

What Are You Really Saying?

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COM125: Interpersonal Communication

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Abstract

Overview

As we discovered in Module 2, conflict is everywhere and can definitely impact our relationships. Even when we are in agreement with what we say, our nonverbal communication might be giving us away.

In the Module 4 movie clip titled “This Is 40”, which appears immediately below the topic titled “**The Theme**”, we observe a couple who appear to be agreeing on some goals for the future, but their body language may be telling us something that their words are not. In addition to analyzing the movie clip, consider how nonverbal communication affects one or more of your significant relationships. View the other video clips as well.

You should spend approximately 6.5 hours on this assignment.

What Are You Really Saying?

How We Utilize Verbal vs. Non-Verbal Communication

Verbal and nonverbal communication may be used in different scenarios when required, but *frac910* times, one cannot be occurring without the other right along side it (*Communication in the Real World*, 2013, pp. 150).

The Most Common Facial Expressions and Gestures

There are 42 muscles in an adult human's face, and any combination of the way they move can yield a different facial expression. To keep the list short, we will instead discuss what goes *into* creating a facial expression. More prevalent with the current 2020 pandemic, eyebrow position is an incredible indicator at a persons emotion as well as the eyes themselves. Avoiding eye with tears welling up means something entirely different (sadness, disappointment) than tears welling up with eyebrows aggravated and a finger waging at someone (Cohn et al., 2007, pp. 207). Even across different cultures in other countries, the response to the same situation can elicit differing facial expressions! For example, in Japan when annoyed many people will simply smile and endure any sort of conversation to show their strength and fortitude versus that of the Western countries where disgust is almost always painted on one's face when they are experiencing it based on another individual's story (Safdar et al., 2009, pp. 2).

Non-Verbal Communication's Effect on the Conversation

In personal relationships, body language is a real expression of what someone may be afraid to say out loud. Again, this author would prefer to not delve too deep into "significant relationships" (assuming that is to mean *the relationships between you and your significant other*), as these details are a bit of a sore spot at present time. Instead, we will focus on other relationships which hold just as much appearance in our day to day lives as our significant others do: our coworkers and peers.

In recent times, the inherent fact that we are all required to wear a facial covering/face mask in public when outside of our own homes has lent itself to an astonishing development in

how we communicate non-verbally with one-another. Because the mask **is supposed** to cover both our nose and our mouth, the usual cues many people look for are now no longer apparent (such as smiling, lip curling, pouting, et cetera). Instead, we now focus a lot of our emotion through the use of our eyes (or perhaps we always did — only now it is all we can see).

The face alone tells many things about a person's true emotions they are harboring when talking to another person, and are *notoriously* difficult to manipulate at one's own will. Even organizations such as the United States of America's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) utilizes a quantitative system for distinguishing another individual's, be it peer, person of interest, or suspect, "true" intentions by assigning numerical values to predefined movements of the facial muscles as well as a letter grade to signify its intensity, yielding a rudimentary understanding of what someone is conveying through their body language which may match or contrast the words spoken by them directly (Cohn et al., [2007](#), pp. 209).

Pete and Debbie

How Does Body Language Changes Throughout the Conversation

When the scene begins we can notice how Debbie's body language is very explanatory and, as someone would say, inviting. She is being very animate by talking with her hands and attempting to explain her side of the argument in detail while looking directly at Pete to ensure that he is taking in all of the information that is being given (Apatow, [2012](#)). Pete is obviously more reserved in the beginning, which is a sign that he either does not want to be *having* this conversation at all, or rather that he just simply does not like where he believes the conclusion is heading.

As the scene of the movie progresses, we can see a small shift in the body language being expressed by both individuals in the conversation. Pete begins to show a more "stand-offish" front (crossing his arms, pacing around the room, avoiding eye contact, licking his lips). Debbie, on the other hand, went from the animate amazing speaker we initially say shift into more of an annoyed demeanor (shoulder shrugging at his replies, audible sighing, staying incredibly stationary in her seat) (Apatow, [2012](#)).

Applying the “Triangle of Meaning” To Their Conversation

The Triangle of Meaning is an illustration of how our perception of a specific idea may differ from what others believe about the same symbol. When the two may have been discussing their future and what could be the “next step” in their relationship, it appears that their individual definitions of settling down together may have differed from what they had hoped and believed that the other felt as well.

Determining How Information is Conveyed within the Scene

Because TV and movies are a *visual* medium, I believe that the writers and directors of this program were intending to make the audience feel the full **weight** of these harder to hear conversations by utilizing body language. This also provides a more relatable feeling for the viewer, as in many of our own personal relationships we have topics we feel strongly about yet are afraid to speak about out loud. Our bodies clearly do not like us hiding anything as it expresses our true emotions visually for anyone to be able to pick up on!

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