

**M4D2: Improving YOUR Interpersonal Communication Skills**

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COM125: Interpersonal Communication

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## **Abstract**

### **Overview**

In Module 1 you committed to becoming a better interpersonal communicator by focusing on improving two interpersonal communication skills. In each subsequent module, we are checking in to see how those efforts are proceeding based on your practice sessions. In this module, you will report on how your practice has progressed so far.

You should spend approximately 4 hours on this assignment.

**M4D2: Improving YOUR Interpersonal Communication Skills****Instructions**

Take a few moments to reflect upon your nonverbal communication skills. In your Main post, reply to the following questions:

1. Do your non-verbals give too much away when communicating?
  - Is this an area you need to work on? Why or why not?
2. As we saw in the movie clip appearing within the topic titled, “The Theme”, Pete and Debbie may be saying one thing, but their body language is telling a different story. Tell us about a time when you had a similar experience.

### Initial Post

This past week was actually difficult for me to attempt at practicing many interpersonal communication skills, as I was on “vacation” in Los Angeles, California visiting my Mom, Dad, and Brother for the Thanksgiving Holiday. While in LA, a *LOCKDOWN* order was in effect causing me to be unable to socialize or experience much of LA outside of my parent’s house and food delivery and limited pick-up.

In a way, the fact that everyone is wearing masks in public is sort of making nonverbal interpersonal communication skills more relevant than ever. I have never seen (or maybe I just did not notice prior to the pandemic) the level of expression people are able to convey with just the way they position their eyes and express other body language, especially without the ability to rely on noticing how someone positions their lips (smiling, frowning, afraid, shock, et cetera). Through just someone’s eyes it is easier for us to understand if and be empathetic towards their emotion be it happiness, sadness, or disgust, and exhaustion.

Many intelligence agencies use something called the *Facial Action Coding System* in order to have agents act as rudimentary “human lie-detectors”. The system, at its basic idea, assigns certain values to different movements of facial muscles to be assigned when observing someone else. There are over around 46 basic “action units” (movements of the facial muscles) which are then assigned a letter value to illustrate their intensity — clearly, a lot can be told from just “simply” reading someone’s face (Cohn et al., [2007](#), pp. 207–209).

## Responses

### Response 1

[ . . . ]

I, personally, don't think my non-verbals give too much away when I am communicating. I am pretty good at keeping myself in check with my body language, and displaying that I am engaged in the conversation. I will say though, that a lot of the time when I am conversing with others, I tend to cross my arms. This is not because I am annoyed or disinterested, it is just a comfortable position for me, and one I resort to. However, this could be received negatively by the person I am having a conversation with, and make me come across as rude. I could definitely work on this more, so my non-verbals don't say one thing, when I am actually feeling the opposite. One example of this was when I was speaking with my friend, I crossed my arms, but soon after I noticed a shift in his attitude. I realized that he probably got the impression that I was annoyed, angry, not interested in the conversation, or somewhere in between. I immediately changed my body language to show that I was in fact engrossed in the conversation.

**This is a response to Kristyna Sekera on Post ID 43560713.** Lovely and excellently thorough post, Kristyna! My attention was caught by where you began to talk about how you try to keep your body language in check in order not to give yourself away too much during informal and casual conversation. I feel that those individuals with perhaps a lot of experience in dealing with people and reading body language would be able to detect when someone else is attempting to consciously adjust their own body language. Would you say that you have notice this in anyone else? When I have spoken to someone about a situation in which they may have done something wrong or are trying to hide something, what that person may feel is a "calm collected exterior" could come off to the other person as anxious or ansy. Though there are many people I have interacted with that are just as **stoic** as the day is long!

**Response 2**

I am working on nonverbal communication and confidence. Since last module, I actually worked on my two skills three times yesterday (11/23/2020). I worked on these skills at work with some success and failure. I was able to exhibit nonverbal communication when communicating at work; I just focused on my body language and speed of talking as well as tone of voice. However, confidence was something I struggled with even though I told myself positive statements and focused on body language to improve my confidence. I don't have a huge success story, but something happened that did not go well while working on these skills. I had to deliver some negative news to a parent, and ended feeling super insecure and not confident at all. I think this contributed to their negative response.

I think people misinterpret my non-verbals quite frequently when I am communicating. So I can't really say if they always do or don't give away too much, it kind of just depends on the situation and the person. This is an area I need to work on since my non-verbal signals do not always match how I am feeling, or they exaggerate how I am really feeling. A time body language was telling a different story, was when I was working with a client. I asked the client if they were feeling okay, and they said yes. However, their tone of voice sounded sad, their shoulders were slumped, their head was down, and they didn't want to really talk to me.

**This is a response to Ashley Nefflen on Post ID 43557683.** I, too, am working on confidence! I wish you the best of luck because it is not all that easy to put yourself out there without knowing the outcome of how others will view you afterwards!

I wanted to ask about the situational differences you noticed in other's understanding of your nonverbal communication. You said it depended on the situation, but I was wondering: does it depend more on the situation or the status of the relationship between the other person and oneself? I had known people in the past where no matter the situation, even after repeat occurrences, could simply *not* get nonverbal communication cues I gave off! Is this similar in your experience, or are the same people more understanding of your nonverbal

communication cues in differing scenarios?

### References

Cohn, J. F., Ambadar, Z., & Ekman, P. (2007). Observer-based measurement of facial expression with the facial action coding system, 19. Retrieved November 28, 2020, from <https://www.pitt.edu/~jeffcohn/biblio/Coan%20013%20chap13.pdf>