

# Behavior Dynamics Journal

A bi-monthly publication focusing on the Operational Application of Behavior



## Behavior and appearance cues/irregularities

Some individuals can try and control their body language and still present a demeanor that can be “read” by a behavior specialist. Again, the caveat is that any nonverbal cues need to be evaluated in clusters and in context with the situation they are being evaluated in and with an individual’s personal baseline. Knowing an individual’s baseline will enable one to determine whether or not the cues observed were caused by a question asked. That is why it’s so important that some type of baseline rapport is established with friendly, non-threatening and non-intrusive conversation when initially engaging anomalous behavior absent an immediate threat.

The following is a list of appearance irregularities that should draw attention and scrutiny from a behavior detection officer or professional in a transportation security environment.

- **Clothing:** Having clothing bulges or unusual or unnatural clothing that doesn’t match the weather or the current environment
- **Exaggeration:** Anyone trying not to appear suspicious (i.e., exaggerated yawning, verbally overstating facts or pointing out the obvious)
- **Demeanor of “no worries”:** Whistling and going out of your way to appear and behave “normally” to draw away any attention
- **Noise:** Coughing or fidgeting excessively that causes noises and distractions
- **Focus and nervousness:** Inappropriate focus on wallet, change, cell phone, newspaper or other items in their possession, continually referring to passport/tickets or excessive staring and appears to be anxious or hurried

## Clustering, analysis and resolution

Once again, making an accurate assessment and analysis with nonverbal cues involves observing for clusters of indicators. The more indicators, the better the assessment. The above are common examples of nonverbal cues and their potential meaning. They must, however, be evaluated in context. Meaning they have to be evaluated in conjunction with the individual’s baseline. Is this part of their normal demeanor when not in a stressful situation? What caused this change? What precipitated the nonverbal cue? A question? A security engagement? K9 going by? Also, culture plays a big role when evaluating and assessing nonverbal cues, as discussed earlier on. Knowing an individual’s cultural background can also keep you from making an inaccurate assessment. Using nonverbal behavior as a security tool in the protection of critical infrastructure and transportation venues can be an extremely effective method of securing our critical infrastructure and transportation industries. Understanding and decoding nonverbal cues, allows you to make better assessments of situations at hand. It also helps you in confirming and dispelling your initial observations and concerns.

Nonverbal cues can gather useful intelligence and may thwart a potential criminal or terrorist attack. Nonverbal behavior is an outward expression of inner feelings. It is also a manifestation of a state of mind or intention to act.

Nonverbal behavior, in the context of a security tool, may signal preoperational surveillance and activity that may precede a terrorist/criminal attack. Observation of these behaviors and their contradictions to the expected norm for those environments can be a useful and effective tool in pre-empting and identifying possible terrorist/criminal activity before it strikes. It also can be a useful tool in gathering intelligence. It’s really a matter of training police and security officials to actually “look” for things. As the Yankee Great Yogi Berra once said, “You can observe a lot by watching”.