valley of the Kings.

**There was a nonverbal message of wealth in the earrings worn by women during the Roman Empire. It became a favorite way for wealthy women to display their affluence during a period in which earrings became something more than metal objects worn. In-stead of simple metal earrings, they were made of gemstones; sapphires, emeralds, topazes and aquamarine. They were widely used and possessed in the Roman Empire as a symbol not only of wealth, but also of power.**

And then an amazing thing happened, after centuries in which ear-rings were worn, they came to a sudden halt in women’s dress styles during the Middle Ages. The principal reason was that earrings were dis-regarded as women chose new hairstyles during that period in history; when they adapted elaborate hairdos, headdresses and clothes with very high collars, earrings became impractical. During that period, women were

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expected to keep the heads covered in public and considered immoral if the head was uncovered.

Then, by the middle of the 17th Century, earrings became popular once again and became part of the well-dressed attire for women in Eu-rope. It was during this time when pendants (Girandole) earrings were worn. Because this type of earring was so heavy to wear, they took a toll on the wearer’s ears and caused many women to develop large ear lobes. One such victim was Queen Victoria of England, although she ruled dur-ing the 19th Century, she was fond of wearing the earrings of her grand-mother, Queen Charlotte. And after years of wearing them, the queen developed distended earlobes that were noticeably recognized whenever she appeared in public or had her portrait painted.

Then another interesting thing occurred from 1840 to 1850. Women changed their hairstyles—again—and this affected the wearing of ear-rings. They began wearing the hair parted in the middle and brushing the hair to the sides of the head, plus gathering the hair in the back and tying it with a ribbon. The women also took a fancy to wearing bonnets with wide brims tied with a ribbon under the chin. As a result of this hairdo change, there was no room for earrings to be worn.

**However, in time when hairstyles changed and allowed the ears to be displayed, the earrings made a strong comeback. And the earrings worn became larger and longer and in some cases almost touching a woman’s shoulder.**

In the early 20th Century, women’s earrings underwent another ma-jor change when the screw fitting earrings was introduced. It eliminated the need to pierce the ears; and many women liked not having to undergo the pain of piercing their ear lobes.

In the 21st Century, it is not only women who wear earrings, but so do men. Two well-known professional athletes wore them—Andre Agassi, who’s played tennis for many years, and Barry Bonds in baseball. Both

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wear the earrings on the left ear. However, they are not the only men who wear earrings.

In Russia, at the school for Cossacks, males who are the sole sup-port of their family wear earrings on the left ear as a nonverbal sign of their responsibility. As a result, they are excused from hazardous duty while they are members of the Cossacks.

Perhaps the most unusual earrings that any culture in past or present history has ever devised can be found among the *Li* people of the Hainan Island in South China. When dressing for a celebration, some women wear five-pound brass earrings as a mark of high status in the tribe. As a result of wearing them, the earlobes are distended as much as five to six inches.

Besides earrings, rings may also transmit nonverbal messages, espe-cially wedding rings. The wedding ring seems to be very ancient in its use for betrothal and marriage purposes. The early Hebrews used the ring as a gift given by the family of the male to the family of his intended bride. There is even a mention of rings in the Bible—in *Genesis*, a ring is men-tioned as a token of fidelity and friendship; and, in *Luke*, of adoption.

In modern Greece there are two types of rings used, gold for the bridegroom, and silver for the bride. The higher value of the ring for the husband is a nonverbal sign of his superiority.

**It is also interesting that throughout Russia, Eastern and Western Europe, married men place their wedding band on the ring finger of the right hand. In the United States and Canada, it is placed on the ring finger of the left hand. Wearing the ring on the left hand comes from an old belief, a vein from the finger ran directly to the heart; hence the nuptial was straight from the heart.**

The early Anglo-Normans wore the ring on the middle finger of the right hand, while in the later part of the 17th Century the wedding ring was often worn on the thumb. Later, the Quakers rejected the concept of a

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wedding ring completely. They did so because they believed it was a Pa-gan ritual—which they attempted to abolish completely. They failed.

Some additional information about marriage and wedding rings: The Irish peasantry had a general impression that marriage without a gold ring was not legal. In Iceland, betrothal and the marriage were confirmed by money; the ring seemed unnecessary.

And, in early England, false rings were made from reeds and used to lure young girls into mock weddings. The bishop of Salisbury soon put a stop to this practice when he declared the ritual illegal.

**Conclusion**

The next time you get dressed, remember what you have just read, there will be many nonverbal messages in what you wear that others may read.

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**Chapter 10: Signs, Symbols and Colors**

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**Signs, Symbols and Colors**

The nonverbal world is full of signs, symbols and colors that many people take for granted. The number of signs you see during the course of a single day is vast. They identify groups, organizations, products, com-panies, etc.; they range from the explicit to the subliminal. But, condi-tioned to look and listen for words, we pay less attention to signs and symbols. That’s bad, because nonverbal signs can be so much more effi-cient than words.

In this chapter, we’ll consider why and how that is.

**First There Was…the Symbol**

A key element to mastering nonverbal communication is distinguish-ing between symbols and signs:

* A *sign* is an event or thing that directs attention or is indicative of other events or things. Essentially, anything that represents something else is a sign.
* A *symbol* represents something in an arbitrary way. The connection between signifier and signified depends entirely on the observer—it may have a different meaning or no meaning to anyone else. Symbols are subjective, established either by social convention or by habit.

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Philosophically, symbols are a subset of signs. But, in the history of nonverbal communication, symbols are more important (because, frankly, signs are more often verbal).

Symbols are older than words. In fact, they are the forefathers of words. The earliest form of writing—the *pictograms* of ancient Egypt and China—were signs, pictures representing objects. These were gradually replaced by more stylized symbols called *ideograms*, which remain the basis of Chinese and other Asian languages today.

The symbols that make up the characters of modern Asian languages not longer look so literally like the things they represent. But their origins were in pictures.

**Symbols and signs aren’t just the stuff of Indiana Jones movies, though. They can be seen throughout the world. Much of our educational process consists of understanding symbols and what they stand for. Mathematics is a classic example: An advanced calculus textbook may be written in English or some other tongue; but the real language of the book is the mathematical symbols.**

In our daily lives, symbols and signs play a bigger role in how people behave than most of us usually realize.

I recently went to the Department of Motor Vehicles in California to get a Drivers Manual because I had to renew my license before my next birthday. As I studied the manual, I became aware that most of the verbal (written) material in the booklet regarding the driving laws and regulations was based on nonverbal signs, symbols and colors.

In order to pass the written test, I first had to master the nonverbal meanings over various symbols and colors. I’ve always had difficulty re-membering the meanings of the different colors painted on curb sides. Of course, I remember the meaning of a red curb—*no parking*, the simplest one. But curbs can also be blue, green, yellow, white and several other colors. When I see any of these others, I look for the words painted on the nearest sign.

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The problem with this approach: The verbiage of parking signs can be positively Joycean in its complexity. “One hour parking 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. No overnight parking. Zone 13 permits excepted.” Are Zone 13 permits excepted from the one-hour limit or the overnight restriction…or both? Knowing the color code can let you avoid all this confusion.

And that’s just parking. There are more symbols once you start moving your car.



**There are verbal signs on all highways and freeways that tell us what the speed limit is, the distance to the next turnoff, etc. But, as with parking signs, these highway signs can be confusing—especially when you’re driving by at 60 m.p.h. Symbols often work better.**

Several years ago, while riding in a friend’s car far from London, I saw a sign that read *Dead Center* with an arrow designating the next turnoff. I’d never seen that term used on a highway before. I knew it meant something in boating And baseball. But on a highway?

We were going to visit a colleague who lived near the center of a village nearby. So, I was surprised when my friend went by the turnoff and continued on without turning. When I asked why he had gone by the turnoff he said, “Because the center of the town is further down the road.” I then mentioned having seen the *Dead Center* sign; my friend smiled and said, “I don’t think you want to go there yet.” He explained that the *Dead* *Center* was the cemetery. The image of a gravestone or a cross (thoughperhaps too religious) might have served better.

**Symbol Theory**

There is a fashionable academic term that describes communication through means of signs and symbols: *semiotic*.

The dictionary definition of *semiotic* is: “a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals with their function in a language.”

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There are some signs and symbols that have the same meaning world-wide. Those signs always have the same meaning regardless of where you might be, such as the skull designating poison, the Red Cross (or Red Crescent), etc. We learn to understand the meaning of such signs and symbols at an early age from our parents.

I recall cutting a finger at an early age—I must have been four or five—and running to my mother. It was a pretty bad cut, so she got some iodine to kill any bacteria…but first told me that the iodine would hurt for a moment while it cleaned the wound. After she bandaged the finger, she looked at me with a very serious face and, while pointing to the skull symbol on the bottle, told me that I must never drink it or put it in my mouth.

The memory of that incident is so strong that even today, whenever I see a skull poison symbol, I think of her and the day I cut my finger. That’s semiotics at work.

**Symbols and Signs in Nature and Culture**

There are numerous symbols and signs that nature gives us during the course of a year—from the beginning of spring as blossoms appear on trees, to dark clouds on the horizon indicating the possibility of rain.

**The less industrialized a culture is, the more aware people are of nature’s nonverbal signs. This is because basic survival depends on the ability of understanding the nonverbal messages nature communicates.**

There are also symbolic nonverbal meanings when conducting rituals that communicate deeply held beliefs as in Judaism: The most recogniz-able is the Star of David which is a new Jewish symbol supposed to rep-resent the shape of King David’s shield (or perhaps the emblem on it). The symbol is so rare in early Jewish literature and artwork that art deal-ers suspect forgery if they find the symbol in early works.

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There is also the symbol of the Mezuzah that is placed on the door-post of a home. It is not as many believe for good-luck, but instead a constant reminder of God’s presence. The symbol of the nation of Israel is the Menorah, one of the oldest symbols of Jewish faith. It is a seven-branched candelabrum used in the temple and cleaned every morning by replacing the wicks and putting fresh olive oil into the cups.

**The reverence and emotional reaction to any religious ritual is fundamentally based on a person’s belief system. A ritual may bring tears of joy to some or ridicule by others. It all depends on the individual’s religious or spiritual background, culture or be-liefs. This is all potent nonverbal communication.**

I recall many years ago taking a walk with an American colleague in Singapore. We were attending a seminar I was conducting in that city; it was his first visit to an Asian country. Since I had traveled extensively in that part of the world for business—and also served there during the Ko-rean War—my younger colleague asked me many questions about Asian people and culture.

It was a lovely Saturday morning and, along our way, we passed a Chinese cemetery. My colleague said he wanted to go inside, so we walked through the front gate and immediately saw a Chinese man in a kneeling position placing a bowl of rice on a grave site. My colleague turned, looked at me with an opened (literally, an “O” shaped mouth) look on his face. I read his nonverbal facial expression and knew he was going to ask a question concerning the rice placed on the grave site. So I answered “I don’t know” even before he said anything.

To me, rice as a symbol of connection to a departed loved one was bit of surprise at first. To my very American mind, it seemed cold and unromantic. But, the more I thought about it, the more it made sense. Food is a powerful symbol. We must eat food to live; and, in a profound way, we are linked to the things we consume.

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Plus, rice is more than just a dietary staple in Asia. It’s a pervasive cultural icon—similar to but moreso than a hamburger in the U.S. or wine in France. Even if you’ve never visited Asia, you’ve probably heard how fiercely Japanese politicians protect their domestic rice growers with tar-iffs and government subsidies. That gives you some idea….

While I was lost in my cultural reverie, my colleague had grown rest-less. I’d told him most people in Singapore spoke at least some English, the young fellow boldly walked towards the kneeling Chinese man and sarcastically asked, “When do you expect your ancestor to come up and eat the rice?”

The Chinese gentleman turned around and with a slight smirk an-swered (in perfect English), “About the same time your ancestors come up to smell the flowers!”

My colleague was caught completely off guard. He looked at me and snapped, “Let’s go!” We walked out of the cemetery and, for the next few minutes, he didn’t utter a word. Finally, he mumbled, “What a weird custom, bringing food to a grave site.”

I considered saying something but saw the closed look on his face (his mouth was now a tightly-drawn dash) and decided to pass. We didn’t go on any more walks.

**Nonverbal symbolic meanings differ greatly in many cultures and religions. In the Islamic faith, men and women do not worship together and are physically separated in a mosque. While Chris-tians and other faiths worship together.**

Many Catholics who walk around after attending Mass with a char-coal mark on their forehead on the first day of Lent. Those who are not Catholic and don’t understand the significance of the mark on the fore-head probably wonder why they didn’t wash their face.

And, in India, a mark on the forehead designates something even more important—a person’s social caste.

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**Patriotic Symbols**

Symbols also have a patriotic meaning and are motivating and/or manipulative. A national flag and anthem has very deep emotional and patriotic effect on individuals. I still get “goose pimples” whenever I hear the national anthem sang or played.

The U.S. flag—like the flags of most countries—means a great deal to many of citizens. In fact, the flag is such a potent symbol that every few years Americans debate passing special laws designed to make defacing the flag a crime. Since the U.S. is a nation of laws, not symbols, such laws seem needless. But emotions run high every time the debate comes into the news.

**Since September 11, 2001, I’ve noticed many politicians wearing a lapel pin of the American flag on their clothes. I wonder how many of them were wearing it before that date? Before 9/11, flag lapel pins meant far-right conservative politics to most Ameri-cans; after 9/11 the symbolic meaning changed. It became a sim-pler symbol of U.S. patriotism.**

Perhaps you have always wondered about the symbolic significance of the pyramid and eye on a dollar bill? They are part of the Great Seal, an official symbol of the United States Government.

You will notice the date of the pyramid is 1776 and, according to the U.S. State Department, the pyramid symbolizes the strength and durabil-ity of the new country. The unfinished top of the pyramid represents the work that remains to be done in building the country. The eye suggests divine guidance in this work and the two Latin inscriptions on the seal support that idea. *ANNUIT COEPTIS* means “He (presumably, God) has favored our work.” And *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM* means “a new order of ages” (though some conspiracy buffs translate that phrase as “a new world order”).

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Many Americans are unaware that, in the early years os the U.S., the eagle was nearly replaced as the nation’s symbol. Benjamin Franklin argued the eagle should be replaced with the rattlesnake (not, as some tales have it, the turkey). He felt that a rattlesnake was a better symbol because it gives a warning signal to an enemy before it strikes; and Franklin believed this was an important quality of the young country—that it would never start a fight but would always be ready to defend itself.

In those days, Benjamin Franklin was—as he might be today—in the minority. The majestic eagle stayed.

National patriotic symbols can motivate the masses not only to achieve great things, but also may lead them into situations that they later regret. A classic example of this is how the Nazi party used the *swastika* to mobi-lize millions of Germans into believing the country’s destiny was world conquest.

**Originally, the swastika was a rather generic Hindu and Buddhist symbol of good luck. In their stitched-together version of cultural history, the German Nazis claimed that the symbol had been used first by the mythical Aryans—the “master race” whose descen-dants the Nazis claimed to be.**

So powerful are political symbols that, in little more than a decade, Nazi pathology trumped 2,000 years of benign use. Today, the swastika is a reviled symbol in most of the world. Efforts by Hindu and Buddhist groups to reclaim the symbol from its Nazi infamy have generally failed.

**Gang Symbols and Colors**

Criminals often embrace nonverbal symbols. There are several rea-sons for this. In many cases, criminals come from an illiterate or semiliter-ate underclass; they may be smarter than they are educated, so they need nonverbal communication. In other cases, they have to use alternative

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modes of communication to avoid detection by law enforcement or rival outlaws.

Perhaps the best-known criminal co-opting of colors and symbols is the use of the colors blue and red by the Crips and the Bloods—large criminal gangs based in the U.S. West Coast.

Both gangs were built from confederations of smaller gangs, made rich with profits from selling crack cocaine beginning in the 1980s. The elaborate webs of affiliation and truce were sometimes more than semilit-erate partisans could remember, so basic standards emerged from the street. Crips and their allies wore blue; Bloods and their allies wore red.

**A Crip “soldier” protecting a lucrative retail drug operation didn’t need anyone to explain that a potential competitor had protection from the rival Bloods. If he saw someone dressed in red on “his” block, he’d just start shooting.**

Within the main gangster framework of primary colors, crooks would use elaborate hand gestures to convey their local affiliations and special skills. And this allowed a rather elaborate system gangster diplomacy to exist—in some cases, business could be done or truces called, based on hand gestures, the use (or hiding) of colors and a few short words.

In several Central American countries there are many different youthful gangs who have tattoos that identify the gang they belong to. As a result of the tattoos, police can readily identify the gang member. The tattoos are nonverbal signs of their loyalty and dedication to a specific gang. And in addition to the tattoos, the members also have their own way of using certain hand signs only members recognize. It is a silent language under-stood by the individual gang members.

**Humanitarian Symbols**

The Red Cross (or, in Muslim countries, the Red Crescent) is a sym-bol recognized around the world as a source of nonpartisan, humanitarian

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aid. The symbol conveys the work of an organization—actually, a loose affiliation of local organizations—that has helped millions of people during floods, famine, earthquakes and other disasters.

Even in the most violent places on the earth, attacks on Red Cross trucks, facilities and personnel are considered repugnant.

**Business Symbols**

There are other symbols like the compass and the ruler that desig-nate the Masonic Order. I’ve been told they also have secret hand ges-tures and handshake that only members use and understand.

There are also occupations that use symbols to identify their craft, like pharmacist’s who use the mortar and pestle, and barbers whose place of business is easily identified by the red and white pole.

**There is an interesting history of why barbershops use the symbol that dates back to the time when the letting of blood was common in the treatment of certain diseases. In those days barbers prac-ticed the art of “bloodletting” and people went to them for such purposes.**

Besides occupations, business firms jealously protect their logos, which identify their company to the world—like the stylized seashell does for Shell Oil. To those firms, “branding” is the one of the most important elements in their business. And their continued success is largely based on product name and company recognition. Their logos or symbols ensure the company and its products will constantly be in their customers’ minds.



**Delta Airlines logo consists of a triangle that is the Greek letter “Delta” and looks like a futuristic flying wing aircraft. The symbol also nonverbally communicates that the company is at the cutting edge of technology.**

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The bottom portion of the Delta logo appears like a mountain that communicates the company can take you to great heights. And when the two parts are put together, it is an impressive design and company brand.

A corporate logo is like a nation’s flag or an athletic teams mascot, uniforms or colors, it represents the entire collective business entity.

**Economic Signs**

Signs and symbols were very important during difficult economics times. In the U.S. during the early 1930s—the time of the Great Depres-sion—there were many men, and some women, who traveled around the country seeking employment. And their main source of travel was jump-ing on an empty freight railroad heading in the direction they wanted to go. These people were referred to as “hobos” and they could be seen in many small towns and large cities.

**As opposed to whose whom society labeled as “bums,” hobos were willing to work. In fact, they were usually eager to accept any type of employment, which for many was the basic reason they were traveling around the country.**

In a very short time, hobos developed their own symbolic language that was understood by other hobos. It was an easy simple language that consisted of symbols that communicated specific messages to other Ho-bos who followed in their footsteps. The symbols communicated where to go for free meals and perhaps a place to sleep for the night. They also suggested places to stay away from because those who lived there had no kindness or compassion for hobos.

There were also symbols that instructed other hobos about the gen-eral attitude of the local police and how they handled those who strayed into the community: These and many other messages were communicated by hobos during that poor economic era in our country in the early 1930s:

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All of which changed when the country entered World War II and full employment existed in the country. Interestingly, in the early 2000s, savvy computer users began using the old hobo symbols to indicate locations where free wireless Internet (wi-fi) connection was available.

Perhaps most famously, during the years of slavery in the United States, many slaves escaped the South and headed for the North using the so-called “underground railroad” that was a means of succeeding in their quest.

When the slaves reached safe havens, the bed quilts where they tem-porarily stayed gave them symbolic information on how to proceed on the next stage of their journey.

**Semaphore**

And there are other places in which signs, symbols and colors have had significant importance. The U.S. Navy at one time used signals for ship-to-ship communication before they had sophisticated hi-tech equip-ment. At that time, the Navy relied on a symbolic system of communica-tion called a “semaphore code”—a visual system of using flags.

**The system had 26 positions for letters and three more for the words, “error,” “break,” and “front.” When the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0 were used, they were the same as the letters “A” through “J.”**

Ships communicated with each other by means of “semaphore” when-ever they were within sight of each other and every word was spelled taking time to communicate a complete sentence.

Additionally, it required four people in the operation; the person who wanted the message sent, probably a senior officer, a trained individual who used the flags in the 29 positions, the individual on the receiving end

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who looked through the binoculars and read each separate letter, and the person who wrote down the message as it was received letter by letter.

**Symbols and Codes**

The nonverbal language of signs and symbols that exists in taking a driver’s test or in a sporting event came down to us from ancient cultures. Archaeologists believe perhaps the Sumerian culture dating back thou-sands of years before the birth of Christ was the first to contrive a sym-bolic language for commercial purposes language called “cuneiform.” The Sumerians used “cuneiform” for business transactions and later it was used to record ownership documents and their history.

Some basic symbols most of us never consider as important are the space between written words and the punctuation marks in a sentence of paragraph. Spaces between words were not used until the 9th Century A.D. Before that, Greek and Latin manuscripts simply ran all the words together. Inscriptions on Roman statues and buildings sometimes used a raised dot to separate the words. And there are also occasions when signs and symbols are used for purposes of using a “code.”

**Such code might be used in describing the moves in a game of chess. The individuals pieces, king, queen, rooks, knights, bish-ops and pawns might be shown as symbols, and notations com-municate the sequence of moves the players make during the course of the game. I find it interesting that, in most Muslim cultures, the queen is not called *the queen*. Instead the piece is called the “Vizier.”**

There are also symbolic meanings in archeological discoveries. While researching artifacts along China’s ancient “Silk Road,” an archeologist found a mummified infant wrapped in woolen cloth and placed in a small coffin. He was amazed to find two small flat stones covering each eye; he then discovered the symbolic meaning. It meant, “In the desert, eyes must

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be as strong as stones.” At the same site, the archeologist also found the mummified remains of a woman estimated to have lived 3,800 years ago. The mummification process was different than what was used by the early Egyptians, but just as effective.

**International Issues**

At times, symbols and signs are difficult to understand. Have you ever had problems in figuring out how to operate a shower in a hotel or motel bathroom? In traveling around the world, I can recall numerous occasions when simply taking a shower proved to be more difficult than I expected. There have many times when I didn’t know whether to push or pull a door when leaving a building.

**In the U.S., building codes dictate doors to public buildings must always open out and not in. However, this code does not apply in other countries.**

Even a simple action like dialing a telephone in another country can prove to be difficult. I remember my first visit to New Zealand and at-tempting to dial the hotel operator for a long distance call I wanted to make. Without looking at the numerals on the telephone, I assumed that “0” for operator would be the last number on the telephone as it is in the U.S. and other countries. However, in New Zealand I discovered that “0” preceded the number 1, rather than following the number “9.”

There are signs and symbols of wealth, the clothes people wear, jew-elry, cars, homes, etc. And it is also very interesting that there are two signs of the Zodiac that seem to favor the wealthy: Capricorn and Scor-pio. More than one-quarter of the richest people in the U.S. who are under the age of 40 were born under those two signs.

Tiger Woods, Ted Wiatt (Gateway Computer founder), and Jeff Bezos (CEO of amazon) are all Capricorns. According to an astrology reading, “Capricorns work steadily and methodically toward financial suc-

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cess and generally won’t relax until there’s plenty of cash on hand.” While Sean “Diddy” Combs, Julia Roberts and Yahoo co-founder Jerry Yang are Scorpios, described by astrology readings as “great where money is concerned.”

There are numerous intuitive signs to read on the road to success and wealth: Signs that nonverbally tell us about the conditions which lie ahead in the quest for fame and fortune. The “stop” sign that communicates we should stop and think things through before making an expensive pur-chase or investment. And the many signs that tell us to slow down and look for other signs that might indicate we are swimming into deeper wa-ters than we have ever been before: Waters where we might need the assistance of a life guard (friend or consultant) before signing a contract or agreeing to a commitment.

And there are also signs on our journey that clearly tell us we are traveling too fast and exceeding the speed limit. Spending too much too fast can make the bank balance look very tiny in a short period of time.



**Another sign that has helped me more than once in negotiat-ing business deals is the one that communicates a rest stop is only one exit away on our journey: Take it and think things over seriously as you sit on the restroom throne contemplat-ing financial matters.**

According to writer Stephen Goldbart, there are many behavioral signs of those who experience sudden wealth. These signs are; feeling cut off from friends and family, suspicious of investment counselors, feeling more guilt than pleasure, feeling as though the money is undeserved, fear that the wealth will vanish overnight, plus others.

So, if you buy a weekly lottery ticket hoping you might win the jack-pot, remember the foregoing misery you may have unknowing purchased.

Otherwise, ask yourself what kind of symbol the lotto has become— for you. It’s usually an awful bet. Is there some complex reason that you want to make a bad bet with your money?

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**Sign Language**

There is another form of nonverbal communication using signs and symbols—sign language, which has been in used by the deaf for over one hundred years. The latest version of this type of nonverbal communication was originated by Sir Richard Paget in the 1930s, and developed with the assistance of a colleague, Dr. Pierre Gorman.



**So-called “American Sign Language” is a grammatical sign system which reflects normal patterns of English and is used by many speech and language-impaired children, parents, teachers, speech therapists and others.**

Paget saw the need for a systematic sign language where each word would have its own sign, with the signs presented in the same sequence as the words in the phrases or sentences to be signed.

In 1934, he agreed to attempt at devising such a system by studying existing sign languages, and from those in existence, he selected signs that seemed to be reasonably pantomimic. He concluded that each group of ideas with a common basis—those that concerned time, position, food, etc.—should have a basic sign of their own, a system in which an identify-ing gesture could be signed. Furthermore, such signs would be compara-tively easy to understand, remember and use.

Richard Paget eventually designed a nonverbal communication sys-tem using 3,000 signs and in 1951 published a children’s vocabulary of 900 signs plus a teacher’s manual. After his death, in 1955, his wife con-tinued with the work he had started and some of his original signs were changed and others added.

The joint effort created a wording system in which the signs are clear and consistent, thereby ensuring uniformity of practice: The system has become known as the *Paget Gorman Sign Speech* in honor of the two men who contributed a great deal of time and effort developing it.

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**Reading Nonverbal Cues Along with Words**

Another daily routine that often requires reading signs is in the simple action of opening the box of a new purchase: An activity at times that it is not a simple as it appears. Opening a box and comprehending the signs and symbols plus the instructions of how to assemble and/or operate what’s inside is not a simple matter.

When we purchase such things as cameras, fax machines, comput-ers, coffee makers or other household appliances, it always requires that we go through this process: Regardless of how much time was spent by the manufacturer in making the product “idiot proof,” the ultimate user will always have some difficultly not only in putting all the parts together, but also in using the product correctly.

**Seeing Color**

In addition to signs and symbols, color also plays a role in nonverbal communication. The early theories of color perception date from Empedocles, a Greek philosopher who believed color was caused by tiny particles that were given off by objects that passed before our eyes. He believed the eyes either produced a color reaction to the particles or rec-ognized them as color; later Plato proposed color resulted by rays shot from the eyes towards objects.

And, to add to these theories, Aristotle came to the conclusion color might be a result of fragmented light. For his discovery, we will forever be thankful.



**All of these theories set the stage for a huge breakthrough, when during the late 1600s and early 1700s Sir Isaac Newton demonstrated white light contains all the colors of the rain-bow. He was also the first person to reveal colored lights can be combined from white light.**

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**What Leaders Wear**

After the tragic occurrence on September 11, 2001 in New York City, George W. Bush started wearing a bright red tie as part of his ward-robe on many occasions. He may have worn a red tie before that date, but not as often as he did after 9/ll. Consciously or unconsciously, he or someone on his staff decided the color red would be a nonverbal message communicating courage, determination, patriotism or something that would nonverbally taken as politically beneficial.

However, Bush went on television shortly after the terrorist attack in Madrid, Spain on March 11, 2004 wearing the same red tie. That was a huge mistake, because he should have worn a black tie to communicate publicly his sympathy and empathy to the Spanish people. It was a foolish international mistake that sent a mixed message to the people of Spain in mourning.



**Bush’s verbal message was incongruent with the color of the tie he wore that day. I wonder if any of his political advisors later realized the mistake he made by wearing the wrong color at a time of national mourning.**

**Black and White**

Every person reacts to certain colors depending on the cultural mes-sage the specific nonverbal message the color communicates. For ex-ample, most cultures identify black as a color of mourning, and as a result, black if typically worn at funerals or other functions in which there is a great deal of grieving and sorrow.

However, in some Eastern cultures the color black is not associated with unhappy feelings and emotions, it is worn on joyous occasions such as weddings, christenings, and other happy social events. Therefore, the message in the color black differs from one culture to another.

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The color black has historically been a color that communicates nega-tive images about things, people and feelings. Think of the meanings of such expressions as “blackball,” “blacklist,” “blackmail,” “black humor” and “black sheep” and others.

The “Black Shirts” was the popular name of the elite corps of Nazi army, so named because black shirts were part of the uniform. The official name of the outfit was “Schutzstaffel” of the “SS Corps.” Black shirts were also worn by members of Mussolini’s army and other fascist groups.

**The “black shoe navy” refers to the traditional U.S. Navy and not the Navy Air Force. The origin of the term goes back to the time when the naval uniforms worn were either white or blue with black shoes. However, the uniform worn by naval pilots allowed them to wear brown shoes.**

Black is the darkest of colors and is in fact the negation of color itself. Black represents the absolute boundary beyond which life ceases, and so expresses the idea of nothingness. Black is the *no* as opposed to the *yes* of white. White is the virgin page on which the story has yet to be written; black is the end beyond which there is nothing more.

The color white has also conveyed different nonverbal messages. In most cultures, white communicates purity, innocence, chastity, spirituality, goodness, etc. However, besides these sublime human qualities, the color white also has connotations of a much less saintly image.

Expressions like “white elephant,” “white paper” and “whitewash,” are far less complimentary than the human qualities that the color implies.

The term “white elephant” stems from centuries ago in Siam, now Thailand. A white elephant was so rare that when one was born it auto-matically became the property of the king. No white elephant was al-lowed to do any work whatsoever.

When the king disliked someone and wanted to place a financial burden on the person, he would give that person a white elephant—thereby

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forcing him to feed the elephant for as long as it lived. And, since an elephant has a huge appetite and a long life, it meant financial trouble for the person owning it unless they were very wealthy.

The color white has also been associated with surrender and cow-ardice. A white flag is raised signifying a person or group is willing to give up during a battle. And a white feather has been a symbol of cowardice in the United Kingdom for centuries. To give someone a white feather liter-ally is a nonverbal message that accuses a person of cowardly behavior.

**Years ago, there was an excellent movie entitled *Four Feathers* in which the main character in the film was given white feathers by his friends because he refused to go into battle with them. After his friends left England and went to war, he followed them wear-ing Bedouin clothing and saved several of their lives in combat. At the end of the movie, when he redeemed himself and regained their respect by his courageous acts, he returned the white feath-ers to each one of them.**

The expression “white paper” refers to an established procedure that an organization may take. It is a directive communicating the firm’s inten-tions and future plans.

With governmental agencies, it is a publication that sets forth an offi-cial position on a specific matter or issue. And when done, the publication attempts to convince the reader that the government is blameless for what-ever transpires. And the reason they are called white papers is because they are typically issued in white binding.

**Color and Psychology**

Another important aspect of color is its psychological connotation. Dr. Max Luscher, in his book *The Luscher Color Test*, argues that a person’s selection of colors is an indication of his or her personality. The

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principle is that accurate psychological information can be gained about a person through his choices and rejections of colors. *The Luscher Color* *Test* has been widely accepted as a major diagnostic aid to psychologistsand physicians in Europe since it was first presented in 1947 at the Inter-national Congress of Psychology in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The substance of Luscher’s work is that your favorite colors indicate your personality. His premise is that colors have an inherent psychological association: dark blue, for example, signifies quiet passivity, bright yellow, hope and activity. Color preferences, when measured and interpreted correctly, highlight significant aspects of personality, reveal hidden anxi-eties and conflicts and provide insights into one’s present frame of mind.

For example, when blue is chosen as the primary color it symbolizes calm water, quiet temperament, femininity, and illumination to the written word. New age color specialists say it indicates sweetness, emotional contentment and resolve.

**However, other shades of blue mean different things. Dark blue is especially favored by overweight people trying to lose weight. It often represents contentment and fulfillment. In some cultures, dark blue also conveys notions of truth and trust, love and dedi-cation, surrender and devotion.**

Color experts say that yellow is often the opposite of blue—in terms of the messages each conveys. To Asian spiritualists, yellow often means the search for a way out of difficulties, the lack of emotional fulfillment that situations demand and a restless search for some solution.

To those same people, green conveys pride and strength. Alternative health experts will argue that green rooms can alleviate the pain of gastric ulcers and digestive upsets—especially when associated with worry over possible loss of personal failures and finances.

The ancient Egyptians used the color green to signify youth, rebirth, spring, vegetation and resurrection. Modern color specialists say that green

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can also lead to lack of controlling accuracy and verifying facts and also affects precise memory.

And, for many color experts, the color red signifies an urge to achieve results, to win and a great desire for success. Red is impulse and all forms of vitality and power from sexual potency to revolutionary transformation. It is the impulse towards active sports, struggle, competition and enter-prising productivity.

Red is the “impact of will” or “force of will” as distinct from the green “elasticity of will.”

**The color red was symbolic in Mayan culture in the spilling of blood. Blood was the mortar of Mayan life, it was spilled to honor gods, communicate with ancestors, and celebrate events such as victories over enemies. One expert on Mesoamerican iconography has studied ancient Mayan ruins and says: “Bloodletting was an honor and responsibility they were proud of.”**

The color brown represents sensation as it applies to the bodily senses. It is sensuous, relating directly to the physical body. It may also represent an increased need for physical ease and sensuous contentment, for re-lease from a situation that is bringing about a feeling of discomfort. This situation may be one of insecurity, of physical illness, or it may be an atmosphere of conflict.

Another interesting aspect in which color and shape is capable of communicating can be found in the study of Bengal Tigers in India. Those who have researched the behavior of tigers initially start the study by nam-ing each tiger. It is a simple matter to identify each one and to keep a separate ledger on its individual mannerisms and behavior. This has been accomplished by noting that no two tigers have identical stripes. The mark-ings are as individual to a tiger as the fingerprints are to each human.

John Seidensticker, curator of mammals at the National Zoo in Wash-ington, D.C., has studied tigers in the wild. He deems the creature “an irreplaceable link in the process and wholeness of life.” And he writes,

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“Always secretive—never devious: Always a killer—never a murderer:

Solitary—never alone.”

This may sound a little cosmic to some…but I find it an evocative description of a maverick sensibility.

**Conclusion**

The smart person acknowledges the importance and meaning signs, symbols and colors convey in society and how many of them are designed to make our existence more enjoyable and fulfilling.

While nonverbal communication tends to rely on physical attributes of people more than signs, symbols or colors, I find these factors to be particularly useful because they convey personal choices in a way that physical attributes don’t always.

And they can certainly send nonverbal cues.

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**Sports**

People love watching sports. And sports are all about nonverbal communication. They may be the *best* example of nonverbal communica-tion available—and their popularity may result from their heavy use of nonverbal communication.

**None of this is new. The ancient Greeks perfected spectator sports thousands of years before our current baseball parks, soccer pitches and football stadiums were built. In fact, it was one of the first things that the first Greeks did.**

A thousand years before Socrates and Aristotle debated the mean-ing of reality in and around Athens, the first great Greek city-state devel-oped on the island that today we know as Crete. The Greek tribe that lived there was made up of sailors, traders and merchants who moved merchandise around the Mediterranean Sea. They became rich doing this, and built the city Knossos on the hills above their main harbor.

These early Greeks had a crude written language (that modern lin-guists still haven’t deciphered) but left behind a vibrant body of nonverbal

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communication. They made metal jewelry and figurines, wove colorful clothes and painted elaborate pictures—especially of bulls and octopi, their favorite animals.

From this nonverbal evidence, archaeologists understand a lot about these early people’s lives. They spent their days at commerce but, on frequent holidays, they would spend their time eating, drinking and going to sporting events. Their favorite sport was a combination of gymnastics and bullfighting. And it combined religious and political elements of their culture into a single, central event.

The strongest and fastest of their children and young adults would practice a series of gymnastic moves designed to antagonize and frustrate wild bulls. These bulls were most likely imported from the plains around today’s Iraq and Iran; they were smaller than a Texas longhorn but, other-wise, quite similar.

**When the holidays came around, thousands of people would gather around the main stadium at Knossos to watch this athletic version of a bullfight. While the crowd was mostly locals, visitors from mainland Greece, Turkey or the Middle East were welcomed.**

The king and his court would arrive to a royal box; and the citizens would cheer his arrival.

Several dozen young athletes—the best and the brightest of the local youth—would arrive in the arena, nude or barely clothed. They would go through ceremonies celebrating their health, strength and beauty. Shamans and priests of the various religious cults would praise the athletes and wish them well. Meanwhile, the athletes would be covered in oils and have their hair set in formal style. To some, these ceremonies were as important as the sport to follow.

Finally, the pomp would be over, the priests and attendants would leave and the athletes would prepare with various minor contests and warm-up gymnastic drills. Then, some hours into the event, the bulls would released into the arena.

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Usually, the animals would be released a few at a time, to keep the confusion in the ring to a minimum.

The athletes would excite the animals by drawing their attention and then gracefully moving away from the horns and hooves. The favorite move—the one that the audience of thousands had come to see—was difficult and dangerous. It entailed facing a charging bull, diving towards its horns and somersaulting over its head and body.

**This was, quite literally, grabbing the bull by the horns. And then doing a flip between them. The move required athleticism and practice, as much or more than any contemporary sport.**

When a young athlete did the somersault well, the crowd would go wild. The best athletes would do many of the jumps in a single afternoon. They would take turns trying to jump the bulls until the animals were so weary they collapsed. (Afterward, the exhausted bulls would be slaugh-tered for either religious sacrifice or food.)

**A person living in Knossos could earn fame, honor and respect for a lifetime by winning over the crowd with multiple or especially artful jumps.**

Of course, there was a downside to the sport. The horns and hooves of the bulls could maim…and kill…an athlete. And many athletes died trying to make their jumps. Clearly, this element of danger was part of what excited the crowd.

We don’t have existing reports of how many athletes would be hurt or killed in these events. But it was a common enough occurrence that the early Greek artists made pictures of unlucky athletes botching their moves.

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In a culture that celebrated youthful beauty and physical grace, sur-viving a goring by one of the bulls may have been as unpleasant a propo-sition as *not* surviving.

**Sports Are a Universal Nonverbal Language**

The World Cup. The SuperBowl. Wimbleton. The Olympic Games. What is it about sports that draws in so many people?

**Certainly, there is an element of physical attraction to some fans’ interest. But most modern cultures aren’t as fixated—at least not so openly—on physical beauty as the ancient Greeks were.**

The appeal may have something more to do with simplicity and the clarity that sports offer. As one high-priced Manhattan corporate attorney told my publisher, “The farther I get in my career, negotiating corporate transactions so complicated that no one really knows everything that’s going on, the more I long to watch a Yankees game when I get home. There’s so much less B.S. Jeter is safe or he’s out. That’s it.”

As a result, athletes assume metaphoric roles that conform to funda-mental nonverbal messages. At the pinnacle of public esteem, we have athletes like Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods and Cal Ripken—who com-bine above-average skills with exceptional discipline and work ethics to convey a nonverbal message of humility and reliability. A step (or several) below, we have Kobe Bryant, Terrell Owens and Allen Iverson—great prospects who struggle to find their best performance. At the bottom, we have freaks and hard cases like Dennis Rodman, Rickey Williams and Mike Tyson—bizarre characters who squander the public’s good will on self-indulgent behavior.

People need archetypes of human behavior and these athletes, much as celebrities in general, fill that need. This why, at the height of the Cold

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War, the most famous person in world was the heavyweight boxer Muhammad Ali. The President of the U.S. and the Secretary General of the U.S.S.R. may have controlled the nuclear missiles, but they were shad-owy sorts. (At least until Ronald Reagan—a swimmer turned actor turned politician—came to power in the U.S.)

In many cases, athletic celebrities complain about being forced to act as role models…when all they want to do is play their games. This makes perfect sense; on the athletic fields, these people are masters of every nuance and cue. Off the field…well, they’re as lost as *you* would be as a nickel back brought in to play man-two coverage against the New En-gland Patriots in the SuperBowl.

But role models they remain. There’s a reason people spend so much money on replica jerseys and uniforms of their favorite athletes. Ordinary people want to have a piece of the grace or humility or erratic brilliance or downright freakishness of those players.



**There’s a lesson in all of the role model talk for anyone inter-ested in the power of nonverbal communication. People will read your nonverbal cues and assign you to preconceived notions they have about people and situations. This espe-cially true if you’re experienced and comfortable in a special field.**

In many cases, people will read your cues and make up their minds before you have time to understand the cues you’re sending. So think hard about the cues you give off…or receive. A friend of mine offers a great example:

*I do business from time to time with an interesting woman. She’s very intelligent, very intense, very successful. We don’t see each other often but, when we do, she locks in on me and it feels like we’ve been together every day our whole lives. Anyway, this woman turned 40 and decided to take up surf-ing. She’d reached the top of her profession, was married to*

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*an equally successful and intense guy—but wanted to do some-thing different. After three months of lessons, she announces to the world that she’s divorcing her husband, selling her busi-ness and is moving in with her surf instructor. They’re going to travel the world looking for the perfect wave. Everyone who knows her is stunned. But this is what she’s going to do. Six months after the big announcement, she gives me a call. She’s back in town, back in business and trying to patch things up with her ex. We get together for a coffee and to talk about doing business again. I ask her what happened with the surf instructor. She smiles ruefully and says, “On the water, he’s a genius. Every move he makes is poetry. My mistake was tak-ing him off the water.”*

**Not Just Celebrity Athletes**

I don’t want to focus exclusively on the general public’s response to celebrity athletes. In fact, I think that’s a small part of the connection be-tween nonverbal communication and sports. Much more happens at the at the amateur level.

You read and give off nonverbal cues when you play a gave of pickup basketball at the YMCA or on your office softball team. And you do the same when you watch—or coach—your child in sports.

People have a hard time describing the qualities that lead to success in sports. They use words like *leadership*, *sportsmanship* and *court* *sense* or *field sense*; but these words don’t do justice to the ideas they tryto convey. That’s because sports success is inherently nonverbal.



**Some business people trust the nonverbal communication skills that people use in sports more than they trust verbal communication skills. These people will push for meetings during golf or tennis…or organize that office volleyball team…or want managers to play paintball.**

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So, for the rest of this chapter, I want to consider the nonverbal communication you deal with when you’re on the field as player or on the sidelines as a coach.

Many years ago there was a well-known college football All-Ameri-can quarterback who unknowingly communicated on every play whether it would be a pass or a running play be a passing or a running play. He did it by the way he positioned his feet on the line of scrimmage before he received the snap from the center.

There was a scout in the stands working for a team that was sched-uled to play the quarterback’s team the following week and he observed the way the quarterback placed his feet as he awaited to received the snap football from the center. The scout noticed the quarterback would move his right foot slightly backwards when he was about to throw a pass, probably to get a quick step back into a throwing position. And how he kept his right foot in line with the left foot when he was going to hand the football to a running back. In that position, he didn’t have to take a quick step backwards.

The following day, the scout met with his coaching staff and informed them of his observation. He said that it would be useful for defenders to watch the quarterback’s footing in the upcoming game. The coaches dis-missed the scout’s information as being too obvious; but the scout per-sisted and, a day before the game, the head coach decided to make use of the information and incorporated it in the game plan.

The linebackers on the team were instructed to rush the quarterback whenever they saw the right foot slightly behind the left indicating the quar-terback was going to pass. And for the entire game, the opposing quar-terback spent the greater part of the afternoon looking up at the sky as he lay on his back on the football field. Because of the scout’s astute obser-vation, his team easily won the game.

This example is just one of many in which an athletes unconsciously sent nonverbal messages of what they intend to do. Another example was a running back that made a habit of adjusting the chinstrap on his helmet while in the huddle whenever he was going to be the ball carrier. When he was not going to carry the ball or perhaps act as a decoy, he always adjusted the chinstrap on his helmet *after* he left the huddle. When oppo-

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nent became aware of his “tell,” the amount of yardage he gained on run-ning plays decreased considerably.

**After several important losses, his coaches studied game films and became aware that the runner was telegraphing the plays in which he would be the carrying the football. They told him to stop adjusting his chin strap at different times. The player hadn’t even been aware of his tell. He stopped doing it…and his performance improved. The solution was easy—identifying the problem was the challenge.**

In addition to the quarterback and running back, another example was a football player who had the nervous habit of flexing his fingers be-fore a play at the line of scrimmage when he was the primary receiver. And when he was not, seldom flexed his fingers in anticipation of catching the football. The word quickly spread and, during the twilight of his ca-reer, the receiver caught very few passes because he was closely guarded on passing plays.

**Baseball Is Full of Nonverbal Cues**

Nonverbal communication in sports has existed for as long as games have been played. In baseball, it is the nonverbal connection between pitcher and catcher that insures positive results in a game. When the two of them are in sync, the game is in good hands. It has been often said, “that behind every good pitcher, there is someone located exactly 60 feet 6 inches away, catching his throws.”

The catcher nonverbally communicates to the pitcher how a batter is reacting to the pitches by how they move their feet. If a pitcher is to be successful, he must be on the same page with the catcher in nonverbally reading each batter.

It is usually the catcher who nonverbally communicates his confi-dence in the pitcher to throw a certain pitch; one that the pitcher may not

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have great confidence in throwing. And when it turns out to be successful, the pitcher’s confidence is greatly increased: Winning a baseball game is often the result of such nonverbal confidence between a catcher and pitcher.

**Casual spectators often don’t realize the catcher’s importance to the baseball team’s overall success. Besides catching the base-ball, he also calls which pitch is to be thrown. He also instructs the fielders where they should stand to have the best chance of catch-ing a particular player’s hits. In baseball, it is important for fans to realize that pitchers know pitching, but catchers know hitters.**

In some games, when the pitcher does not have the usual zip to his fastball or dip to his curves, the team still wins. On such days, most pitch-ers will tell you they achieved the victory solely because the catcher did a splendid job of nonverbally reading the hitters and knew which pitch to throw and at what spot in the batter’s box.

There are occasions when a catcher gets to know a pitcher’s ability better than a manager or a pitching coach. And as a result, the catcher may convince a manager or pitching coach to allow a pitcher to face a dangerous batter at a crucial time in a game instead of replacing him with another pitcher. Such a situation occurred several years ago during a criti-cal World Series game. The bases were loaded in the late innings in a tied game and the manager came out of the dugout fully convinced it was time to change pitchers.

As is usual in such situations, there is a great deal of talk on the pitcher’s mound as the relief pitcher gains time to warm-up in the bullpen. The umpires are aware of the waiting game being played and often will walk to the mound to expedite matters. When this happens, the manager has just seconds to signal a new pitcher into the game, or allow the pitcher to stay in the game. And a catcher who has confidence in the pitcher’s ability can influence the manager’s decision. The worst thing that can hap-pen to a pitcher is when he starts to lose confidence in his pitches. When this occurs it isn’t the pitching coach, manager or any other player who

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helps the pitcher regain the lost confidence, it’s the catcher: The one who catches the smoke in the pitches and the only one who can re-establish a pitcher’s confidence.

In that crucial World Series game, after a great deal of thought by the manager, he decided to follow the catcher’s advice and allowed the pitcher to remain in the game. His decision proved to be wise—because the next batter hit into a double play that ended the game and ultimately lead to winning the World Series.

In all athletic activity, there is no sport that uses more nonverbal com-munication than baseball. Before every pitch is made, the catcher signals the pitcher the pitch he wants him to throw. If the pitcher disagrees, he shakes his head, wiggles his glove or sends some other sign. Then the catcher will send another sign and the process continues until they both agree on the pitch to be thrown.

**In the meantime, the batter looks at the third base coach who goes through a series of signs from touching the nose to rubbing his hand across the letters of the uniform: Gestures designed to transmit—nonverbally—what he wants the batter to do. All of these signals originate from the manager sitting in the dugout who flashes signs to the third base coach who in turn transmits them to the batter.**

**More than Just One-on-One Communication**

Besides the batter receiving nonverbal messages, the other players on the field will also use signs to communicate with each other.

For example, if the opposing team has a runner on base that may try to steal a base, the shortstop and second baseman will signal each other which one will cover the base in the event the base runner attempts to steal a base. They signal each other with in a manner that cannot be ob-served by anyone else on the playing field. It is called an “open-closed

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mouth sign.” It nonverbally communicates who will cover the base in the event the base runner tries to steal the base.

If the second baseman will cover the bag, he will open his mouth and if he wants the shortstop to cover, he will close his mouth: All of this is done while the player’s face is shielded by the baseball glove. As a result, the only two players on the field who are aware of the signal that has been given are the second baseman and the shortstop.

Mastering these various forms of nonverbal communication—virtu-ally a language unto themselves—is essential to success as a professional baseball player. Some players have a natural instinct for them; others struggle to learn and retain everything that’s going on.

**A famous example of this struggle: Basketball legend Michael Jordan interrupted his career on the court to try to become a Major League baseball player. Obviously, Jordan’s success in one sport meant he was in great physical shape. But he didn’t have an instinct for baseball. Apparently, while he knew the basics of baseball’s nonverbal communication, he never really mastered them. After two seasons of struggling with baseball, Jordan re-turned to basketball…and more success there.**

**Celebrations and Congratulations**

One of the essential nonverbal cues that athletes give is celebration— it’s critical to celebrate, so that other players and spectators can under-stand clearly what constitutes success.



**Tiger Woods’ signature fist pump means victory to millions of golf enthusiasts. Brandi Chastain’s famous celebration—by removing her shirt to show her sports bra—put women’s soc-cer on the front pages for weeks. Joe Namath’s cool victory at the SuperBowl defined his career.**

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Baseball players once nonverbally congratulated each other with a handshake. However, the handshake has completely disappeared from the game and replaced by many other ways of congratulating each other. Today, fans will see players congratulating each other with “high fives:” A form of celebrating first used by Glenn Burke and Dusty Baker when they were playing for the Los Angeles Dodgers—and since has changed how players nonverbally communicate a celebration in baseball.

According to legend, the high-five started when Baker hit a home run and, as he came back around to home plate, Burke—his teammate who was batting next—shot his open palm hand in the air. Baker slapped Burke’s hand and a familiar celebratory gesture was born.

Since then, baseball players have developed other ways of celebrat-ing such as the “knuckle-knock:” When two players celebrating with closed fists touch each other. It is thought that the gesture originally was seen in boxing matches where fighters are required to tap gloves before bouts. Therefore, fighters could not shake hands with other or use “high fives.”

Another sport in another in which one may see a great deal of non-verbal communication is professional golf. When watching a tournament on television, a person can readily see by the golfer’s “body language” if a putt made has gone in the hole or not. If the putt is made, the golfer usually swings the hand towards the hole in a gesture signifying success. And if the putt fails to go in, the hand is not swung in a victory gesture and the entire body turns away from the direction of the hole.

**Also, when the ball is rolling towards the cup, you’ll notice how often the golfer will use “body English” as if trying to straighten a line—or curve it—telepathically.**

Bowlers often do the same thing. In any bowling alley on any evening, you will see players wriggling and twisting their bodies, hoping that these nonverbal prayers will keep their balls from wind up in the gutter.

There are many occasions in other athletic events in which nonverbal messages may be observed. The next time you attend a sporting event,

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think about how much information the participants or athletes are uncon-sciously communicating through their gestures, posture, facial expression or sounds they make: Messages that signal disgust or joy at the outcome.

**Sports Symbols**

Business firms are not the only ones who have symbols to identify them, fans of athletic teams also use symbols and signs that communicate their nonverbal loyalty to a specific team, like the fans of the Green Bay Packers football team who wear a large foam wedge shaped hunk of cheese for headgear during football games. As a result of the headgear they are fondly called “Cheeseheads.”

Fans of the Washington D.C. Redskins wear a plastic snout of a pig to the games and are called “The Hogs.” Minnesota Vikings football fans wear headgear with horns—however most of them are not aware that the real Vikings wore no such headgear.

**Popular images of Vikings are usually at odds with actual history. Although the Vikings had leaders, each one was very indepen-dent; so were Viking women, who were free to divorce and also held great power in their homelands because the men were away so often raiding and sacking other cultures. An interesting aspect of Viking history is they left no literature whatsoever, their only written record consists of inscriptions on grave sites. But, in terms of popular culture and nonverbal communication, the erroneous legends trump the real history.**

However, the most garish symbols are those worn by the fans of the Oakland Raiders—with black eye patches, pirate hats, skull and cross bones, etc. On Sundays, during the football season, regardless of which stadium one may attend, a person will see many signs, symbols and colors that are nonverbal clues to that individual’s team loyalty.

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Perhaps even more important than teams’ logos, sports equipment manufacturers promote their logos aggressively. The best-known sporting good logo in the world may be Nike Corp.’s so-called “swoosh.” This familiar curved check adorns all Nike products—from running shoes to golf shirts.

**The Nike (the company’s name itself comes from the Greek for “victory”) symbol has gained significant nonverbal mean-ing to millions of people who barely read or speak English. Many people who couldn’t explain the meaning if you ask them, know it anyway. The symbol stands for athletic success…and, by extension, success generally.**

**Conclusion**

Why do some business people put so much importance in the non-verbal communications in sports? Is it because they distrust words? Maybe it’s because they distrust lawyers.

Developed societies rely heavily on words and laws to make their complex systems work. That’s why lawyers play such a prominent role in the larger scheme of the modern world. Most businesses operate only within a small portion of a society’s whole structure. Success in these narrower markets doesn’t always require such verbal virtuosity; it may require listening, reliability and calm during a crisis.

Which describes the best essential skills of a quarterback, catcher or point guard.

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**Chapter 12: Cues All Over the Place**

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**Cues All Over the Place**

In this book, I focus heavily on the use of nonverbal communication in business and negotiations. I also discuss nonverbal cues in social set-tings; and I just talked about their critical role in sports. But the truth is that people use nonverbal communication in almost every activity or endeavor they undertake.

As you work to master the tools of nonverbal communication, you can always be on the watch for the same tools in people and events going on around you in the course of your daily life. As I mentioned in the sports chapter, you can learn from masters. However, successful athletes aren’t the only masters.

**I enjoy discovering an expert in nonverbal communication in an unexpected place. And you can notice these fairly often: a foreman at a construction site, the lead flight attendant on an airplane; employees in a retail store; family members in a crowd. When I travel, I'm always looking for nonverbal com-munication going on around me; I suppose this can make me a difficult travel companion. But I believe it keeps my own nonverbal skills sharp.**



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When you’ve finished this book, you should try this. Go to a busy place—a shopping mall, park, city street or college campus—find a low-key location and watch people go by for a few minutes. Look for how individuals and small groups communicate with each other without speak-ing. Small groups are often the easiest to study, because they concentrate their cues among each other and swap lots of information.

In this chapter, we’ll take a quick survey of various human activities and consider how nonverbal communication works in each.

**Music**

A conductor of an orchestra uses gestures, posture and facial ex-pressions in directing it. The conductor directs the group of musicians during the entire score of a symphony or short etude merely by the non-verbal movements of the body and the manner in which they use the ba-ton. From the moment the conductor taps the baton as a signal to get ready, to the final crescendo, every movement of the conductor is a signal that the musicians must follow.

Furthermore, every conductor has their individual signature gestures with hands, arms and using the baton. Some will use the hand not holding the baton to signal they want a musical passage played very softly by bringing the index finger to their lips as if they are saying, “hush.” While other conductors use the free hand in a gesture as if they were asking someone to “tone down” the volume on a radio.

**My former cello teacher, who played with many symphony or-chestras, once told me that it takes several months for musicians to get used to the nonverbal signals of a new conductor. Every conductor, she said, has their own way and methods of commu-nicating what they want the orchestra to do. She likened it to having to learn sign language all over again whenever the sym-phony changed conductors.**

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For orchestra musicians, learning the ways of a new conductor can be very unpleasant. Often, the conductors who are the most difficult to follow are the ones who use their eyebrows and facial gestures as a means of expression. In a large orchestra, at times it is very difficult to see such nonverbal messages.

But nonverbal communication in music is not confined to the rigid manners of a symphony conductor. Probably the best-known type of musical nonverbal cues come in that process of informal group playing that jazz and popular musicians call *jamming* or *riffing*.

Jamming is very much like the nonverbal communication that goes on in mating rituals or corporate negotiations. The musicians will come to-gether and indicate to one another that they are open a receptive to play-ing together. Next, each player will establish his skills and knowledge of the genre by playing a standard part in a song or piece.

Finally—and this is where the real pleasure of jamming comes in— once the players are all established with one another, they will begin to change the style and manner of their playing. This will step beyond the familiar chords and tempos and challenge the other musicians to follow suit. Experienced musicians will be patient about letting others take the lead at times, while they wait for their own chance.

The result sounds like improvisational junk to some…but genius to others.

**What impresses me most about jamming is that the musicians often signal each other with music only. They may use an occa-sional nod of the head or quick word—but the music is its own nonverbal language.**

**Cartoons**

Many newspapers and magazines contain nonverbal messages in the cartoons they publish. A classical example was one I saw many years ago

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published by the *New York Times*. The drawing depicted the rear view of a family of three standing side by side holding each other’s hand. All of them were obese, and the only word in the cartoon was the title, *Syllo-gism*.

**In the event you are unfamiliar with that word, it means a logical structure in which two premises lead to a certain conclusion. In the context of the cartoon: Overweight father, overweight mother and overweight child.**

The best cartoonists and cartoons convey deep and complex mes-sages with a simplicity and efficiency that words cannot accomplish. The *New Yorker* magazine has developed an almost signature style of cartoonthat compresses the maximum of ideas and commentary into a few im-ages. The award-winning political cartoonist Herblock of the *Washing-ton Post* made his most effective comments about his nemesis—RichardNixon—not with any deep thoughts or witty captions but with a steady stream of memorable images of Nixon as a shifty liar.

**Security and Law Enforcement**

Nonverbal communication plays a major role in law enforcement and security. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, law enforcement agencies in the U.S. are overwhelmed by their mission—to identify possible terrorists among millions of ordinary citizens and visitors.

So, the cops often rely on the controversial practice of profiling. Profiling does not need to be an illegally discriminatory tool. It is

simply the practice of using a system of predetermined standards to sepa-rate more-likely risks from less-likely ones. These standards can include characteristics of who a person is (race, age, gender); profiles based on these standards are of dubious legality in the U.S.

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But the standards can also be based on things people do. Profiles based on *these* standards are more likely to hold up under legal challenge.

In a 2004 pamphlet entitled *Preventing Terrorist Attack: How You* *Can Help*, the U.S. FBI outlines what to look for:

* Surveillance: Are you aware of anyone video recording or monitoring activities, taking notes, using cameras, maps, binoculars, etc.?
* Suspicious Questioning: Are you aware of anyone attempting to gain information in person or by phone, mail or e-mail about a facility or people who work there?
* Security Tests: Are you aware of attempts to penetrate or test physi-cal security or procedures?
* Acquiring Supplies: Are you aware of anyone attempting improperly to acquire explosives, weapons, ammunition, dangerous chemicals, uniforms, badges, flight manuals, access cards or ID for a key facility/ event or to legally obtain items under suspicious circumstances?
* Suspicious Person: Are you aware of anyone who does not appear to belong in the workplace, neighborhood, business or near a key event/ facility?
* “Dry Runs”: Have you observed any behavior that appears to be pre-

paring for a terrorist act: mapping out routes, playing out scenarios, timing traffic lights or flow?

* Deploying Assets: Have you observed abandoned vehicles, stockpil-ing of suspicious materials or persons being deployed near a key fa-cility/event?

To these suspicious behaviors, I would add the following gestures, which are common nonverbal cues of nervousness or anxiety:

* inappropriate, excessive or oddly-timed laughter;
* frequent touching of a person’s hands to his or her face and head, including rubbing eyes, chin scratching, adjusting hair, etc.;
* the inability to keep hands still while sitting;

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* shifting weight from leg to leg or walking in place while standing; and
* the inability to hold your gaze, once noticed.

Some might scoff that these tips are all just common sense; and, certainly, they are. But the important point is timing—to notice these be-haviors in these situations. Most people don’t. Terrorists (like most other criminals) don’t usually practice hiding their nonverbal cues. They prac-tice being in places where people won’t notice them.

To combat this cluelessness, the U.S. Department of Homeland Se-curity (DHS) launched a program for alerting frontline employees in the transportation industry—truck and bus drivers, van operators and oth-ers—to help spot possible suspects through nonverbal behavior during the course of their travels. At a meeting in Arkansas on June 2004, 75 of them were given instructions on what to look for and what to do in the event they saw anything that might be worthy of investigation.

This initial training backfired a bit for the DHS. Critics in the media lashed out at the agency for creating “a nation of snitches.” But the Feds stayed with the plan. In 2004, DHS gave $19.3 million to the American Trucking Associations to recruit a volunteer force called “Highway Watch.” Within a few months, some 10,000 truckers had signed on to become amateur sleuths. And, over a two-year period, the goal is to add tollbooth workers, rest-stop employees and construction crews, ultimately creating a corps of 400,000 people throughout the United States.

**All of the members were given a toll -free number to report any suspicious nonverbal behavior. In essence, the members were asked to report any behavior they thought didn’t “look right” to the DHS. During the training, the members must be told to recog-nize certain cultural differences in order to minimize errors made concerning cultural customs, habits and dress. Again, the focus of their attention was on behavior, rather than appearance. They were supposed to notice people who looked nervous or uncertain in unlikely places or situations at unusual times.**

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In one widely-reported episode, two truckers participating in an early training session told their trainer that they could easily spot “Islamics.” They said, “Just look for their turbans.”

**The instructor responded by pointing that, while clothing can be a marker, it was better to watch for actions. He then told the two drivers that turbans are usually worn by Sikhs, not Muslims.**

The training did pay some quick dividends. A few days after going through the DHS a driver noticed a young man walking between two cars carrying a sweater draped over one of his arms in an odd manner. The young man looked out-of-place; he walked slowly but looked around quickly and a lot.

Real drivers usually move right through truck stop parking lots to their rigs.

The driver kept his eyes on the man for a few moments—and no-ticed a quick flash of what looked like a semiautomatic weapon under the sweater.

The suspicious young man got in his car and drove away. But the truck driver wrote down the license number of the car and then called a special toll-free number to report what he’d seen. A short while later, the young man was apprehended.

Again, the truck driver in this story wasn’t Sherlock Holmes. He was just alert.

**Cards and Gambling**

There is no place on earth where more cameras and people are used to observe nonverbal cues than in Las Vegas. There are few locations in a Vegas casino where a person is *not* constantly being monitored. Casino employees are trained in the mechanics of nonverbal communication, so that they can recognize high-stakes gamblers and/or cheaters—who would rather not be recognized.

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The first nonverbal cue the casino employees will watch is the amount of money you wager and how you wager it. If you hover around a gaming table, watching, and then tentatively fish just enough money from your pocket to play one hand, they won’t pay much attention; but, if you march decisively to the table and exchange a bankroll for stacks of chips, the dealers will recognize you as a *player* (whether you should *want* this recognition is another matter).

The dealers will often announce that they’re changing your money for chips and make some standard welcoming small talk with you. All of this, in turn, is designed draw the attention of the pit boss—the middle man-ager of the standard casino hierarchy.

**If they think you’re a serious gambler, the pit boss will spend a few minutes observing how you play. He’ll look for signs of how closely you’re paying attention to the table, how much time you take to think about your moves and how you vary your bets.**

Every casino has its own, secret list of behaviors it considers suspi-cious or desirable. But there are some general standards that all share. For example:

* Blackjack players who raise and lower their bets according to how many 10s and face cards have been played from a deck are called “card counters” and are considered cheaters by most casinos; if they are successful for more than a few minutes at a high-stakes table, they may be asked to leave.
* Gamblers who hesitate enough to slow the progress of the game (not being sure whether to take another card in blackjack or changing their bets repeatedly within the same turn in craps or roulette) are consid-ered neophytes. They may not be asked to leave…but they may get scorn from dealers and other players.
* Gamblers who make a lot of noise or use flamboyant gestures (whoop-ing and clapping when they win; cursing or hitting the tables when they

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lose) are also considered neophytes. While they are usually not asked to leave, they may not be given the “comps”—that is, perks and free-bies—that other players get.

* Gamblers who are frequently distracted or spend a lot of time watch-ing other players may be cheaters.

When an experienced player cashes in a large enough bankroll (these days, at least a thousand dollars), the pit boss will notify the casino man-ager or a hospitality specialist who will makes sure the player gets any drinks or food that he or she wants.

As one casino manager says, “We like players who are rich, serious, focused and know the rules.” As for luck or skill, the manager just shrugs. The rules of the games are stacked heavily enough in the house’s favor that time is on his side.

**Poker**

In the 2000s, poker has enjoyed a big renaissance in the popular media—and in casinos. It’s overtaken blackjack and dice as the most popular game in many locations.

**Poker is different than other casino games. In the other games, gamblers usually play against the casino itself. In poker, the play-ers play against each other (and the casino takes a small percent-age of all the money wagered).**

I enjoy watching the many poker games shown on television. They are a wonderful chance to read the players’ nonverbal cues and tells. In the game of poker, players refer to the word “tell” as a nonverbal sign or clue which is a “tip off” concerning what the player is about to do. The programs are interesting for me to watch because I look for “tells.” The games are also interesting to other viewers who are watching the outcome

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of a game, and since the “hole cards” each players is shown on TV; a viewer can literally play each hand in their mind as the cards are dealt.

One of the tells I’ve observed is how a player looks at the “hole cards.” One peek at the cards should be sufficient. However, some play-ers look twice. In my opinion, sometimes the second look is done uncon-sciously and at other times the player does it to fool players. And when it occurs, it is how they peek and hold their head that is important. If the head is slightly tilted to one side, they may be attempting to reassure them-selves they have a hand worthy of staying in the game, or perhaps thinking of getting out of the game.

In either case, there is genuine doubt. If they are not wearing dark glasses, check out the blink rate. If the blink rate is rapid it is another “tell” indicating doubt. (This is why many professionals wear sunglasses at the poker table.)

**Sometimes a player with a very good hand will purposely look at his cards a second time to send a “tell” to the other players falsely signifying doubt or insecurity. However, the confi-dent player rarely tilts the head when the peek for the second time. Instead the head is at a right angle to the shoulders and if they are not wearing dark glasses, notice the blink rate will not be very rapid.**



My only criticism of the televised poker games is the commentators say little or nothing about the nonverbal communication that is taking place during the game. Perhaps the commentators are completely unaware of it—or they don’t wish to make comments because they’ve been instructed not to do so.

Viewing the games on television would be considerably more enjoy-able if commentators discussed certain behavioral characteristics of poker players that they consider to be “tells.”

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**Job Interviews and Meetings**

Business meetings are another source for reading nonverbal signs. People unconsciously communicate their respective feelings about a meet-ing, people, issues/problems to be discussed, etc. As an example, when a meeting starts, individuals usually take sitting positions at the table and in chairs that indicate those feelings or attitudes.

At the beginning the upper torso can signal the degree of interest a person brings to the meeting. If they tend to lean forward placing the hands, arms or elbows on the table, it is an indication of interest, involve-ment or/and commitment—as opposed to those who sit back in the chair with a very rigid back, head at right angle to their shoulders with the arms crossed.



**In any meeting, the person who called the meeting or is responsible for achieving results should be aware of the dif-ferent nonverbal body positions that often reflect a person’s attitude.**

And as the meeting progresses, the body positions that were initially taken tend to change in the same way that a person’s attitude changes relative to what is being discussed. In other words, the individual who initially sat down with a very negative attitude may have heard something that influenced them and now has become more positive or receptive to what is being discussed. It is very important not only to hear what people say in a meeting, but also to be aware of the nonverbal messages they are constantly sending when they speak or while listening.

**Outsiders and Rebels**

Nonverbal communication has been a means of expressing dissatis-faction by many generations throughout history. They are the individuals

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who disagree with the accept norms of behavior or conduct, they are the people don’t join the ranks and in step with the rest of society, instead, they “march to a different drummer.” They are labeled *rebels*, *outsiders* or with other similar names. In the past they displayed their dislike in a variety of ways, in the music they listened to, the clothes they wore, their manner of speaking, the social places they frequented, etc. All were non-verbal messages that communicated they were different not only in how they looked, but also in how they thought.

Symbols and signs are sometimes used for purposes of inclusion and exclusion. When I was a teenager, those of us who lived in the neighbor-hood had a special handshake we used to greet each other. And anyone who didn’t use the special handshake was immediately excluded.

At that time and place—Southern California during and immediately after World War II—we had the “Zoot Suiters.” They were mostly Mexi-can-American youths in East Los Angeles and were subsequently replaced by “hot rod,” “skinheads,” “be-boppers,” punk rockers, etc.

**In every generation, there are groups choosing to be outsiders and they display their alienation with society by the clothes they wore, their hairstyle, behavior or other manner. It is a nonverbal message of stating, “I’m different,” or “I don’t agree with your life style.”**

There are several psychologists who believe the primary reason why every generation has such nonconformists is simply because youth has a way of seeing the hypocritical tendencies in organized society, especially in business and politics: Such dichotomies found advertising, business, education, organized religion, etc. And having seen through the vale of such hypocritical action, truths, individuals rebel against a society that is “two-faced.”

Whenever I hear the word or read the word “rebel,” I always re-member the words spoken by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*; when asked what he was rebelling against, he merely asked, “Wha’d ya got?”

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A group that used to be considered outsider and is now considered a standard part of society is the gay and lesbian community. Homosexuals no longer have to hide their orientation; they can flaunt it in pride parades and other events. However, many in the gay/lesbian community feel some differences from other members of society may be worth keeping.

**Gays and lesbians have long kept a complex language of nonver-bal communication that allows “closeted” homosexuals to ex-press their orientation to people attuned to the cues. Some of these cues are obvious—the exaggerated effeminacy of a “femme” man or the exaggerated plainness of a “butch” woman. But other cues are more subtle, such as small details of clothing or accesso-ries and postures or expressions that recall iconic characters.**

This nonverbal language has created a rich cultural environment. As a result, some gays are not content with the welcoming change in the social climate. They feel that being “queer” is about more than just sexual orientation; it’s about the life of reading and sending nonverbal cues.

People who feel this way may not *want* to join the social mainstream.

**I believe that this is the dichotomy of being a rebel. On one hand, it involves wanting to live and display uniqueness and difference from the majority—nonverbal communication is a big part of *that*. On the other hand, most people want, at some point, to be accepted and recognized by the majority.**



**Conclusion**

The point of this chapter has been to make a quick survey of the various elements of daily living that involve nonverbal communication. While

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this book is focused primarily on the effects of nonverbal communication in business and negotiating, it’s important to see how nonverbal cues af-fect everything around us—from the music we hear, to the games we play, to the jobs we work.

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**Dead Men *Do* Tell Tales**

An expression most of hear when we’re kids (or when we ride on *The Pirates of the Caribbean* at Disneyland) is, “Dead men tell no tales.”With major technological advances in the field of forensic science— not to mention the growing number television shows based on forensic

investigations—most people realize the old expression is false.

The physical evidence found at the scene of most crimes is loaded with information that can be read by someone who understands the non-verbal language of forensics.

Ultimately, our bodies are themselves a nonverbal cue.

Forensic investigation covers a very wide area; physical, anatomical, organic chemistry, toxic, psychological, serology (blood analysis), trace evidence, fingerprints, and in the event of a suspected homicide, crime scene investigation. A medical autopsy determines the cause of death by examining the physical condition of the body and when the manner of death is suspect, a forensic investigation will begin to in order to determine the manner in which the person died or was killed.

The science of forensics began about 200 years ago when toxicol-ogy became part of the investigation when deaths were suspect. Violent deaths were easy enough to recognize; but early detectives were often stumped by poisons. So, they needed chemical tests to detect those.

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Since then, forensics has also become important in the determination of accidental deaths and suicides to determine the cause and nature of death. A toxicologist will be called to investigate anything from an over-dose of pills to possible use of poisoned substances. That part of foren-sics investigation is usually done by National Medical Services—the larg-est independent toxicological testing laboratory, testing more than 3,000 compounds each year.

**Toxicology is the study of poisons, but it also covers the detection of foreign substances in the body that can have a toxic effect, such as alcohol, industrial chemicals, poisonous gases, drugs— legal or not—and even solid objects. There are times when a tissue sample, blood, urine or a strand of hair is used to give the forensic investigators nonverbal information relative to a cause of death.**

For many centuries, poisoning was a popular method of murder. Al-most any substance in the right amount can be poisonous; and some poi-sons can confuse a doctor to believe the victim died of natural causes. As a result, toxicology is important not only as a nonverbal tool investigating a death where foul play is suspect, but also in determining accidental deaths, suicides or substance abuse.

In the early stages of forensic toxicology, arsenic was the most com-mon poison used. At that time it was known as the “poison of poisons” and the “inheritance power,” simply because so many people send their relatives to a premature grave. Arsenic has different degrees of effect in the ingestion process. It is absorbed from the bowel into the bloodstream and then goes into the organs. The liver takes most of deleterious effect from arsenic. And when given in large amounts it injures the brain and the spinal cord.

However, when smaller doses of arsenic are given over a period of time, the poison affects the peripheral nerves, stripping their insulating sheaths and causing them damage. The person being poisoned will feel prickly heat, like needles, and the skin may blister. They also will suffer

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headaches, nausea, numbness and general weakness over a period of time.

Sometimes a toxicological procedure needs only a little tissue from a body while, at other times, it requires a full autopsy—in which substantial tissue samples are removed from organs. (Of course, a living person may be tested for substance abuse using a simple procedure such as analyzing the breath for purposes of detecting alcohol levels.) These techniques for gathering nonverbal cues have been used by law enforcement officers on motorists for many years—and have resulted in keeping many drivers who consumed too much alcohol off the highways.

**Nonverbal Cues a Body Can Provide**

There are times when the cause of death can be determined, but not the manner. In those cases, where the death is unexplained, an autopsy or further forensic tests and examination are required.

**An autopsy allows “serology”—the analysis of semen, blood, sa-liva, sweat or fecal matter. This is the body’s best chance to con-vey nonverbal information about what happened to it. According to one expert, more than 6,000 major criminal investigations a year have assisted law enforcement by using serology.**

The first test used to see if there are any blood traces at the scene of a crime is a powerful light used across the surface of the area. If nothing is observed, but there are reasons to suspect foul play because of the way the death occurred, then another procedure is utilized: A chemical called “luminol” is used. This chemical makes blood traces luminescent when sprayed across a crime scene and takes less than five seconds to get positive results.

This procedure also works in places where someone has tried to wipe away blood stains. The major drawback to using luminol is that it can destroy the properties of blood samples that forensic investigators

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need for additional tests. Therefore, luminol is limited to proving that blood is present even though it is not clearly visible.

Despite how well cleaned up a crime scene may appear, small traces of blood can be detected for testing. Even if a killer carefully scrubs down the murder scene, they may overlook tiny blood particles embedded in the cracks of the floor, carpeting, or rugs. Simply by pouring water on ceramic tiles at a murder scene may produce slight traces of four different blood samples—A, B, O or the very rare AB.

When a darkish substance is found at a crime scene, it must first be determined if it is blood. Therefore, several cursory tests are conducted which separates the blood from other chemicals that may be present. Such tests are conducted with great care because the possibility of error always exist and only a positive result will determine if the forensic investigation will continue.

In 1932 in Italy, Dr. Leon Lattes developed a test by applying blood testing to stains on fabric and other materials. His procedure consisted of using saline solutions to restore dried blood to its original liquid form. And once the samples are available, it is necessary to distinguish if the blood is human or animal. A chemical called “precipitin” is used; the blood sample is put into a test tube and by passing an electric current through it, the protein molecules filter into gelatin and join each other in a line indicating the blood sample is human.

**Earlier in this book I discussed how the things we wear send non-verbal messages to others, the science of forensics is also aware of the information contained in the analysis of fiber materials.**

When there is a person-to-person physical contact, there’s often a transfer of minute fiber particles. And, when that happens, it is possible to trace the fibers back to the garments from which they came. Such nonver-bal cues can disclose that—and even *when*—a person was at particular location (including the scene of a crime).

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This is especially helpful when a suspect claims they were not at the scene of the crime.

The major forensic problem is that fibers are not unique like finger-prints or DNA; the evidence alone cannot condemn a suspect. This is because another person may have committed the crime wearing clothing made from the exact same fabric. Fibers are usually gathered at a crime scene with tweezers, tape or a vacuum. They generally are retrieved from clothing, wigs, carpeting, furniture, drapes, blankets, etc. All fibers fall into three categories; natural, synthetic or a combination of both. The two instruments that analyze them are the microscope and the spectrometer. Some microscopes use reflected light and magnify the fiber, and others reveal the structure of the fiber or a highly magnified image of reflected electrons: And there are other spectrometers that scan the electrons and convert them into a photographic display.

Despite the valuable nonverbal forensic evidence fibers may present in many crimes committed, there have been instances in which the evi-dence presented did not convict the suspect. This was primarily due to the manner in which the prosecution presented the evidence. In such cases, the judges rule that—since there was no witness, weapon, motive or con-fession—they cannot find the defendant guilty solely based on the forensic evidence of fibers from a fabric.

**Forensic Work as Popular Entertainment**

Like many Americans, I enjoy watching television programs such as *CSI*, *Law & Order* and *Monk*, because the detectives on these showssolve their crimes by looking for nonverbal evidence that tells them how the victims were murdered…and also who killed them. Recognizing non-verbal cues is a critical part of detective work (on TV and in real life).

In one episode of *Monk*, the title character—a quirky detective—is investigating a case where a woman was murdered and dismembered. After the forensics examination is completed, he says, “the woman was from a Baltic state because of the vaccination mark she had on her arm and was murdered by someone who was left handed mountain climber because of the type of knot that was found at the scene of the crime.”

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Subsequently, a person was arrested and charged with the crime and the individual fit the description as outlined by Monk. Plus, it was discov-ered the victim had been born in Estonia, as Monk astutely observed from the vaccination mark on the arm. That’s nonverbal communication!

**A Great Mystery: Napoleon’s Death**

Moving from fiction to reality, we can consider the controversial death of the French general and statesman Napoleon Bonaparte. Amateur sleuths around the world still ask basic questions about the Frenchman’s death: How did he die? Was he killed? If he *was* killed, who killed him?

The only answers available to these questions are nonverbal. No definitive written account exists (or has been discovered). So, we’re left with nonverbal cues that might unravel the historical mystery concerning Napoleon’s death.

Standard histories report that Napoleon died in British custody on the swampy South Atlantic island of St. Helena on May 5, 1821. An autopsy was conducted by Napoleon’s personal physician and all five of the English doctors stationed on the island. Their conclusion was that the cause of death was stomach cancer, the same disease from which Napoleon’s father had died in 1785.

**But there were some conflicting observations. One of the English doctors stuck to the diagnosis of liver disease complicated by hepatitis; but that portion of the autopsy report was deleted by the local English authorities.**

There were other oddities. The doctors noted the relative hairless-ness of Napoleon’s body—as well as his soft, feminized, rather fat condition. And none of the doctors at the autopsy seemed to notice that the general wasting of the body usually associated with cancer (and espe-cially stomach cancer) was *not* present.

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The Scourge of Europe was buried with some pomp, in a four-layer coffin (two coffins of mahogany, two of lead).

Almost immediately, Frenchmen whispered that the death was not so natural. They implied—or stated, plainly—that Napoleon had been poi-soned. Different people blamed different villains: the British governor of St. Helena, in some versions; Bonaparte’s untrustworthy advisor and fel-low exile Charles de Montholon, in others.

**Still more excited stories had Napoleon escaping St. Helena, where he was replaced by a loyal supporter who’d served a double for him during his reign. According to this version, the real Napoleon lived in Italy under a series of false names.**

In 1840, 18 years after Napoleon’s death, his body was exhumed from St. Helena and transported back to France—where it would be buried again in the Paris cemetery known as *Les Invalides*. The move was a political one; the new French king permitted it so that Bonaparte’s supporters (still an active political bloc) would support him.

The repatriation of the body allowed supporters and physicians to take another look. The quadruple coffin had done a good job of preserv-ing the Emperor’s remains. A group of his supporters—some of whom had been on St. Helena during his last exile—confirmed that the body was, in fact, the real Napoleon Bonaparte. More importantly, French phy-sicians were able to take some hair and tissue for further examination. The tissue was in bad shape; the hair, though thin, was more useful.

When the doctors tested Napoleon’s hair for toxins, they found high levels of arsenic.

This inflamed some of his loyalists; but, in truth, it didn’t answer the questions about his death as clearly as anyone hoped. First of all, arsenic was present in fairly high qualities all around St. Helena. Famously, the wallpaper in the house where Napoleon had lived was found to contain dyes with enough arsenic to make residents ill.

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**In one piece of credible nonverbal evidence, one of Napoleon’s staff sent a friend a letter that included a piece of the wallpaper from the room in which Napoleon had been staying during his last illness. The green dye in the wallpaper contained large amounts of arsenic. That dye, combined with the humid conditions on St. Helena, could have poisoned anyone living in the room.**

Second, a local fruit drink that Napoleon had preferred while living on St. Helena contained very high levels of the same chemical compounds that make arsenic.

So, it was possible that Napoleon had inadvertently poisoned him-self while in exile. *Possible.* To date, no one has been able to determine definitively what really caused his death.

**More than Just Chemistry**

There are many forensic services ranging from pathological to the artistic that are offered by individuals and companies. One of them is the nonverbal evidence at a crime scene that may be photographed. Steven Staggs, a professional photographer states, “From documenting a homi-cide scene to recording the detail of a bite mark, photographs can (nonverbally) communicate more about crime scenes and the appearance of evidence than a written report.” There you have it! “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

The famous serial killer Ted Bundy was very careful not to leave any evidence behind when he committed his string of murders by taking great precaution to wipe away evidence of his deeds. He also took whatever instrument he was going to use to kill his victim and never left it at the scene of the crime. All the nonverbal forensic evidence the investigators had was sperm and blood samples and a few fingerprints that were smudged—which all proved to be inconclusive at trial.

However, there was a piece of evidence that became a major cen-terpiece of Ted Bundy’s trial and ultimately lead to his conviction: It was a

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bite mark on the left buttock of one of his victims. Bundy had been ar-rested in a stolen vehicle after a murder in Florida and when initially ques-tioned gave a false name and then after further interrogation, told the po-lice his true identity. When the police attempted to get a dental impression of his teeth, he steadfastly refused. Subsequently, the police got a search warrant that authorized them to take photographs of his teeth and found a pattern matching the bite marks on his victim.

**During most of his trial, Ted Bundy acted as his own attorney. His downfall came when the police matched the photographs of his teeth with the photos taken of the bite marks made on the victim’s buttocks: The unique indention revealed the bite was caused by teeth exactly like those belonging to Bundy.**

An enlarged photo of the bite mark was displayed in the courtroom and a transparent sheet with an enlarged photo of Bundy’s teeth was shown, there was no doubt they were the same and his sentence was sealed. Nonverbal evidence prevailed once again.

**Composite Art as Nonverbal Cue**

Another service offered is forensic art—a valuable tool in law en-forcement. It is the technique of rendering a sketch or drawing of wanted persons. It also covers depiction of image modification, age progression, post-mortem reconstruction and demonstrative evidence. The art of com-posite drawings has been used by police agencies throughout history. An example of this was during the time of the Old West and the classic wanted poster with a drawing of the “Bad Guy.” Those drawings were nonverbal information obtained from a verbal description.

In the 1980s and 1990s, composite art evolved into forensic art. The artist has knowledge of victim psychology, post-mortem reconstruction and human aging. And in this the high-tech era, computers and digital imagery are used to create more realistic images.

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Another very interesting occupation is a forensic sculptor creates a three-dimensional representation based someone’s description, and the foremost sculptor is Frank Bender who has contributed a great deal to-wards apprehending criminals in the TV program *America’s Most Wanted*.

**Bender’s job is complicated by the fact that many of suspects have aged considerably since the photographs last taken. There-fore, he has to age the individuals as they might look at the present time. He also considers the psychological profile on the individual— likes, dislikes, tendencies, etc. Once all of the nonverbal informa-tion is assembled, the sculpting begins.**

One of the most sought after criminals was apprehended as a result of Bender’s work. After all the information was compiled, he concluded the suspect would not travel more than 300 miles from his former home because of his previous behavior; furthermore, because of his poor eye-sight, the suspect would probably be wearing the same glasses that he’d previously worn. (On both counts, Bender and his colleagues would later be proven correct.)

Subsequently, a description of the suspect based on Bender’s ren-dering was disseminated on television and radio and a former neighbor of the suspect supplied evidence that finally brought the criminal to justice.

Another increasingly popular investigative tool is forensic psychia-try—the medical specialty dealing with psychiatric and mental health is-sues as they relate to the crime and the law.

Forensic psychiatrists are trained in the identification of medical his-tory, causation and damage issues related to the mental health of suspects…and victims.

In legal matters, forensic psychiatrists are competent to testify on issues of insanity, diminished mental capacity, guardianship, child custody, personal injury and many others.

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**Concerns about Forensic “Experts”**

Composite artists and forensic psychiatrists may get a lot of time on TV shows about detectives. But there are other experts in the nonverbal cues at crime scenes who’s work is less dramatic—but just as important, in real life.

Forensic pathologists serve primarily as a expert witness consulting both the plaintiff’s and defense attorneys in criminal and civil litigation. Their major contribution is testifying relative to the merits of nonverbal evidence and sorting out the factors that lead to an individual’s demise; and whether in fact medical negligence was a factor or not.

Michael Baden is a forensic pathologist who specializes in interpret-ing nonverbal evidence at murder scenes. He pays a great deal of atten-tion to the nuances of bruises and abrasions in a way other people do not see. As a pathologist, he has conducted more than 2,000 autopsies. He was an expert witness in the O.J. Simpson case. But he’s probably best known as the host of a series of graphic shows about autopsies that appeared on the HBO television network.

Baden has strong opinions about the state of forensic work in the

United States:

*The same expertise we learned at the autopsy table can be applied to living people who’ve been shot, battered, or raped. The search for trace evidence is the same. [But] when you look back on the history of murder investigations in this coun-try, in most places we still use the same system we used in colonial days. The people who do the investigations are elected and they often have no medical expertise. We get upset about the handling of Nicole Brown Simpson and JonBenet Ramsey because we think these cases weren’t investigated according to the community’s standards. Sadly, they were in fact handled according to the community standards, which are pretty poor. We have around fifty murders a day in the U.S., and most are investigated at the crime scene by people not competent to do it. Autopsies, too, are often done by physicians not trained to do them.*

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Despite Baden’s concerns, the nonverbal evidence produced by fo-rensic investigators continues to help solve cases.

Forensic investigation was involved in trying to catch a killer in the summer of 1984 when a 79-year-old woman was killed in California. Her throat was slashed and she was stabbed several times: Although investi-gators were able to lift fingerprints off a window screen, without a sus-pect, they could not proceed further. Within two months later, there were two more murders that were similar and no one linked the crimes until much later. The killing surge continued and the killer became known as the “Night Stalker” for his penchant of crawling through unlocked windows and winding up with fourteen murders to his credit.

When the killer, Richard Ramirez, was finally apprehended, finger-print analysis helped secure his conviction. Had he been born only two months earlier, his name would not have been in the database and Ramirez would not have been caught. Such is the nonverbal contribution of finger-printing in history.

**Clearing Up Uncertainty**

One of the most interesting aspects of dying is what is called “equivocal death.” It is cases in which the death is unexplained and it is not clear what happened, a psychological autopsy at times may assist the coroner or medical examiner in clearing up the mystery. Such an example is when a person jumps out of an airplane and dies of multiple injuries. Did the per-son wear a parachute? Did it fail to open? Were they pushed out? Did the chute open but they had a heart attack? Or perhaps did the person intent to commit suicide? These multiple questions are what the nature of an “equivocal death”.

The nonverbal inquiry into psychological autopsy is to discover the state of mind of the victim preceding death, because the results are abso-lutely necessary in order to settle criminal cases, estate issues, malpractice suits, or insurance claims. Whenever circumstances concerning a death are interpreted in more than one way, psychologists can assist an indi-vidual unlike an attorney or medical examiner.

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**One of the most controversial nonverbal (and, I should empha-size, *not* forensic) aspects in criminal investigations is the use of psychics. Though few cops like to admit it, the official of psychics in the U.S. traces back the mid-1800s—and still happens today.**

There have been many situations in which psychics have been used in assisting police in trying to solve a crime or predicting one would occur. Jeanne Dixon supposedly warned the White House of a possible assassi-nated attempt on President Kennedy before his visit to Dallas.

The difficultly in such psychic foresights is that, for every prediction that turns out to have been correct, there are many more which are not. The percentage of correct predications is no better than during the Greek and Roman times—when people relied on oracles to forecast the future.

Beliefs in the nonverbal vision of the future persisted into the 16th Century when the mystic Nostrodamus predicted all sorts of future events, most of which never were fulfilled. Despite his low accuracy, Nostrodamus is still quoted regularly today as a well established futuristic oracle.

**Conclusion**

The science of forensics deals in nonverbal cues. And it has solved many crimes and will continue to be the source a great deal of nonverbal information regarding most criminal investigations.



**How does apply to your everyday life? I hope it doesn’t, di-rectly. But thinking about forensics does help *me* remember that humans are complex organisms, which are constantly conveying all sorts of nonverbal information about themselves.**

Words are really just a small part of human communication. The next time you watch a television program in which a forensic investigation is

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conducted, try to look past the tabloid elements of violence and gore— and try to think about the nonverbal information that a person’s body can convey about its own demise.

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You might feel that learning to recognize nonverbal communication is a difficult proposition. But if, from time to time, you feel frustrated with your efforts to master nonverbal cues, I have a suggestion that might seem strange at first.

Study animals.

In many cases, their nonverbal communication—facial expression, posture, breathing and touch—is easier to recognize than humans’.

Psychologists and behaviorists have been studying animal expression for a long time. And many of their fellows have scoffed the whole while. When Charles Darwin wrote his pamphlet *Expression of Emotion in* *Man and Animal*, he noted that many scientists considered the wholesubject of animal expression ridiculous.

One such person was Sir Charles Bell, an eminent 19th Century anato-mist. He wrote, “Among the lower creatures there is no facial expression that may be referred, more or less plainly, to their acts of volition and necessary instincts.” And he believed that animals “only seem capable of expressing rage and fear,” while conveying nothing about emotions such as affection and love.

To our modern ears, *that* opinion is what sounds ridiculous. Since the discovery of DNA and mapping of human genome, we are aware that primates and humans share approximately 98 percent of the same genes.

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So, it shouldn’t strike anyone as unusual that the two species have similar nonverbal behavioral patterns.

**It’s difficult to believe that Bell was unaware of the manner in which dogs display their emotions for owners when they lick a master’s face and wiggle their tails. Or when cats nuzzle close to their master’s leg and rub their body gently back and forth as a gesture of deep affection.**

Bell gained a great deal of recognition for his work in physiology but, like others before and since, he seems to have been unaware of the non-verbal signals that animals communicate with humans and other animals.

**Many Species, No Words**

Most people have a cat or dog as a pet at some time during their lives, so I’ll first consider those two species to examine the nonverbal communication that exists in the animal world.

Cats were probably the second animal domesticated as pets, after dogs. Archaeologists originally believed that the Egyptians were the first culture to domesticate cats—around 2000 B.C. But more recent discov-eries have pushed that date farther back.

In early 2004 on an island near Cyprus, a single large cat was dis-covered buried in its own grave next to human remains. The archaeolo-gists who made the discovery believe the cats were tamed as far back as 7000 B.C.—and perhaps even earlier. The 9,000-year-old cat belonged to the same family as the species known as *felix silvestris lybica*, which evolved from African wild cats and is considered most likely the ancestor of all modern day cat breeds.

The same discovery revealed many ruins of wooden posts, ditches and water wells, plus thousands of stone artifacts and animal bones the tribe had hunted and butchered. The amount of evidence discovered indi-

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cated the population who had lived on the island was very large and had existed there for several hundred years.

Nerissa Russell, a Cornell University archaeologist who specializes on the relationship between humans and animals of the Stone Age, stated the findings as being, “a completely fascinating new look at the issue of domestication.” The cat grave she said reveals “a symbiotic coevolution-ary relationship” had already developed between felines and humans.

**Can Your Dog Read Your Mind?**

Konrad Lorenz, who wrote *King Solomon’s Ring*, is one of the foremost researchers in the world on animal communication. He has done more than any other person to establish the principles and to formulate the essential ideas of how different species communicate with each other and with humans. In his work, he has attempted to understand the fundamen-tal differences between animals’ minds and our own—without projecting human attributes onto nonhuman creatures.

Animals do not possess *language* in the true sense of the word. But higher vertebrates and some insects have a certain number of innate move-ments and sounds for conveying information to other members of their species. They also have innate ways of reacting to these signals whenever they see or hear them.

**In that sense, they communicate nonverbally—much as humans do. And animals may be even more keen on nonverbal cues, since they don’t have words to dull their perception.**

Whales can navigate by sensing magnetic fields, elephants can hear ultrasonic sounds, a platypus can test electrical signals created by fish muscles and mice can make visual distinctions humans cannot. Are these mystical skills? Hardly. They are simply the sharpened senses of creatures who don’t have words—much as the blind person’s hearing and other senses sharpen to compensate for the lost sight.

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For example, Konrad Lorenz writes of the unusually bad behavior his dog exhibited when certain guests, whom Lorenz disliked, were visit-ing. Some people would say that the dog had a “telepathic” connection with his master. But the doctor’s findings indicated such behavior by ani-mals of understanding the mood and feeling of its master is not telepathic. Most animals are capable of perceiving nonverbal information transmitted by their owners.

Anyone who’s ever owned a dog will agree that the dog knows the moment its owner had made up his mind to take it for a walk. The dog recognizes this from the nonverbal messages the master sends out.

**When walks are scheduled daily, a dog without the ability of telling time knows when its time for a stroll. And perhaps if the owner has forgotten, the dog might pick up the leash in its mouth and dropped it at the feet of its owner at the appointed time for the walk. That’s real animal communication without words!**

Dogs have been used for centuries in tracking, hunting and killing animals. In order to achieve this function, nonverbal communication is necessary between a human and dog. Indeed, there are yearly contests in the United States in which a dog retrieves a fowl hidden in a marsh. The dog’s master knows where the fowl has been hidden and directs his dog by the use of nonverbal signals to where the fowl is hidden. The animal that accomplishes the task in the shortest time is judged the winner.

Border Collies are used to shepherd sheep in many parts of the world. Golden Retrievers are used by search and rescue units seeking avalanche victims. Search and rescue experts say that, when the dog is digging through the snow and reaches a point at which it knows a human is buried, it tail starts to rotate in a circle.

Dogs have also been used in wars dating back to World War I. In World War II, more than 40,000 pets were donated to the military, of which the German Shepherd was the most desired because of its keen

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sense of smell, hearing, endurance and loyalty. During the Viet Nam War, they not only carried messages between military units, but also searched for wounded soldiers in the field.

In Indonesia, there are two native tribes that live in the treetops. The Kombai and Korowal natives live in houses as high as 150 above the ground and climb down daily to hunt for food. The tribes rely on dogs to assist them in tracking, finding and often killing animals for the tribe’s sur-vival. The dogs are greatly valued because, without them, the natives would starve. The dogs are medium size, approximately the size of a beagle, although much leaner. The lesser weight is a blessing because each day after the hunt the natives climb trees holding a dog in one hand and grasp-ing the ladder built with the other.

Once the dogs are safely in their lofty homes, the hunters climb back down and retrieve whatever they caught or killed during the day. Their existence is a wonderful example of the nonverbal relationship between man and animal.

**People who live in primitive cultures—like the ancestors of mod-ern people, generally—have a sense for the tones and pitches of animals around them so sharp that it seems like some kind of extrasensory perception. But it’s not; instead, it’s an ability to recognize nonverbal cues that’s sharpened by years of practice.**

**What Constitutes Language?**

Already in this chapter, I’ve stated breezily that dogs and other ani-mals must rely on nonverbal communication—since they don’t have the means of verbal language.

But I should take a few minutes to point out that not everyone agrees with this assumption.

Some scientists argue that the term *language* is not defined well enough to accept as axiom that animals don’t possess that ability. So, for

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the sake of clarification, we can consider the question: What constitutes language?

Language consists of elements people believe are very important: Things like grammar, symbols, etc. and some people believe language is an “open system of communication.” According to the late anthropologist and linguist Charles Hockett, there is one system of language. It consists of seven key properties: duality, productivity, arbitrariness, interchange-ability, specialization, displacement and cultural transmission.

So, is nonverbal communication a language?

Perhaps. Based on Hockett’s definition, it takes a considerable amount of information in order to qualify certain communication as a language among animal species or between humans and animals.

Animals use various means of communication in their natural envi-ronment. Many use scent or urine to mark their territory. While others use touch to develop relationships and groom each other. And some also have human like facial expressions, hair erection, and certain gestures and pos-tures.

Primates use certain vocalizations to communicate from using grunts to loud screams. The soft grunts are used for personal and intimate mes-sages, whereas the louder ones usually communicate approaching danger or the location of a food source.

**Some studies have found that monkeys have the most sophisti-cated communication of the primates. The sounds they create are learned and are not instinctive. Therefore, the adults must have some method of teaching the young the specific meaning of each sound.**

For example, Gibbon apes produce a remarkable series of sounds that is an exact musical octave with perfect pitch ascending and descend-ing the scale in halftones. Charles Darwin referred to the sound as “brute animals singing.”

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If those species can achieve that level of communication with the sounds they make, perhaps the process would satisfy some of Charles Hockett’s criteria relating to language.

**Intelligence and Vocal Chords**

There are fundamental reasons why primates cannot speak. But none of these reasons include the fact that they don’t have sufficient intelligence. The main reason they are unable to speak is because their vocal chords are not designed for speaking like humans. And when the vocal chords are used its usually during times or great excitement as a result of fear or anger.

**Some anthropologists make the stimulating suggestion that, dur-ing their natural evolution, primates consciously discovered they were unable to speak—so they resorted to using gestures and developed their own sign language.**

The utilization of sign language clearly displays primate intelligence. The best known of the primates taught sign language is “Koko” the gorilla. She learned so well she was able to use humor in communicating with those who taught her. On one occasion “Koko” used a metaphor of an elephant to refer to herself when she picked up a long tube and placed the tube next to her nose as if it was a trunk, pretending to be an elephant. Francine Patterson, “Koko’s” trainer, believes that “one cannot really un-derstand the mental workings of other animals or bring them to the limits

of their ability unless one first has true rapport with them.”

The basic assumption the majority of researchers have made is that by teaching primates a sign language, the animal becomes more intelligent. However, there are those who believe the opposite. They feel that do-mesticated apes may be less intelligent than their counterparts in a jungle environment.

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The basic problem is we have no way of communicating with pri-mates unless we can teach them *our* language. Moreover, most anthro-pologists believe that, if humans learned the language apes use, we could then measure the difference in intelligence between the primates who are taught sign language by humans and primates in the wild.

**Social Elements of Communication**

Animal communication is largely transmitted only between members of the same species; a communication system understood by each mem-ber of the species. Social life in the animal world depends on the coordi-nation of interactions between them and it is the means by which this co-ordination is achieved that we can call “animal communication.”



**This is the kind of signal that passes between animals and affects each’s behavior toward some goal that is of mutual advantage to the group. It might be a bee signaling other bees towards the direction of a source of honey or ritualized combat between two male antelope during mating season— when they determine the winner with a minimum of physical damage to each other.**

The primate’s nonverbal communication also includes the art of teach-ing as described by Elizabeth Lonsdorf, who has studied chimpanzees in Tanzania’s Gombe National Park where Dr. Jane Goodall first demon-strated similarities in behavior between humans and chimpanzees. Ms. Lonsdorf discovered female chimps teach their young the fine art of fish-ing for termites to supplement their diet. And in the process also discov-ered mothers teaching their young how to use tools, such as leaves, twigs or sticks.

An interesting part of her discovery was that female chimps learn the process in less time. After studying and videotaping 14 young chimps and

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their mothers for four years, she became aware that the females usually learned how to extract the termites from a hole when they reached the average age of 31 months; whereas, the male chimps took an average of 58 months.

Lonsdorf concluded the female chimps learn how to fish for termites sooner than the males because they pay more attention to their mother and study her movements, while the boy chimps would go off and play games with each other. The females would also catch more termites with each dip of a tool than the young males.

Jane Goodall, who spent many years at Tanzania’s Gombe National Park researching chimpanzees, also discovered the same data of tech-niques when fishing for termites that Elizabeth Lonsdorf used later.

Goodall also uncovered that chimpanzees were carnivorous when she found a group of them eating a baby bush pig. However, the most unusual revelation about chimpanzee behavior resulted when one of them— who Goodall had nicknamed “Mike”—showed superior intelligence by using empty kerosene cans to create a noisy charge display. By banging the cans together, he intimidated larger males away and bluffed his way to become the “alpha” member of the tribe.

Additional discoveries reveal chimpanzees have human like capacity to display happiness and joy. Lonsdorf recorded chimps on videotape performing a spontaneous dance-like display at the sight of a waterfall. The two well-known primate researchers firmly believe such expressions may resemble emotions that led early humans to religion.

**Goodall and Lonsdorf both concluded chimpanzees know some-thing about homeopathic medicine, because they swallow the leaves of a medicinal plant to relieve stomach pains and reduce internal parasites. The chimps conveyed the effects of these leaves to one another.**

Researchers who have studied orangutans have discovered that, un-like chimpanzees, orangutans do not live in groups. The adults travel alone

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and infants and juveniles accompany the females. This behavior is due to the fruits they prefer are widely dispersed and a localized supply is unable to support a large group of them. However, orangutans are very sociable at certain feeding times when as many as eight of them will gather together if the food supply is sufficient.

During fruit-poor periods, they range more widely from their home base and each one is aware of encroaching on another orangutan’s terri-tory. It appears the intruders have a system of communicating they are only looking for food and are not interested in establishing a home. The message is understood and orangutans in the area allow the encroaching apes to eat as much as they want and patiently wait for them to leave. As a result of this, there is a high degree of overlapping territories and very little violence among them.

Orangutans, like humans, store fat when food is plentiful, the extra calories which they store helps them survive bleak periods when food is difficult to find.

**Horses and Body Language**

Besides primates, other species of animals also send nonverbal mes-sages. One of them is a thoroughbred racehorse. Whenever you go to a racetrack, it is an advantage to read the horses “body language” to deter-mine how fit the horse is and whether the horse wants to run or if it does not feel comfortable in running that day. I’ve been interested for many years as an owner of thoroughbred racehorses in knowing the difference between horses that want to run in a race and those that don’t.

**Like humans, horses have their good days and the days when they don’t want to get out of a barn. If owners, trainers and those who bet on racehorses knew the difference, it would make handicapping a race much easier, make their lives more enjoyable and the pocket book much heavier.**



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**What I have observed after many years of going to the racetrack is a nonverbal clue that some horses signal during the post parade before a race. My observation has proven to be very reliable for purposes of separating the horses that don’t want to run from those who do.**

In any race, it is impossible to know with certainty which horse will win. However, I’ve come up with nonverbal evidence that tells me which horse or horses will probably not win because they feel insecure or are disinterested in running. This observation is worthwhile because it is just as important to eliminate horses that have little chance of winning, as it is know which horses have a good chance at winning.

I’ve observed during the post parade before a race, horses that don’t want to run or are insecure, communicate those feelings nonverbally. As a horse walks or trots next to a lead pony some of them position their heads over the pony’s neck: I call them “neckers.” The reason they put their neck in that position is the same reason humans do when they need to contact others physically.

My belief is that horses, like humans, often need the comfort of touch-ing someone when they are uncomfortable or insecure, and during such times racehorses instinctively react the same way as humans. And the horses that are looking forward to running that day keep their head away from the “lead pony’s” neck. They tend to toss their heads up and down, or from side to side and display a greater amount of enthusiasm towards wanting to run in the race.

After many years of watching and betting on races, I’ve yet to see a “necker” win a race.

If you go to a racetrack make sure you watch the post parade before you make your bet. The horses who have the best previous track record sometimes don’t win simply because like humans, they don’t feel well or don’t want to perform their effort on that particular day.

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**The Most Common Nonverbal Cues**

Humans, horses and other animals communicate their emotions in the manner they move their bodies and also in the sounds they make. If an animal has a tail, it signals how it feels by wagging that tail. So let’s take a look at some common nonverbal signals animals communicate to other animals and to humans.



**The sounds animals make largely falls into three categories, during mating season, at times of great danger or anger, or in the process of looking for and/or finding food.**

These are three distinct time periods in the life of an animal and all three have one thing in common, each expresses an emotion. Therefore, sound is a vital means of communication among animals, and the more social an animal is, the more sounds they utter. As a result, next to hu-mans, primates are the most vocal in the use of sounds.

But communication by sound is not solely used only by humans and primates, horses, dogs, cats develop strong emotional ties with other mem-bers of their species and when they are separated from each other, they clearly display sorrow and sadness.

Animals display these feelings in the way they walk and by refusing to eat. They mope around and appear listless with little energy even for the evening walk that they normally enjoy. And the “intraspecies” nonverbal communication is evident when they are reunited; dogs will lick each other, cats rub their bodies together and horses will greet each other with a rousing *neigh* signaling joy at being together again.

Some other examples of sounds animals make when communicating with each other are with cattle and sheep when a mother calls for her young who might be lost and when the young. No one has yet discovered and perhaps never will how a mother knows the distinct sound of it’s young amongst thousands of other cattle or sheep in the herd. Just the same as you would distinguish the voice of your lost child in a crowd.

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The sounds animals make also communicate anger, fear, danger or warning. It is a common sound among dogs when they growl at an in-truder as a signal not to come any closer. And if the sound is not properly acknowledged, then loud rapid barking may follow.

**The barking sound a dog makes is not unlike a lion’s roar. It at-tempts to establish its presence and a warning to those who might be encroaching in its territory. The lion’s roar is not reserved just for prey animals; it is also intended to intimidate other hunters (perhaps including humans) who might be in the area.**

Of all the sounds animals make, the singing of birds may be the most pleasing. Charles Darwin believed birds musical sounds were first origi-nated as a courtship ritual. And the number of sounds birds create is vast, ornithologists number them in the hundreds and the specific individual sound is still largely unknown. And some birds like the stork when excited make a loud clattering sound with their beck.

On several occasions near my home, at about 6:00 a.m., I’ve have heard an owl use three separate *who* notes then pause for about 10 sec-onds before repeating the same three notes. The notes have the same pitch and intensity and continue for a period as long as 20 minutes—then suddenly disappear as quickly as they appeared. I don’t have the any idea of what that owl is communicating or to whom. However, since it reap-pears often, the owl knows what it is doing. I don’t.

Another sound some animals make is stomping the ground, as rab-bits often do. Researchers imitating rabbits by stomping the ground often get responds from rabbits in the area. But the researchers don’t know what the message means, therefore are unable to adequately give a good response. In addition to the rabbit, the elk will also stomp the ground before charging an enemy. A few humans who didn’t give ground to the elk have been gored and died because they didn’t take the sounds and stomping seriously.

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We usually associate the rattling of tails with rattlesnakes and the sound they make as a warning signal to keep away from them. However, there is another creature that makes the same sound as the rattlesnake and at night is often mistaken for it; the critter is the male cicada using the rattling sound during mating season to lure females. If you’re in rattlesnake country during a clear night full night full of stars, be alert to both signs— and don’t mistake one for the other.

Rattlesnakes and cicadas are not the only creatures that vibrate their tails when angry or threatened. A porcupine will also rattle its quills and vibrate them when angered. The quills on the tail are different than those on other parts of their body. They are short, thin and hollow as a goose-quill. And when the quills are shaken rapidly, the hollow quills strike each other and produce a peculiar continuous sound unlike any other animal.

Porcupines are nocturnal animals. If they smell or hear a prowling beast of prey, it is a great advantage to them to be in the dark and give a warning to their enemy to stay away from them or suffer the pain of having sharp quills embedded in their body. Since animals don’t have hands like humans, just imagine how difficult it is for a creature to remove quills em-bedded in their body.

The most common nonverbal message an animal sends that humans understand clearly is when the hair on the body rises or bristles: The bris-tling of hair along the neck and back of a dog, and all over the entire body of a cat, especially on the tail that clearly indicates a creature that is very angry, frightened and upset.

**An interesting aspect of this type on nonverbal communication: With cats, it usually only occurs when they are frightened; how-ever, with dogs, it is not only fear but also anger.**

In addition to sounds, stomping the feet, rattling and hair raising an-other nonverbal sign demonstrated by birds is raising their feathers during times when they are angry or frightened. Two cocks preparing to fight

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each other will have their neck-hackles erect. A chicken approached by a cat or dog will ruffle the feathers and spread its wings to look ferocious in order to discourage the cat or dog from coming any closer.

Likewise, swans when angered will raise their wings and tail as they erect their feathers while opening their beck and uttering hissing sounds. And finally, a barn owl or a hawk when approached suddenly will swell its plumage, extent its wings and tail and also hiss loudly.

**Swelling or Puffing Up**

Another aspect of animal nonverbal communication during times of anger or fear is the method by which some species inhale air, thus appear-ing to be much larger than they are as is the case of toads and frogs. The latter is well known in Aesop’s fable of the “Ox and the Frog” in which the frog is said to blow up from envy until it burst. And in several European languages, the word *toad* expresses swelling up or a nonverbal expres-sion of pride or hubris.

**The enlargement of the body by swelling in order to appear larger is also a device to discourage an enemy from trying to devour it: When frogs are seized by a snake, they enlarge themselves imme-diately. If the snake is small, it cannot swallow them. Likewise, chameleons and lizards inflate their bodies when angry.**

Frogs, toads, chameleons and lizards are not the only ones that in-flate themselves, several different types of snakes also do the same thing. The puff-adder is remarkable in this respect, experts believe they don’t do it to increase their size, rather to take in as much air as possible for the prolonged hissing sound they make that warns enemies to keep their dis-tance from them: And finally, a cobra may enlarge itself as the skin on each side of the neck inflates into a large flat disk; which is why the snake is called a “hooded cobra.”

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The 1989 videotape program *National Geographic: Elephant* in-cludes sections that describe the manner in which elephants communicate a variety of messages.

Among elephants, there is a fine line between camaraderie and com-bat, and elephants know the difference between a friendly gesture and a challenge. Researchers have stated, “You have to watch every trunk tip and ear posture for clues.” Why? Because the difference between the two may be expressed in a stance the elephant takes, or a facial expression and vocalization.

Some of the ways in which elephants communicate are a “kneel down” posture an elephant might take to encourage playful interactions with smaller members of the group.

Another message the researchers discovered they named “bush bash,” in which young elephants practice their aggressive moves by crashing through vegetation: And while standing raising their tails and staring down at imaginary enemies. They may also mock charge, and then feigning fear, spin around and run away.

The “floppy run” is a boisterous game elephants play in which they run around with a loose, floppy gait and highly curl tail. The head is low-ered which they shake from side to side as the ears flap against the neck. The researchers believe this signals “pure joy” as the elephant feels ex-traordinarily silly.

The elephants also perform a gesture called “lean-upon” in which they climb, roll or wiggle atop each other, and the young elephants learn it as a game to practice future competitive skills. And touch also sends a powerful message of belonging in a tightly knit group of females. Elephants also communicate with a game of “sparring” in which they test each other’s strength. Young males place their trunks on one another’s heads attempt-ing to push each other backwards.

**The researchers noticed female elephants rarely take part in this game. This is interesting because among humans, it is also the boys who usually play strength game when they are young.**

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Michael Garstang, a University of Virginia meteorologist wanted to know how atmospheric patterns effect acoustics. Since he had always had a fondness for elephants, he decided to make a study of how they communicate with each other in their environment.

He discovered that elephants communicate more often when the at-mospheric conditions are best, because wind, heat, wide rough terrain and dense vegetation can affect the distance of their calls to each other. Elephants have the ability to produce sounds as low as 15 hertz (HZ), however the human ear is capable of perceiving sound at only 20 hertz. Therefore, most of the sounds recorded among the elephants were too deep for researchers to hear. However, they were able to isolate certain nonverbal signs in their behavior that communicated specific meanings.

**Baby elephants quickly learn to understand their elders resound-ing instructions with their low -pitched rumbling sounds. What also amazed Garstang was the distance elephants are able to com-municate estimated across the savannas in Africa.**

Elephants use the long distance signals to keep in touch with other adult bulls connected with the herd. They use a broad frequency range, sounds ranging from the highest note of a clarinet to the lowest note on a piano: Some of the lowest notes in the animal kingdom are created by elephants.

**Whales Communicating**

Another animal species that communicates is the beaked whale, which uses a series of rapid clicking sounds to communicate with each other just above the range of human hearing. They are the least known of the large mammals on earth. The sounds they make are recorded by researchers able to detect the clicks electronically with a hydrophone in the water near where they are swimming.

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Beaked whales are one of the four species of cetaceans—the others are, whales, dolphins and porpoises. Hal Whitehead, a whale expert from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia stated, “they are some of the most extreme animals on the entire planet, probably among the most intel-ligent, and we hardly know a thing about them.”

**Beaked whales spend only 15 percent of the day at the surface, so in order to learn more about how they communicate, researchers use a crossbow and a suction cup dart to attach a recorder, a palm-size device with a float and radio transmitter.**

The data has revealed beak whales dive deeper than other mam-mals—such as elephant seals and sperm whales. And researchers have discovered whales are in constant communication with each other and their social bond is as transient as a teenager’s. A month after they estab-lish a bond, they will be swimming in sync with new best friends severing all ties with the previous group of whales.

One of the signals the whales send is intended for humans when they come out of the water and slap their tail. Researchers believe it means, “Don’t get too close to me!” Some of the sounds the whales make when out of the water are grunts, whistling, and a strange-like “Bronx cheer” made through their blowhole.

**Killing Sounds**

There are sounds made by insects that can kill members of another species. *Femme fatale* fireflies attract their next meal with blinking sig-nals. They imitate a female of another species in order to attract males and the duped male becomes her next meal. The female not only eats the male, but also absorbs the toxins she lacks from the victim’s blood that acts as a defense against birds and spiders. How’s that for eating a meal and getting the most mileage from it?

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In the animal world, there are few that have the instincts and capabili-ties of hunting and killing like sharks. Sharks are masters at sensing non-verbal cues from other animals.

To a hungry shark, a fish in distress is a dinner bell sounding. Sharks operate like high-powered antennas. They can hear the low-frequency vibrations emitted by a struggling fish over long distances—perhaps as far away as a mile. At the same time, their sensitive noses pick up the faint smell of blood spread over ocean currents.

Through visible pores on their heads that lead to special receptors, a shark can detect at close range electrical fields given off by animals, in-cluding humans. Although some sharks—like the gray reef shark—will hunt alone, sharks generally attack and feed in groups. And, while feeding in a churning frenzy, the sharks appear to show no aggression toward one another.

A researcher observing them stated, “the feeding scramble is like a football fumble, when everyone goes for the ball, not each other.” This coordination requires significant nonverbal communication among the sharks.

**Animals and “Imprinting”**

Another form of human and animal communication was an experi-ment in which unborn swans where imprinted with the sound of human voices and noise made by an ultra-light aircraft.

**After the swans were born and became accustomed to the hu - mans around them and the aircraft, the swans flew from Airlie, a Virginia research center, to a Chesapeake Bay farm by following the sound of the ultra- light. It was a classic example of animals learning sounds made by humans and following them.**

Douglas Chadwick, who studied mountain goats in North American for more than 25 years, states “that no other animal can match the goat in

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mountain climbing ability.” Instinctively, the goats seemed to understand this unique ability and, as long as there is a steep wall nearby for escape, they are not frightened when predators appear in their territory.

Chadwick has noticed how the goats communicate with each other. For instance, if they flick their tongues in and out and raise their tails, it is a sign that they are frightened. And when they confront each other it be-comes a staring contest and the one that looks away loses.

During the rutting season, some battles ensue. Each goat has his own personal space, a kind of imaginary bubble that extends about 10 feet around it. If another goat violates that sphere, the defender will threaten or even attack the trespasser. Yet the goats seldom come to blows.



**Most clashes are resolved by body language—stiff postures combined with feints and bluff charges, thus sparing need-less bloodshed. *That* sounds like some business negotiations I’ve seen.**

**Conclusion**

For those who are interested in additional information on this sub-ject, an excellent program is *Animal Minds* produced on television by the Explorer Channel. The program’s major purpose is to convince humans that they needed to have an open mind to see that our furry, feathered and finned friends are thinking and not just reacting. During the program, Alex— an African gray parrot—solved problems posed by a biologist. With a vocabulary of about a hundred words, Alex demonstrated an uncanny capacity to use words with understanding.

Resourceful dogs? Self-aware chimpanzees? Sharks communicating by electrical impulses? The more we learn about our fellow animals, the more we know we may not be alone on earth as beings capable of ratio-nal thought.

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A recent scientific paper written by Phillip Clapham of the North-west Fishery Sciences Center regarding his study of humpback whales further illustrates how well animals send and receive messages.

The male humpback whale was thought to sing his mysterious songs mainly to attract females during the winter mating season in the tropics. Scientists now realize, because of Clapham’s studies, the males also break out in song during springtime in New England—a time and place in which they are supposed to be eating, not courting.

Christopher Clark, a bioacoustics expert and Clapham’s coauthor further believes the humpback whales behavior was not unusual. He said, “The whales were doing it before. We just never listened.”

The difference in the sound the humpback whales make, versus what the researchers expected is as different as “a grunt at the dinner table and a grand opera.”

**Humpbacks have a range of that covers eight octaves, from a bass so low that humans are unable to hear to a magnificent soprano. Their highly structured songs include multiple themes that are occasionally repeated and even rhyme. The songs last for up to 30 minutes, and the whale perform like jazz musicians, seeing “who can improvise in a better way” than other whales in the area.**

Besides attracting females, singing also seems to be a way of estab-lishing a hierarchy among male humpbacks. Clapham believes the whales may be singing because their hormone levels are high during the winter. Or they could be establishing bonds with females in hopes of hooking up with them during the next mating season. Whatever their reason is, this ability establishes them in the highly intelligent range for animals.

In summary, nonverbal communication is the source for survival in the animal world. Although animals are unable to speak like humans be-cause they lack vocal cords, they are capable of expressing many emo-tions humans have.

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So far, I have focused on nonverbal communication as it applies to individual people (or animals) in specific situations. To the extent that I've discussed cultural influences, I have considered how they effect individu-als and their dealings with other individuals.

But nonverbal communication can paint in broader strokes. Some-times, it is the way that cultures, eras—perhaps even nature itself—com-municates with us all.

**Perhaps the most profound aspect of nonverbal communication is its universal application. While languages come and go—in an anthropological sense—the nonverbal cues that people and *peoples* give off are rather permanent.**

An Egyptian living at the dawn of the first dynasty, a scientist from Stanford today and a starship captain from 5,000 years in the future placed in the same room for two hours would learn more about each other from the way they behaved and the things they did than any words they ex-changed.

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If one crossed his arms, looked at the ground and shifted his weight from foot-to-foot, the other two would probably understand that he was nervous. And possibly dangerous. If one held eye contact, offered open hands and moved slowly, the other two would probably realize that he was calm. And probably open to nonverbal give-and-take.

These universal traits may have truly universal application. One of the most (perhaps one of the *few*) plausible parts of the classic science fiction film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* was that, during mankind’s first contact with intelligent aliens, most of the communication took place by hand signals, music and facial gestures.

**On a more practical level, history has been communicating with us in a nonverbal sense since the dawn of civilization. The best example of this was how the builders of Stonehenge had the intelligence to understand the motion of the planets and stars and able to chart the seasons that enabled them to know when plant and harvest crops.**



This was a powerfully observant culture—even if their clothes and homes looked crude by today’s standards. They understood nonverbal communication well; in fact, they may have looked to the stars as the source for their religious beliefs. The celestial orientation of Stonehenge suggests this.

**The Universe Itself Gives Nonverbal Cues**

Can the stars give us nonverbal cues about our origins? According to some scientists (including academic allies of the late

Stephen Jay Gould) life on Earth may have begun some four billion years ago, when a ball made of nickel and iron crashed onto our planet from outer space.

This meteor might have been smaller than a car—or been as large as a football field. Whatever its size, the impact would have devastated the

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area. It would have sent loose sand and gravel into the sky as a dust that lasted for weeks; it would have created of a size and shape like the Great Meteor Crater in northern Arizona.

**More important, according to the scientists, the meteor’s bio-chemistry was similar to that of every form of life that has evolved since. So, the chemical structure of plants and animals here may contain nonverbal cues about our origins.**

The meteor would have given a kick-start the formation of what sci-entists call “the primordial soup.” This soup could have begun as rains or creeks partially filled the crater made by the impact. Or it may have begun when the crashing meteor liquefied the sand and plants in a 3- to 5-kilo-meter radius of its crash site.

Regardless of its mechanics, this primordial soup quickly (in geologi-cal terms) started throwing off living organisms. The first of these may have been simple thermophiles (or “heat lovers” as scientists call them). These still exist on Earth and scientists study them in places such as Yellowstone National Park.

Anna-Louise Reysenbach, a microbiologist at Rutgers University, believes there are three main branches on the tree of life. One branch of organisms is made of cells with a nucleus. This is where humans fit in. The second branch is made up of bacteria. And the third one belongs to an-other group of single-cell organisms known as “archaea.”

The primordial soup needed additional ingredients, and it got them. Comets that are seen in space contain water, ammonia, formaldehyde and hydrogen cyanide which can react to form amino acids, the building blocks of proteins necessary for life forms.

So, when meteors, comets and other celestial bodies struck Earth, they added the necessary ingredients to a soup needed to spark the first creation of organisms. Scientists believe the first forms of life started in a scalding environment four billion years ago, perhaps around volcanic hot springs on the ocean bottom.

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**Chapters of the Earth’s Story**

Geologists like to think of Earth’s history like a book, with the Paleo-zoic Era period the first and by far the longest chapter, taking up to 88 percent of geologic time. It came long before humans, dinosaurs, or even snails.

**But, if most of Earth’s history book is dedicated to the Paleozoic Era, most of those pages are blank. The origins of life didn’t leave many cues—nonverbal or otherwise.**

What kind of place was Earth during this period? The answer: a very inhospitable environment indeed. The sun had only 70 percent of its present power. The atmosphere held little free oxygen. There were few sounds beyond the wind, the hiss of lava hitting water, and the occasional boom of meteorites slamming into Earth. No plants, animals—as we know them.

Even though this was the longest period of the Earth’s history, there is very little geological record of it. Why? Because there was so little life…and what life there was was so little.

The Paleozoic Era was the age of microscopic life, simpler even than the bacteria and viruses we know today.

These tiny creatures formed in the primordial soup around volcanoes or where meteors landed; billions of them could fit into a drop of water. Their importance was paving the way for later organisms. They devel-oped DNA and proteins, the basic molecules that sustain all living cells. They also devised means of harnessing sunlight to produce food and gave rise to oxygen we need to survive. They even invented sex.

All of this information about how living organisms developed on Earth was not sent to us by a telegraphic or electronically recorded space mes-sage. It’s been decoded from nonverbal cues by scientists in the field and in laboratories worldwide after years of studying the evidence found in Yellowstone Park and other areas.

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Then, in a flash that took place about 250 million years ago, life started getting more complex. The Paleozoic Era ended with massive extinction. For reasons we’re still not sure of, many of the crude forms of life that had developed died off.

As the Mesozoic Era began, the surviving life forms developed into more complex shapes and sizes. And the nonverbal cues they left behind started getting a lot more interesting.

**The Mesozoic Era included the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods which, as most children will eagerly tell you, means one impor-tant thing: dinosaurs.**

By the time the dinosaurs developed, plant and animal life had be-come so developed and diverse that the Earth looked like *Earth* as we know it today. The nonverbal cues left behind by the animals and plants of this period tell a complex story of what life was like.

Essentially, the paleontologists and other scientists who study these cues (made most famous, I suppose, by another popular movie—*Juras-sic Park*) are analyzing nonverbal communication in a way that’s not sodifferent from how you might decipher nonverbal cues in the workplace.

They study the available evidence for cues that they recognize. They gather as many of these cues as they can and try to draw reasonable conclusions that get them “inside” the perspective and experience of the creatures and periods (in your case, people and situations) they’re con-fronting.

In this way, the smart person using nonverbal cues is a sort of anthro-pologist or paleontologist of human behavior.

Of course, no scientific inquiry leads to perfect—or even complete— results.

To keep with our Jurassic theme, there is lots of physical evidence about late Jurassic and early Cretaceous giants. The Tyrannosaurus Rex is a good example. There is a wealth if evidence about this animal, includ-

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ing a key source of fossils right in the United States—in the “badlands” area of North Dakota.

From this evidence there are things we know about the T-Rex. It was large: 40 feet long, from nose to tail, and over 13 feet tall when stand-ing up. The size of the bones suggest that an average T-Rex weighed six to eight tons. Its feet were large—50 inches from ankle to claw tip— which suggests it ran quickly. It had 60 teeth; and some of these measure up to a foot in length, from root to crown. The teeth were serrated, which aided in tearing flesh from the bones of other animals.

**So, we know…or can be reasonably certain…about the size and shape of this creature. But beyond that, when experts try to “get inside” the T-Rex, opinions begin to differ.**

Conventional wisdom about dinosaurs has been that they had small brains. But some experts aren’t so sure. For one thing, “small” is a relative term. One popular description of the T-Rex’s brain is that it was about the size of a quart of milk; this sounds small, placed in an eight-ton body. But a brain that size actually matches the brain size of some modern animals that people consider intelligent.

Another more recent theory is that dinosaurs (all species, not just the T-Rex) may have gotten more efficient use out of their small brains. They may have had very keens senses of smell. For its part, the T-Rex had a large and sophisticated olfactory system. In fact, one of the paleontolo-gists who found the first complete T-Rex fossil set concluded: “This thing must have smelled its way through life.”

**Historical Cues from Dinosaurs**

All of this suggests an animal with the intelligence and senses of a modern dog—an animal many people consider relatively intelligent. (And whose sophisticated nonverbal communication I’ve mentioned before.)

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Then, there’s the matter of those serrated teeth. Obviously, they are well-suited for eating flesh. But some paleontologists have put forth the theory that T-Rex wasn’t a predator, as traditionally portrayed. They ar-gue that it was a scavenger, preferring to eat the flesh of animals that were already dead. They say that the keen smell wasn’t for stalking prey; it was for determining whether meat was fresh or rotten.

And, then, there’s another group of experts who argue that the T-Rex may not have had a keen sense of smell at all. This group says that the chambers in the T-Rex skull that others think were for olfactory nerves were actually a mechanism for regulating the body temperature of the giant animals. According to this theory, the chambers were a combination of a modern mammal’s sinuses and a car’s radiator. And, more impor-tantly, this would mean that dinosaurs weren’t cold-blooded.



**So, the physical evidence allows many different interpreta-tions. It’s like this with nonverbal communication, generally. Behavior often offers better nonverbal cues.**

The traditional interpretation of dinosaur behavior was that they were like lizards and other simple reptiles—creatures that lived solitary lives, driven by only the most basic impulses for food and comfort and unaware of fellow lizards or even their own offspring. But the behavioral evidence left behind by Cretaceous dinosaurs suggests something different. It sug-gests more social animals, like modern birds or fish.

The so-called “bone beds” of ceratopsian species (the best-known of which is the triceratops) suggest animals that lived in complex herds. If attacked, the herd could stampede or “circle the wagons” and fend off predators. In terms of animals living today, ceratopsians might be com-pared to elephants or rhinos.

There are other behavioral cues in the fossil record that suggest dino-saurs were more social than experts originally imaged. It’s true that most dinosaurs laid eggs from which their young hatched. But fossilized nests

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(found all over, but most notably in series of finds in China during the 1990s) suggests that mothers laying the eggs took care to arrange them efficiently, so that each would have an optimal chance to be protected and live to hatch.

The discovery of an intact dinosaur nest in Mongolia during the 1990s gave scientists a great opportunity to study the behavior of dinosaurs. As in the nest found earlier in China, the eggs were found in a nice round ring, resembling a circle. This indicated a nurturing, parental instinct for giving all the eggs equal attention.

But what was more important was the fossilized skeleton attached to the nest. It was mother—with her forelegs wrapped around the nest. This was a level of parental awareness beyond what most experts had ex-pected to find.

**The paleontologists that found Mongolian fossil named her “Big Mama;” and she is displayed in the New York City Museum of Natural History. This is a nonverbal cue that helps add to the general understanding of how these ancient animals lived.**

One of the most unusual discoveries by paleontologists was a dino-saur with feathers. The plumage appeared at the end of the tail. It was also discovered in China and estimated to be 120 million years ago. It added to the long held belief by many in the scientific community that birds are the direct descendants of dinosaurs.

It was about the size of a chicken, with a large head in proportion to its body. It had needle like teeth, two short forelegs, and a bony tail nearly double the length of the body. It was so well preserved that the soft tissue could be seen plus other body parts that did not fossilize. It also had tiny filaments bristling on the animal’s neck and the long hairlike fibers burrow-ing on its back and tail.

However, the earliest oldest finding of birdlike fossils was in Bavaria, where a workman discovered in an ancient lagoon the remains of a bird-

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like creature embedded in flagstone. It was about the size of a cow, with clawed fingers and long bony tail of a reptile, but with the wishbone of a bird. It was estimated to be 150 million years old and the experts agreed, although it appeared to be a bird, it couldn’t fly.

Since then, there have been others findings of similar fossils in Ba-varia and there is strong nonverbal evidence that points strongly in the direction that birds are indeed the descendants of dinosaurs. However, there still remain many dissenting voices among scientists who just as strongly believe that birds did not evolve from dinosaurs instead they think birds are related to them, like cousins.

**Historical Cues from Ancient Humans**

In addition to all of the nonverbal information we have learned about prehistoric creatures from their fossils, we also have gained much knowl-edge about prehistoric humans from rock paintings and carving. In the Libyan Saharan desert, scientists have found rock carvings of a giraffe six to seven feet tall, which they estimated to have been made more than 7,000 years old. At the same location, they also found rock carvings of cats fighting each other as in a ritual dance.

The rock-art people who lived in Africa and Europe carved animals that they hunted for food. Much of what they created has since been removed and sold in Europe. However, significant displays remain in place—largely in northern Africa.

**The oldest paintings found in South Africa are estimated to be 27,000 years old; however, some expert believe that there are sites in which the rock painting may be over 40,000 years old.**

The experts believe the materials used in rock painting consisted of minerals for red and yellow oxide, white clay and charcoal mixed with blood, fat or urine. Although the colors in these pictographs are thousands

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of years old they are still very vibrant. What these paintings and others nonverbally tell us is, although the artists may have been primitive in many aspects of their life, they were very professional in how they mixed their colors.



**This raises the question, again, of whether art qualifies as nonverbal communication. In my opinion, it certainly does. Music and fine art are the purest forms of nonverbal commu-nication.**

As a result of these paintings, we have nonverbal evidence concern-ing some areas that are now arid once had abundant water: Some areas of Africa that receives very little rainfall and are desert-like, once were lush with vegetation. The nonverbal evidence in rock carvings that date back 9,000 years also clearly display that crocodiles lived in the area. The carv-ings also reveal a deep spiritual nature of the people who lived in the area; there are stone carvings illustrating a sort of “out-of-body” travel that was part of their rituals.

Additionally, the rock carvings also reveal how those ancient cultures painted their body. And the amazing discovery is that the designs used by them are similar to the designs used today by tribes in the general area. Among the Surma people of Southern Ethiopia, there remains ritualistic body painting design almost identical to the rock carvings. And several tribes that live in what today is the country of Chad paint their bodies in the same manner to intimidate their enemies.

**The Challenge: Recognizing Nonverbal Cues**

There are artifacts worldwide that contain nonverbal messages. The problem is we don’t understand their meaning.

To use a metaphor, suppose you were to walk into an automobile junkyard and didn’t know what an automobile was, or what it was used

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for. That is a small example of what geologists, archaeologists, paleon-tologists, and others feel when they discover an ancient artifact or ruin left behind by some tribe or society.

One strange rock formation stands in the Tenere desert in Niger. It is a man-made circle of rocks measuring 60 feet in diameter and approxi-mately a mile away in each direction of the compass are man-made ar-rows pointing due North, South, East and West. The arrows are pointing away from the center of the circle of rocks.

Considering how much attention has been paid to similar rock for-mations in Peru—no to mention crop circles in northern Europe—and the possibility that these were constructed as landmarks for people who had flight technology, I don’t understand why so little attention had been given to the rocks in Niger.

**These formations continue to fascinate people precisely because they seem full of nonverbal cues. We just haven’t deciphered their meanings.**

Of course, some mysteries have practical explanations. For example: In the Death Valley desert in California, there had been a mystery of how large rocks seemed to move by themselves: This occurred on a sandy location that seldom received rain and on a dry lakebed of clay. Yet from time to time, one could see signs that rocks had moved from one spot to the other by the trail they left on the clay bed.

For years, the movement of the rocks perplexed geologists and local residents. Some looked for extraterrestrial answers; others thought some-one was playing games, trying to make locals worried about space aliens.

Then, a geologist from a local school came up with a simple and elegant explanation. During the winter, night temperatures in the desert can get very cold and daytime rains are more common. When that water comes, it collects in the usually dry lakebed and—at night—freezes. The desert winds (which blow stronger in the winter) send the ice sheets, with

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the rocks locked in, skimming over the shallow water. The effect is some-thing like a geologic sail boat.

Even with modest winds, the ice sheets can drag rocks weighing up to 700 pounds a distance of a thousand yards away. The person who came up with the answer said, “The rocks are passive passengers. They do whatever the ice does.”

**Cues from an Historical Anomaly**

A very early prehuman aquatic animal discovered in 1992 lived more than 365 million years ago and moved through muddy shallows in on four feet and lets its stone imprints in Ireland. The tracks and other fossil finds have force scientists to reconsider when and how life came developed on land. They believed it was an ancient “tetrapod,” the name used to de-scribe an animal with a backbone and four limbs.

Until 1992 no one had seen the fossilized footprints of these mysteri-ous animal that live more than 365 million years ago.

The absence of “tetrapod’ prints has long frustrated experts because in their opinion “tetrapods” made one of the greatest breakthroughs in the history of life on earth, one that made possible the evolution of humans. Some scientists believe this occurred when the first large animal was able to crawl out of the water where life first existed onto land where humans developed. This primitive creature left no bones, is estimated to have been more than three feet long and used its large back legs to move forward.

There is evidence that suggests the limbs evolved while “tetapods” were still living in the water. This evidence comes from a fossil discovered in the mountains of Greenland in 1987 by Jenny Clack, a paleontologist at Cambridge University’s Museum of Zoology.

**The fossil known as “Acanthostega” dates from 360 million years ago and she named it “Boris.” It had stumpy legs, a tail almost the length of its body, and short ribs emerging from its backbone like the tooth of a comb. “Boris” also had a snout-like long nose like a crocodile and jaw full of very sharp teeth.**

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Other “tetrapod” remains have emerged in recent years from Latvia and Australia. However, only one clear-cut candidate for a land dwelling “tetrapod” has emerged-a creature name “Hynerpeton” discovered in 1983 near a town in north-central Pennsylvania. The fossil had forelimb muscles attached to the shoulder and judging from the size of the muscles, it devel-oped robust forelimbs.

One scientist joking said, “it could have done push-ups in or out of the water.” The discovery was a great step towards understanding the evolution of humans.

**History’s Oldest Nonverbal Communicators**

The nonverbal history of humans begins with understanding the fossil discovery that was made by paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson in 1974 while walking the parched earth of Hadar, Ethiopia. He unearthed a set of fossilized bones of a complete hominid skeleton that he named “Lucy” after the popular Beatles song “Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds.”

Although the bones Donald Johanson discovered proved that “Lucy” walked upright, he was missing a skull that is the most revealing of all anatomical clues. And in his determined quest, 18 years later in 1992 he and his team found what they had been seeking.

**Lucy dates back more than three million years and is the oldest, most complete hominid fossil ever found. She stood a mere three and half feet tall, with a mixture of ape and human features. Her long arms dangled—apelike—by her sides. Yet her leg and pelvis showed that she walked upright on two legs.**

Lucy belongs to a species named *afarensis* by paleoanthropologists. *Afarensis* were principally vegetarians, although they would eat meat when-ever it was available. When they foraged as a group for food, they prob-ably communicated with hand and arm gestures and signals, plus pro-duced a series of different sounds from grunts to howls. Their nonverbal

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messages were the only means of communicating with other members of the group and vital for their survival.

It is interesting that paleoanthropologists for decades have studied the physical remains of our human ancestors and in that time have learned so much more about human origin. Despite all this knowledge, scientists seem to have uncovered very little on how early humans communicated besides the basic sounds they made—in the absence of a spoken lan-guage.

**During Lucy’s time, there must have been a regional or tribal communication system that was nonverbal. I believe they used sounds that represented objects and feelings; like a modern young man might whistle as a pretty girl walks by. And those sounds eventually became words. Thus, many years later, if there were groups of human scattered through-out the world making different sounds that represented the same thing, we have the early development of languages in which there are different words for a similar object.**



In addition to the discovery of Lucy, a two-million-year-old hominid skull was found in South Africa, the most complete skull every discov-ered. It was a species of *Australopithecus Robustus*, a large-jawed pro-tohuman that became extinct. At the site, the paleontologists found 80 specimens that were no larger than a modern chimpanzee—but these crea-tures lived successfully for more than one million years.

**Nonverbal Cues Among Proto-Americans**

Besides the discoveries that have been made in Africa, it is also inter-esting to see evidence of nonverbal communication in the migration of the earliest humans that settled in North America. For more than 60 years, it has been believed by paleontologists that the first people to populate North America came from Siberia (by way of a land bridge across what today is

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the Bering Sea) less than 12,000 years ago. They were called the Clovis people—named after a site in Clovis, New Mexico where scientists found fluted spears that subsequently became the signature mark of the tribe.

However, new evidence found in Monte Verde, Chile indicates that people lived there before the earliest Clovis settlement. So a quandary exists. How could this be possible? It defies all the prevailing scientific findings and beliefs. The discoveries in Chile are sound and valid consist-ing of stones that had been flaked for weapons and tools and carbon tested to be at least 33,000 years old, much older than any Clovis relics ever found.

In Chile, more than 6,000 years before the Inca Empire, an ancient culture began along the Pacific Coast of South America. Like the earlier Egyptians, they mummified their dead. The archaeologists who made the discovery named them *Chinchoro* and stated, “The mummies are archeo-logical wonders of mortuary studies anywhere in the world.” The earliest carbon aging on a mummy comes from 5500 B.C. Egyptians considered only royalty and rich citizens worthy of mummification; but the Chinchoro culture accorded the honor to everyone—even infants and fetuses.

**A 9,000 year old skull suggested America’s first known occupa-tional disease; auditory “exostosis,” a thickening of bone in the ear canal caused by repeated exposure to cold water, probably resulting from diving in the sea for shell fish.**

Over a period of several years a total of 149 mummies were found in burial sites along a narrow costal strip stretching from Southern Peru to Northern Chile. The reason why the Chinchoro culture has not been more publicized is because most archaeologists associate this part of South America as belonging to the Inca. However, the Chinchoro predate them.

A few years later, another discovery caused additional complication concerning the nonverbal history of human migration to North America. In 2000, paleontologists searching for clues on the first humans to settle

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on the continent discovered 4,000 year-old animal bones in a cave in Southeastern Alaska. This nonverbal evidence meant the ancient Ice People from Siberia migrated much earlier than what had previously been thought, and stayed there. And if they did, how did this finding impact on the Clovis tribes? To date, this remains a question unanswered.

Because of the archaeological findings of the evolution of humans and the migration of nomadic tribes, experts have uncovered nonverbal evidence of progressive sequential development of a human quest in forming tribes, tools, languages, cultures and advancing their understanding and awareness not only of the world they lived in, but also limited knowledge of the universe.

**More Cues from Early Cultures**

During the 19th and 20th Centuries, much was learned about ancient cultures primarily from the nonverbal interpretation of the discoveries made. For example, from relief drawings found in an Egyptian tomb, a team of archaeologists learned how to make bread as the Egyptians did during the old kingdom. It consisted of a wheat bread that was normally washed down with beer as part of the Egyptian diet.

The bread was made from an old grain called *emmer*, which the scientists were unable to locate in Egypt or Europe. Fortunately, they found it growing at a California farm where a farmer specializes in ancient and obscure grains. The next problem was acquiring yeast; Egyptians didn’t know anything about yeast, they assumed bread rose automatically.

So, the scientists collected free-floating native yeast spores and bac-teria by leaving the container with the wet flour outdoors. Within a week the dough was rising and, when it was ready, it was put into pots exactly as shown in the ancient relief drawing. In one hour and 40 minutes, they had baked the first loaf of Egyptian bread since the time of the Pharaohs. Perhaps that was the first nonverbal recipe ever used.

The historical knowledge we know about most ancient civilizations is based on nonverbal information put together like pieces of a puzzle.

One the best sources of information about life in ancient Rome was the discovery of Pompeii that was buried under tons on ash and rock

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when Mt. Vesuvius erupted. For 17 centuries afterward, the city lay un-disturbed until a few farmers started digging in the area and found the roofs of an entire ancient Roman community.

**It’s been said that the best way to understand a culture is to study its garbage. This is surely a form of nonverbal commu-nication. And digging through rubbish is what the first ar-chaeologists who found Pompeii had to do. One of the first findings was a pile of 1,917 old chicken bones in an area that they believed had been a cockfighting arena.**



Broken pottery gives archaeologists a great deal of nonverbal infor-mation about cultures. It helps them date everything in the excavation. Also, pollen and seeds are very helpful because it helps identify what people ate. Then minerals in paint and vegetable dyes in the clothing re-veal a great deal of the type of manufacturing and trade that was involved.

In Pompeii, a team from Japan studied what the traffic flow might have been and by examining the ruts left behind by the chariot wheels, they came to the conclusion that Romans in Pompeii had one-way streets and no-left turn intersections.

Another source of historical nonverbal information lies at the bottom of the Mediterranean, where the greatest concentration of sunken vessels can be found. The artifacts that have been recovered confirm the belief that there once existed a major trade sea route between Carthage and Rome during ancient times.

The ships carried trade between the two nations consisting of wine, olive oil, fish sauce plus many other goods. During a short period in 1988, five Roman ships dating from about 100 B.C. to 400 A.D. were discov-ered within a space of less than 60 miles.

Of special interest currently is the search being conducted in the Black Sea where the wooden wrecks of sunken ships may be well-preserved in the oxygen depleted deep sea that are hidden like time capsules of history.

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Some nonverbal discoveries have endorsed the written word. A dis-covery in Greece of a seventh-century B.C. amphora from Mykonos shows the earliest depiction of the wooden horse that defeated the Trojans, thus giving credibility to Homer’s *Iliad*. There is a site in Western Turkey on a hill called “Hisarlik,” believed to be where the battle was fought, there are scorch marks and signs of numerous sling pellets that were thrown on the walls that give archaeologists nonverbal signs of a war involving a large number of soldiers being fought in the area.

The discovery of Troy was made between 1870 and 1890 by Heinrich Schliemann, a businessman from Germany who believed in every word written by Homer. In the *Iliad*, Homer describes with detail a helmet Odysseus wears, a cap with “the shinning teeth of a white tusked boar.” Archaeologists have unearthed evidence of boar’s tusk helmets in several graves in the site. In addition, the discovery of gold convinced the experts of the wealth of Troy.

Today, the remains of the city still stand were Homer described them.

**Conclusion**

Just as individuals can use nonverbal communication—facial expres-sions, gestures and clothes—to convey information about themselves, ancient people can use nonverbal cues from their bodies and behaviors to tell us about themselves.

In fact, nature itself might use these cues to communicate its history, parameters and activities.

Before you dismiss these observations as too cosmic for practical use, try one thought experiment. If intelligent life has evolved on any of the millions of planets in our cosmos, it probably has vastly different mental abilities and sensitivities than we humans do. If we ever come in contact with these other intelligences, who will be communicate?

You can bet it will be nonverbally.

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**Dreams: Nonverbal Cues to Yourself**

Dreaming remains one of the most puzzling parts of conscious life. We dream nightly and often don’t understand the dreams. Many people err to one extreme or another about their dreams. They either become obsessed by the things or nervously dismiss any meaning in them.

Perhaps there is a very good reason for that type of attitude. During the day, most people are social, rational and logical in what we think and do. However, when we are asleep, we sink into a different level of con-sciousness and state of mind. We invent stories that never happened. At times we are the hero and sometimes the villain. We see beautiful scenes— and terrifying ones. But whatever dreams we have, we created them.

**The things we see in our dreams rarely are what they appear to be. A tall, thin person may dream that he’s short and fat while a short, fat person may dream of being tall and thin. The meaning of an object or person in a dream may represent different things to different people.**



Dreaming is both a physical and mental process. It is the method by which our brains organize and retain the experienced we’ve had and memo-

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ries we’ve made during the previous day. It’s a major reason that we— and all animals—need sleep. The conscious and subconscious parts of our minds do so much work while we’re awake that they need occasional downtime to process all of the images, ideas and stimuli.

Trying to unscramble the message of dreams can be very difficult. Sigmund Freud built his name on the effort; the ongoing challenge explains why there are so many psychologists, psychiatrists and others who make their livings helping sort the images out.

I prefer to think of dreams as a form of nonverbal communication that we have with ourselves.

Humans have been trying to interpret the meaning of their dreams since the earliest of times. A Chinese poet once expressed his feelings about dreams when he wrote, “I dreamt last night I was a butterfly and now I don’t know whether I am a man who dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly who dreamt he is a man.”

When we have a dream, each one of us is the architect, writer, fash-ion designer and creator. We write the entire script of the dream, and in some instances, take more than one role in the play. The material for our play is taken from our waking state and incorporated into the unconscious

**For most people, dreams are not wordy things—they are more like pantomimes, with a great deal of nonverbal information conveyed with few if any spoken words.**

Dreams are largely images. Most of the communication is through facial expressions, gestures, postures and sounds. And dreams don’t fol-lowing the laws of logic. People who are dead are alive; chronologies get scrambled; cause and effect get twisted up; it’s easy to be in two places at once and move from one place to another in a second.

In our dreams we sometimes recall individuals and places from the past that we have long ago forgotten and the people appear ageless.

Dreams are the realm of post-modern movies, impressionist paint-ings, surreal stories…and nonverbal communication.

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Although we all have different nightly dreams, the common feeling we share is that dreams are “weird” or “strange.” The obvious reason for this is because in the dream state we don’t have a discreet verbal means of communicating. And since we don’t understand the nonverbal signifi-cance on what is happening in our dreams, it becomes a very confusing experience. And then to complicate matters, when we try to remember what we dreamt, our memory is very hazy. All we recall is dreaming some-thing, but are not sure what it was all about.

**Different Types of Dreams**

One thing that seems constant in all our dreams is that we remember very little of the dream afterwards, when we wake up during the night or in the morning. This is why many psychoanalysts and other advisors suggest it’s a good idea to have a pen or pencil and a some paper next to your bed; when you wake up, you can jot down notes about what you have dreamed.

Psychiatrists and psychologists generally agree that there are four common types of dreams that most people have. Each has a particular set of nonverbal meanings. To simply slightly, the four common dreams are:

* falling,
* being chased by something or someone,
* appearing in public naked and
* being unprepared for a critical test or event.

The *Talmud* states, “Dreams which are not interpreted are like let-ters which have never been opened.” I would add that nonverbal cues which are unexamined are the same thing. And, like unopened letters or nonverbal cues, dreams need to be understood.

There are times when we are able to associate the meaning of a dream in the context of a fresh emotion or event that occurred during the day. In the clearest cases, these connections are so strong that the waking experience fits neatly into our dreaming unconscious mind while we sleep.

Other times, we’re unable to connect the dots because the dream reveals deeply repressed emotions or experiences that have been hidden

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for many years. Explaining these connections is the principal purpose of psychological analysis; analysis tries to make plain the deep-seated men-tal and emotional impressions a person may carries around for many years and which affect their behaviors, personalities and even dreams.

I believe strongly that training yourself to read nonverbal cues serves much the same purpose. If you can read the nonverbal communication of others, you apply the same skills to your own unconscious mind.

My aim in this chapter is to explain and illustrate something that I believe has largely been overlooked in the copious amount of material previously written on the subject of dreams: It is the importance of under-standing the nonverbal messages contained in dreams.

**Understanding the Meaning of Dreams**

Unraveling the symbolic meaning in a dream is in fact revealing the nonverbal messages. However, nonverbal information is communicated in many others ways besides symbols, signs and colors. If we are consciously aware of these other ways, perhaps when we are dreaming we might be able to use this awareness unconsciously.

In my executive seminars on nonverbal communication and the ne-gotiating process, I’m sometimes asked about the meaning of dreams a person had prior to an important meeting or negotiation. A question fre-quently asked concerns one of the common dreams: being chased by something or someone.

**From personal experience, I have discovered that in many business and personal situations individuals have failed to express their true feelings and emotions—perhaps for fear of censure, criticism or other negative response. Instead of ex-pressing those feelings plainly and releasing the connected anxieties, people let their unconscious minds shift their anxi-eties to their dreams.**



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Although I have many dreams, I no longer have such dreams of being chased by something or someone because I’ve learned that there is no crime to expressing how you feel. Moreover, if people disagree with what you think or say, more often than not, it benefits both sides of the argu-ment.

Should you ever have a dream in which you are being chased by an unknown other, you should try to yell at your chaser, “What do you want?” or “Who are you?” I can assure you that no one will show up or respond —and you will lose any fear you had once you confronted the dream of being chased.

**“Sleeping on It”**

Another interesting issue involving dreams is trying to incubate them by holding off from making a decision and “sleeping on it.” Before going to sleep, some people try to set up their dreams by thinking about a deci-sion they have to make.



**This may sound gimmicky; but I think there’s value in the exercise. In the standard negotiating seminar I conduct, I strongly urge practicing “delayed judgment” whenever pos-sible and incubating dreams for answers.**

The Japanese—who are very creative and like to produce new prod-ucts—have popularized something for those who would like to incubate their dreams. It consists of an electronic device that allows a person to display a scene or picture just before they go to sleep. And then they put on a headset and listen to music as they fall asleep set to dream what they have programmed.

The product will have to wait a few years in order to assess how well it works in trying to incubate dreams, but stay tuned for the results.

There are times when dreams are very creative and we are able to visualize new ideas, methods or ways of doing things, solving problems,

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etc. The concept of the sewing machine was seen in a dream by its inven-tor, as was the idea of the “weed eater.”

It has been written that Galileo had a dream in which he saw the earth revolving around the sun instead of the age-old belief of the sun revolving around earth. And Columbus supposedly dreamt the world was round and not flat, therefore he would be able to circumnavigate the earth with-out falling off—as some had believed he would.

**How Dreams Help with Daily Life**

Many creative ideas in dreams have assisted humans in dealing with life’s problems. As Macbeth exclaims, “sleep and dreams nourish life’s feast.”

Most people also have an occasional *precognitive* dream: A dream that tells us what will occur in the future. I once had such a precognitive dream: A reoccurring dream I had for a period of two years before I recognized its precognitive message.

The dream was very short and started a few months after I was discharged from the Army in 1948. It consisted of waking up in an Army barracks, looking up at the exposed wooden beam ceiling and wondering how I got there since in one part of my mind I knew I was a civilian and no longer in the Army. Whenever I had the dream and woke up, I was al-ways in a cold sweat.

After a year of having the same year several times a month, I became so familiar with it that after a while I no longer woke up in a cold sweat. However, there was always a slight apprehension when I woke up in the morning. I wondered if perhaps the dream might be sending a message about the future.

After I was discharged from the Army I joined the inactive reserves. Although I didn’t attend any meetings or participate in training exercises, I still knew there might be a military commitment in the event of a national emergency or if a war was declared—both of which seemed farfetched and something worth little concern.

And then, in the fall of 1950, the Korean War started while I was in college. I wondered how it might affect me. Two months later, I found out:

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I received a notice to report for a physical examination at a nearby Army base.

I reported for the exam; and I joined several dozen other men on a chartered bus to the far suburbs of Los Angeles. The physicals all went smoothly and the group was done several hours ahead of schedule.

After some phone calls, the drill instructor who was our guide that day told us that we could use an empty barracks nearby to relax or take a short nap. We all wandered over the building…and I was one of the sev-eral who shortly fell asleep.

**The next thing I remember was the drill instructor shouting at us that the bus had arrived. When I woke up, I saw the same wooden beams in the ceiling I had seen many times in my dream. My entire body was a mass of goose pimples.**

Three months later, I’d been called back into active duty and was in combat in Korea—serving in an artillery battalion. The reoccurring dream I had been having for a long time was a precognitive nonverbal message of what the future held for me. I simply didn’t recognize its meaning until reality had slapped me in the face.

Some will argue that there’s no such thing a precognition. These people will say that the mind—even the unconscious mind—can’t see the future. And that what seem like visions of the future are simply familiar images cast in details that follow our anxieties. Since our anxieties are often legiti-mate concerns about likely outcomes, there’s always a fair chance that they will come to pass. Then, what was in fact merely a rational prediction based on familiar issues seems to look like a premonition.

I believe the basic problem we have in understanding the significance of dreams is primarily due to unawareness. The reason for the unaware-ness is the manner in how we perceive the world. The major sources of knowledge for most people are family, friends, experiences we have and the education we receive.

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So, our perceptions are often more narrow than we imagine. Our worries and anxieties are based on familiar concerns. Our dreams end up being our unconscious mind’s attempt to organize our perceptions for stor-age in our memories. This process may result in our unconscious minds recognizing patterns in our daily lives and issues that we, in our conscious lives, may be too busy or too worried or too happy to recognize.

**Advanced Cultures Ignore Dreams**

The interesting cultural aspect of dreams is that the more modern and advanced a society is, the less important dreams are; whereas, in more primitive cultures, dreams play a major part in daily life.

I remember that, when I was young, if someone was called a “dreamer” the word usually carried negative meaning.

**During the course of my trips to Australia and conducting busi-ness seminars in that country, I have heard many amazing stories of how Australian aborigines communicate with each other over vast distances and through their “dream-state.” An Australian colleague once told me he believes “Aborigines don’t need tele-phones or the Internet to communicate with each other.” They can do it in their dreams.**

In order to understand the nonverbal messages dreams contain, it is important to understand symbolic language and to interpret it based on your own experiences. Erich Fromm’s *The Forgotten Language* is a good place to begin your quest for this knowledge.

Fromm writes that dreams have

*a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language that has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime a logic where time and space are not the ruling categories but inten-*

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*sity and association. It is the one universal language the hu-man race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. It is a language with its own grammar and syntax, as it were, a language one must understand if one is to understand the meaning of myths, fairy tales and dreams.*

The main difference between Freud and Fromm on their concept of dreams is that Fromm believed dreams were the result of mental activity while asleep. His version was based on the assumption that dreaming is an expression of the lowest or highest rational function of the mind.

Freud believed that dreams are always the expression of our irratio-nal personality.

**In order to understand Fromm’s version of dreams and symbolic language, we have grasp his concept of the two kinds of symbols, conventional and incidental. Both communicate nonverbal mes-sages.**

A *conventional symbol* would be a flag that may represent a nation, or a brand, logo, trademark, etc. An *incidental symbol* might be repre-sented by an experience.

For example, even though I’m a senior citizen, every time I eat a certain meal that my mother cooked for our family when I was very young, I think of her. Or when I smell a certain odor it brings back memories from long ago. We not only have conventional and incidental symbolic mes-sages we see when we are awake, but also while dreaming.

There is a certain dogmatism and rigidity that has resulted from sev-eral schools, each claiming to have the only true knowledge of dreams and symbolic language. And the other is considered only legitimate when used by a psychiatrist in the treatment of neurotic patients.

Erich Fromm believed that symbolic language was the one foreign language *everyone* should learn.

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The one thing all dream researchers agree on is that we do not dream anything that is meaningless, trifling or insignificant. The stuff of our dreams carries more meaningful baggage than we realize; this makes the dreams we have even more difficult to interpret.

We often believe what we remember of a dream is nonsense; but researchers insist that we don’t dream about nonsense. This confusion is complicated when we add the dimension of time and space in which the things we dream about are separated by many years. It is a situation in which the present meets the past and we’re caught in the middle.

**When we’re asleep, we are not interested in bending the outside world to our dream because we are totally helpless. Perhaps this is why dreaming has been referred to as “the brother of death.”**

Freud came to the conclusion that dreams where a form of hallucina-tion. There were the product of irrational wishes and sexual desires that originated during childhood. To Freud, symbolic language does not ex-press feelings and thoughts in any particular manner, instead it expresses only very primitive desires and uses symbols—sticks, umbrellas, boxes, etc.—for the male and female sex organs.

How simple the interpretation of dreams would be if we all followed such simplistic methods in which a certain symbols clearly represented something in every dream: But they do not. It is only when we start learn-ing how to sort out what the messages in each of our dreams might signify, make a note of them each time we dream and by doing so establish our own symbolic dictionary.

**Learning the Language of Dreams**

Understanding the nonverbal messages in dreams is possible—like learning another language.

It has been said when learning a second or third language, age is an important factor. And it is easier to learn additional languages when we

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are young rather than when we’re long in the tooth. However, the nonver-bal language in dreams is different than spoken languages, it does not require learning the correct pronunciation of words; instead it requires understanding a silent language that has no vocabulary.

This is a language we learned when we were infants but soon forgot when we started to verbalize our thoughts and feelings. Since we learned the language once before in our lives, the second time should be much easier.



**Instead of trying to remember all the specific information in a dream, just look at it as an overall picture or as something you have just experienced.**

I believe there is a spiritual source within us that is just waiting to be discovered—a source of inner wisdom, knowledge and spiritual aware-ness. It is a book that has been in front of us all our lives. And, once you open it, amazing things start to happen: the bits and pieces of the dream start falling into place like a jigsaw puzzle.

It’s important to write down the experiences we had or the pictures we saw in every dream.

The various parts of the dream start to make more sense than they would without a frame in which to put them. Even if you don’t have a vivid recall of the dream when you wake up in the morning, during the course of the day, specific events or people may trigger a more lucid recall.

These triggers are helped along if you make notes that help you es-tablish a framework for what the dream was about and any images you saw in it. Dreams often occur in serial form, like an episode unfolding on television. At other times, the same dream will reoccur at certain intervals.

**Understand the Dreamer, Too**

The famous mystic Edgar Cayce insisted one had to “interpret the dreamer” as well as the dream. He believed that trying to figure out the

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meaning of a dream without any real life context was foolish. And since we are the architect and designer of our dreams, it makes sense to me. Some dream analysts recommend checking your diet, physical exercises, schedule, problems at home, work or any other part of your life that might be stressful and creates difficulty in your life.

Understanding the nature of your dreams is solely up to you. There is an old Sufi expression that, “Only a fool takes the words of

another over his own experience.” And, since we are the ones who walk in our own shoes, we are best qualified to judge how well they fit and how comfortable they are.

**Conclusion**

To end this chapter on dreams and the nonverbal messages they con-tain, it is appropriate to cover some universally accepted symbolism on the meaning of dreams.

If there is *movement* in the dream to the right it represents logical reasoning, and if it is to the left, it suggests emotional and irrational behav-ior. When you are in a dark or darken environment it represents some-thing unconscious and areas in which there is sufficient light, it represents consciousness.

Some analysts believe that *colors* in dreams have symbolic meaning. Black represents guilt or deep emotions and white represents purity and spiritual feelings. Finally, the color green, like the Egyptians believed, rep-resents healing and the power of nature.

The *locations* of your dream also can communicate symbolic mes-sages. If the dream occurs in front of your house, it represents something in the future. If it occurs at the rear, it represents something in the past. Upward or elevation represents spiritual or intellectual matters, while down or downward movement represents physical or basic elements in your life. If it is in a desert it suggests there is something within us that we have not paid much attention to; if it’s on or near a shore, it represents deeper levels of soul and spirit.

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**Conclusion: Oddities and Ends**

**Conclusion**

**Oddities and Ends**

Nonverbal communication is not a mystical or magical thing. It is a natural—even rational—process by which people convey information by means other than words. As we’ve discussed in this book, these “other means” include everyday behaviors like posture, gestures and facial ex-pressions. In some cases, they can include less direct behaviors, like the way a person dresses or inadvertent behaviors.

Some people are more attuned to notice nonverbal communication than others. But don’t worry, if you are not someone who naturally picks up on nonverbal cues. You can teach yourself to recognize them. This book explains some ways that you can do that.

An added bonus: By training yourself to notice nonverbal cues in other people more effectively, you can also train yourself to manage the cues that you send.



**The great advantage in mastering nonverbal communication is that it makes a strong impression on people around you. By recognizing the cues, you seem attentive and perceptive...be-cause you *are* attentive and perceptive.**

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In my experience, all of this has very practical application. Specifi-cally, being keen about nonverbal cues gives you a great advantage in negotiating with other people. And, by negotiating, I mean formal busi-ness negotiations as well as informal personal negotiations—the kinds of dealings that all of us have everyday.

There’s a downside to working with nonverbal communication, though. A lot of people who purport to be experts in nonverbal communi-cation confuse it with various metaphysical and supernatural beliefs.

In this book, I’ve touched upon some of the supernatural elements that are sometimes associated with nonverbal communication—things like extrasensory perception, spiritualism and New Age philosophy. But I’ve done this, I hope, in a way that draws distinctions between the practical, real-world nonverbal cues and their other-worldly counterparts.

**Again, there’s no magic to nonverbal communication. Mastering it simply requires some learnable skills and perceptiveness…and maybe a little understanding of human psychology.**

Some people will argue that you can’t “master” nonverbal communi-cation; they will claim that it requires intuition or other innate skills.



**I believe that there is such a thing as intuition; but I also believe that it is a skill, like any other. It is the result of thou-sands of small experiences and observations that give you basis for understanding—and even anticipating—people’s responses.**

As I conclude this book, I think I should mention a few of the super-natural theories that nonverbal communication, in order to reiterate the differences.

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**ESP and Propinquity**

Extrasensory perception (ESP) is the mental power that some people believe exists which allows one person to read the thoughts of another without any communication—verbal or nonverbal.

Propinquity (which comes from the Latin preposition *propinquo*) is the mysterious chemistry that makes one person feel very comfortable with another.

Some people invest both words with a lot of mystical significance. I think that both exist in some manner (particularly propinquity); but they are more practical than mystical. What some people call ESP is re-ally just a person’s subconscious mind picking up on nonverbal cues that

his conscious mind hasn’t noticed.

**When we meet a person for the first time, there is a part of us that unconsciously goes through a nonverbal analysis of the individual and scrutinizes every aspect of them: The clothes they wear, how they move, smell, look, smile, etc. And based on the nonverbal information we receive in a matter of seconds, we make the un-conscious decision whether we like the new person or not.**

Whatever affinity we may develop for the person starts with the first time we meet them. Therefore, as the old expression states, it is best to put “your best foot forward when meeting people.”

When you first meet a person, the first two nonverbal signs you con-sciously notice are a handshake and a smile or slight grin. The type of handshake you receive may give you some immediate information. Was it limp? Was it firm? Was the palm sweaty?

As people are shaking hands, they look at each other—and the two places on the face most looked at are the eyes and mouth. There are some who truly believe that the “eyes are the window of the soul.” Unfor-tunately, there have been serial killers who have beautiful eyes. Perhaps that’s why they have no difficulty taking women to places where they later

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killed them. This is also true when a person laughs or smiles and displays a fine set of white teeth.

**Clear eyes and straight white teeth (along with tall stature) are traits that make humans attractive. These are facts that reach far back in our evolutional history.**

Beyond these basic guidelines, each of us has our own particular sense of what we find attractive in other people—either as friends or po-tential mates. What I stress, when it comes to questions of first impres-sions, is that the quick takes we make don’t happen because of some mystical or psychic forces. They happen because people send off hun-dreds of nonverbal cues in the first few minutes they meet. And our minds— whether consciously or not—pick up on many of these cues.

The challenge for the person who wants to master nonverbal com-munication is to pick up these cues *consciously*.

**Sympathetic Pains**

Another common belief that many people hold is that they have psy-chic connections to family or loved ones that allow them to feel pain when the other is hurting.



**There may be such a thing as sympathetic pain; but it’s not necessarily based on any psychic links. It can be more logi-cally explained as a result of nonverbal communication.**

A study published in the magazine *Science* concluded that the pain-sensing part of the human brain switches on when a person becomes aware

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**Conclusion: Oddities and Ends**

of another’s suffering. The study found that, the more you feel empathy for other person, the more strongly your brain senses the pain.

But, again, this connection doesn’t mean there some supernatural mind-reading going on. All it requires is that you notice—either consciously or subconsciously—the nonverbal cues a person close to you sends out that he or she is in pain.

The research merely reveals there is a nonverbal communication sys-tem in the brain that is a mimic to the internal “bodily states of others” according to Dr. Tanis Singer of University College London.

Singer’s study was conducted for purposes of exploring the neuro-logical secrets of empathy in humans. Sixteen married couples were se-lected and the wives were placed inside an MRI scanner. Before an elec-trical shock was applied to the women’s right hand, they were informed as to the severity of the pain that would follow. Afterwards, then the same procedure was followed with the women’s husbands.

**When each person was in the MRI scanner undergoing the painful experience, their respective mates were hooked up to electronic devices that scan the brain to see if there was any stimulation. The results recorded revealed many things—including that the wives had a more sensitive reaction that the husbands.**

Of course, this is not groundbreaking news. In the evolution and de-velopment of humans, females have displayed the strongest feelings of unselfishness, love, sympathy, compassion and empathy. Singer suggested, “Our ability to empathize has evolved for a system representing our own internal bodily state: Our human capacity to ‘tune in’ to others when ex-posed to their feelings may explain why we selfishly engage in human in-teraction and helpful behavior.”

The study also discovered the brain communicated the differences between those who were fair and those who displayed unfair tendencies. This was done when volunteers played the game “prisoner’s dilemma.”

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The game tests how two hypothetical prisoners cooperate with each other under certain circumstances. In the game, sometimes it is wise to cooper-ate, while at other times it is unwise to do so.

Using MRI scanning techniques, the research team discovered the brains of the volunteers displayed information in how each person re-sponded to certain elements of the game: Thus, the study revealed those who were acting purely for self-serving purposes, versus those that were more willing to cooperate or negotiate.

This information may finally shed some light on a subject many have wondered about for thousands of years: Why do humans and (certain) animals risk their lives to help others? Especially when we all have a “self-ish gene” that dictates our life is more important that other lives. The an-swer: Our ability to recognize nonverbal cues in others may be more keen that we consciously realize.

I sincerely hope that I’ve covered the major situations in which we need to become more aware of the silent messages that are constantly being transmitted. My hope is that—after reading this book—you see something of yourself in everyone you know or meet.

That’s the critical first step in mastering the power of nonverbal com-munication.

And, once you’ve mastered this power, you will see and hear things that other people miss. Some of those people may assume your powers of pereception and communication are other-worldly. They’re not. But they certainly can give you great advtanages in dealing with others.

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**Appendix**

**Tools for Managing**

**Nonverbal Communication**

Throughout this book, the author has made various suggestions and checklists to help readers master and manage nonverbal communication. In this appendix, these suggestions have been refined into checklists and bullet points, for easy review.

**Tips for Touching Other People**

Common sense should inform tactile contact that you make in public.

This means that you should:

* look before you touch—some people will signal their discomfort with any contact by crossing arms, crossing legs and buttoning or folding clothes when they meet you;
* keep it short—don’t cling, grasp or grope others;
* announce your presence by addressing a person as you approach him or her;
* keep any contact above the waist and outer shell of the body—hands, arms, shoulders and back;
* avoid touching someone’s face, head, chest or stomach;
* keep eye contact as much as possible when touching someone; and

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* maintain physical contact only long enough to give a quick nonverbal cue, then step back and let the person re-establish personal space.

You can use physical touch to convey important nonverbal cues: wel-coming, inclusion, sympathy, etc. You just want to make sure that you don’t surprise anyone in a bad way.

**A person who understands nonverbal communication can recognize the signs that someone is willing to lower ordinary inhibitions about physical contact. These signs can include open or upturned palms, a slow head tilt, a slight shrug of the shoulders, a raised eyebrow and eye contact with a smile.**

**Al Gore’s Nonverbal Miscues**

In the 2000 U.S. Presidential election, candidate Al Gore fumbled away a narrow lead in popular polls with various confusing nonverbal cues. Among these miscues:

* He followed the advice of one image consultant and wore casual, earth-tone clothes to convey confidence and strength. But this experi-ment clashed with his earlier image as a more formal politician—an image which Gore admitted was closer to his true personality. The brown outfits didn’t work.
* He made a point of kissing his wife passionately and lengthily after he accepted his party’s nomination. By all accounts, Gore and his wife share a close, passionate relationship (not as strained as some politi-cal marriages). But their kiss looked contrived to many of the voters who saw it.
* In one of his televised debates with George W. Bush, Gore approached Bush at several points in a manner that violated all of the common-

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sense guidelines for touch: he came unannounced, lingered too long and didn’t convey any message.

**Nonverbal Meanings of Fragrances**

People who work in the cosmetics and beauty supply industries work with fragrances everyday, developing perfumes for women and colognes (or, more recently, body sprays) for men. Most agree that the basic fra-grance compounds—and there aren’t as many as you might think—that make up perfumes and colognes do convey rather consistent personality traits. Here is a brief, simple description of these:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Traits** |  |  | **Fragrances that convey them** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **intelligence,** | |  | **cedar, juniper, orange, lime,** | |
| **alertness** | | **rosemary, cinnamon, peppermint** | | |
| **kindness,** | |  | **chamomile, vanilla, jasmine,** | |
| **calm** | |  | **clary sage, lemongrass** | |
| **humor,** | |  | **pepper, marjoram, basil, mint,** | |
| **playfulness** | | **juniper, tangerine** | | |
| **safety,** | |  | **chamomile, orange, jasmine,** | |
| **reliability** | |  | **sandalwood, frankincense** | |

I’ve left out the more florid traits—things like mystery, sexuality and complexity—that actually make up the bulk of the meanings that perfumes try to convey. Instead, I’m trying to focus on those traits that you might want to convey in the workplace or a business environment.

**Responding to Sounds and Noises**

A person who masters nonverbal communication doesn’t rush to re-spond to distracting sounds and noises. Instead, keep these points in mind:

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* Don’t rush to judgment or reaction to a noise you hear. Listen care-fully and investigate before you draw any conclusions about what you’ve heard.
* Try to identify the person or thing making noise. Often, this is biggest part of responding appropriately. The bloodcurdling scream that you heard outside could be two eight-year-olds having fun.
* Assess the environment around you and the noise—the temperature, location, time. Consider the normal sounds in this environment.
* Check your emotions, as much as possible. Many people have trigger noises, which cause extreme emotional reactions in them. If the sound of a baby crying or the screech of a car’s brakes upsets you, realize this and try to curb your emotions until you know more.

**Using Silence as a Tool**

It is wise to remember that silence can convey confidence, honesty, forthrightness, strength, loyalty and dedication; but it can also convey in-decision, lack of interest or ignorance. Which traits it signals may be de-termined by other nonverbal cues—such as facial expressions, gestures and posture.

If you’re going to use silence as a nonverbal cue, make sure that you stand tall. Literally. And don’t frown or wince. If you appear steady and determined, your silence will be interpreted as strength.

**Where to Look for Facial Cues**

Experts in nonverbal communication pay particular attention to move-ments in the following parts of the human face:

* chin boss: the skin covering the bone of the chin
* eye aperture: the degree to which the eye is open; the eye opening
* eye cover fold: the skin between the eyebrows and the palprebral part of the upper eyelid, which folds into the eye socket

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* glabella: the area of the forehead between the eyebrows
* infraorbital furrow: a place where a line or wrinkle may appear paral-lel to and below the lower eyelid running from near the inner corner of the eye and following the cheek bone laterally
* lower eyelid furrow: a place below the lower eyelid where a line or wrinkle may appear. A line or wrinkle may be permanently etched into the face; if so, it will deepen with certain activity
* nasolabial furrow: a place where a line or wrinkle may appear which begins adjacent to the nostril wings and runs down and outwards be-yond the lip corners
* nostril wings: the fleshy skin of the side of the nose that forms the outside of each nostril
* philtrum: the vertical depression in the center of the upper lip directly under the tip of the nose
* root of nose: the beginning of the nose between the eyes (also called the nasal root)
* sclera: the white part of the eyeball

**Common Facial “Tells”**

* Follow the eyes. People’s eyes travel to good news and flee from bad news. People usually can’t help but stare at good news; they literally turn away from bad news. If you follow their eyes, you can sometimes see what people think are their strongest tools.
* Look for darting eyes, which mean anxiety. People usually get anx-ious when they are confronted or expect confrontation. As I’ve men-tioned before, psychologists call this the “fight or flight” response. Someone who won’t challenge you looks calm; the one who might fight looks nervous.
* Look for blinks. People blink more often when they are excited than when they are calm. (This is the main reason that professional poker

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players wear sunglasses when they play.) But remember that the blinking doesn’t mean nervousness or anxiety—it just as often means happi-ness and positive excitement.

* Look for facial touches. If a person touches any part of his face, he’s nervous about something. This goes for rubbing his forehead or eyes, touching his chin, biting his fingernail our touching his nose.
* Look for blushes. No other part of the body reacts more dramatically to a flow of blood than the face. Simply said, when a person is ner-vous or embarrassed, he will blush. Some simply blush more notice-ably than others. However strong or weakly a person blushes, the meaning is the same: He’s anxious about something
* Watch changes in posture. Some people are so unaware of their pos-ture that they let it betray their thoughts. Their shoulders drop or slump when they are not confident; conversely, the same person may be-come attentive and sit in an erect position when thinks he’s strong.
* Watch for inversion. You may also notice that a person who’s bluffing or exaggerating his position will lean forward in a confrontational way. This posture is part of the bluff—strong is weak; weak is strong.
* Don’t read too much into a single expression. By itself, a twitchy eye or a flared nostril may not mean anything. And, sometimes, it’s an act designed as part of a bluff. What you should be looking for is patterns of expression or behavior; these are the best indicators.

**Body English in a Business Meeting**

* When they’re ready to compromise or disclose information, people often move the upper torso towards the center of the table. At times, they even move the chair they are sitting in forward.
* If they had previously been sitting towards the back of the chair, their upper torso will move forward and place the hands on the table.
* Seasoned negotiators sometimes blur these easy distinctions. They might alternate between the torso postures…or even use one posture

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when their words suggested the opposite attitude.

* If a person was about to make a sincere disclosure, both hands were usually on the table and the speaker would gesture with them when he spoke. While those who were not going to make disclosures usually kept the hands hidden under the table or close to their body.
* Another important nonverbal observation we discovered was the sig-nificance of “locked ankles.” Individuals who are not revealing infor-mation often lock their ankles and, when they allow the emotions to flow, they unlock their ankles.

**Signs of Confidence**

* It is common to see a person using a steepling gesture (hands to-gether, fingers interlocked, index fingers raised and touching at the tip) when speaking comfortably about a subject she knows very well. Politicians, teachers, professors, accountants and attorneys are very fond of using the gesture when they speak.
* The steepling gesture can also communicate a change in feelings and attitude. A confident person may speak with the fingers joined in a steepling position, elbows resting on a table and arms and hands away from the head and body. Then, as his confidence level decreases, the fingers remain joined in the steepling position—but the hands, instead of staying away from the face, are brought to the mouth.
* People who are confident seldom bring their hands or fingers to their lips. Confident people may do nothing with their hands—just leaving them at their sides or folded in their laps. But, in most cases, even confident people like to find some activity for their hands.
* Sometimes, business people hook their thumbs in the vest of their suit to reflect their confidence. Or they may hold the lapels of their suit with both hands in what I call “the Churchill gesture.” (Winston Churchill was fond of that particular gesture whenever he appeared in public.)
* More recently, a new gesture of confidence has come into mainstream

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culture: the head sway. People who believe they’re in the right—es-pecially in a public forum or confrontation—will sway their heads from left to right or in a shallow circular motion.

**Matching Verbal and Nonverbal Messages**

Some people are good at matching verbal and nonverbal messages.

They’ve usually mastered most of the following points:

* Understand what your audience expects to hear—and whether your words are going to agree with those expectations or disagree with them.
* Don’t worry about words themselves. Focus on how a conversation, speech or exchange will end. Many people send mixed signals be-cause they haven’t considered how they want an exchange to end.
* Realize that a single conversation or exchange rarely defines a busi-ness or other relationship. If you establish or maintain a good connec-tion with someone, you can always resolve a bad exchange later.
* Strong eye contact goes a long way in making any message under-standable; conversely, weak eye contact can muddy an otherwise clear message.
* Be aware of your posture and gestures and try to match them to your message. If you’re there to be aggressive, stand aggressively. If you’re there to be conciliatory, lean back and keep the palms of your hands as open as possible.
* Modulate your voice to the content of your message. Many people speak in the voice—either loud or soft, fast or slow—that’s comfort-able to them. People who’ve mastered nonverbal communication think about the person with whom they’re communicating and pick the voice that will make sense to that person.

**W. Bush’s Speaking Tips**

George W. Bush is, even by his own admission, a poor public speaker.

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Yet he is very good at conveying a sense of “regular guy” common sense that many voters find trustworthy. How does a relatively inarticulate man convey a sense of trustworthiness? He follows a few basic guidelines:

* Make steady eye contact—with people in a live audience or with the camera on video (some television experts advise people not to look straight into the camera; this is bad advice).
* Wherever you make eye contact, keep it there. If your eyes dart around the room, you will seen shifty to the audience.
* Don’t move your head too much. Even carefully planned gestures with the neck and head can look jerky and sudden to audiences. Sud-denness (in verbal or nonverbal communication) confuses listeners.
* More specifically, avoid looking down (at the floor) or up (at the ceil-ing or lights). The first strikes most people as dishonest; the second strikes most as unprepared.
* Don’t smile too much. Keep smiles for the first few seconds of a statement and to emphasize particular jokes or comments. Smiling constantly will seem artificial and dishonest.
* Use open gestures. When possible, keep your hands open and visible to your audience. When a speakers’ hands are visible, audiences tend to trust him more.
* Don’t rush. Using silence—at least occasionally—doesn’t make you seem unprepared as much as staring at the ceiling does. Audiences tend to interpret a moment or two of silence as thoughtfulness.
* Don’t touch your face while you’re talking. This may seem like a quibble, but the gesture is a sign of doubt—especially among smart crowds.

**Quick Tips that Interrogators Use**

Interrogators often simplify their jobs by looking for quick and simple cues that suggest verbal/nonverbal incongruence in the people they inter-view. These cues include:

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* Saying yes while you shake your head no.
* Saying that you’re not in a rush while you look at a clock.
* Saying you don’t mind being interviewed while frowning.
* Saying you’re not upset while speaking in one-word grunts.

**Cues from Ancient History to Present Day**

Paintings, reliefs and statues that come to us from ancient times in-volve many gestures that we would recognize on the streets of New York today:

* an open hand means honesty and welcoming,
* a closed fist means violence or confrontation,
* a smile conveys happiness and satisfaction,
* figures in power tend to stand straight and hold their heads high,
* figures in deference tend to bow their heads,
* sex appeal and sexual relations are critical concerns,
* figures in power dress noticeably,
* eye contact and vision are essential signs of strength.

These are the basic tenets of nonverbal communication.

**Obscene and Confrontational Gestures**

The oldest obscene gesture that is still used in some cultures today, especially in China, is the *fica* sign. It is given when the thumb is placed between the index and middle fingers and the hand is cupped slightly. Some psychoanalysts believe that when a patient is undergoing analysis, a *fica* gesture indicates inner conflict.

There are various gestures that send a threatening message, such as:

* thrusting the forefinger at someone and using as if it were a dagger,

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* fist-like gestures waved in air,
* flipping an extended thumb out from the chin or front teeth,
* using the index finger in a throat slitting sign,
* grabbing the crotch,
* closing the hand and jerking the forearm upward while the other hand is holding on to the inside of the elbow.

**Nonverbal Cues from Colors**

* The color black has historically been a color that communicates nega-tive images about things, people and feelings.
* In most cultures, white communicates purity, innocence, chastity, spiri-tuality, goodness, etc. However, besides these sublime human quali-ties, the color white also has connotations of a much less saintly im-age.
* Blue symbolizes calm water, quiet temperament, femininity, and illu-mination to the written word. New age color specialists say it indi-cates sweetness, emotional contentment and resolve. However, other shades of blue are different.
* Dark blue is especially favored by overweight people trying to lose weight. It often represents contentment and fulfillment. In some cul-tures, dark blue also conveys notions of truth and trust, love and dedi-cation, surrender and devotion.
* Color experts say that yellow is often the opposite of blue—in terms of the messages they convey. To Asian spiritualists, yellow often means the search for a way out of difficulties, the lack of emotional fulfillment that situations demand and a restless search for some solution.
* To those experts, green conveys pride and strength. Alternative health experts will argue that green rooms can alleviate the pain of gastric ulcers and digestive upsets—especially when associated with worry over possible loss of personal failures and finances.

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* For many color experts, the color red signifies an urge to achieve results, to win and a great desire for success. Red is impulse and all forms of vitality and power from sexual potency to revolutionary trans-formation. It is the impulse towards active sports, struggle, competi-tion and enterprising productivity.
* Red is the “impact of will” or “force of will” as distinct from the green “elasticity of will.”

**Suspicious Nonverbal Cues**

In a 2004 pamphlet entitled *Preventing Terrorist Attack: How You* *Can Help*, the U.S. FBI outlines what to look for:

* Surveillance: Are you aware of anyone video recording or monitoring activities, taking notes, using cameras, maps, binoculars, etc.?
* Security Tests: Are you aware of attempts to penetrate or test physi-cal security or procedures?
* Acquiring Supplies: Are you aware of anyone attempting improperly to acquire explosives, weapons, ammunition, dangerous chemicals, uniforms, badges, flight manuals, access cards or ID for a key facility/ event or to legally obtain items under suspicious circumstances?
* Suspicious Person: Are you aware of anyone who does not appear to belong in the workplace, neighborhood, business or near a key event/ facility?
* Dry Runs: Have you observed any behavior that appears to be pre-

paring for a terrorist act: mapping out routes, playing out scenarios, timing traffic lights or flow?

* Deploying Assets: Have you observed abandoned vehicles, stockpil-ing of suspicious materials or persons being deployed near a key fa-cility/event?

To these suspicious behaviors, I would add the following gestures, which are common nonverbal cues of nervousness or anxiety:

* inappropriate, excessive or oddly-timed laughter;

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* frequent touching of a person’s hands to his or her face and head, including rubbing eyes, chin scratching, adjusting hair, etc.;
* the inability to keep hands still while sitting;
* shifting weight from leg to leg or walking in place while standing; and
* the ability to hold your gaze, once noticed.

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