

Recognizing and Shaping Nonverbal Behaviors

Approximately 93% of the emotional impact of a message comes from nonverbal cues. Nonverbal behaviors are expressed by both the speaker and by the listener. Nonverbal communication can even be conveyed during periods of silence during an interpersonal exchange. Enhancing your ability to recognize and adapt to nonverbal behaviors will increase your ability to communicate effectively with others.

Nonverbal Communication: What to Look For

Facial Expressions & Eye Contact	Genuine facial expressions, typically, last only 5 seconds or less. During this brief exchange look for the degree to which eye contact is being made. If eye contact is being made, is it too extreme or just right? What is the receiver's face showing? Are they smiling, frowning, or looking at the floor?
Tone of Voice	Consider the speaker's tone of voice by paying attention to the tone, rate, pitch, sarcasm, pauses, and volume. Does their voice project compassion, self-confidence, and attentiveness, or is it tense and disinterested?
Body Posture	To what extent is the person's body language relaxed or tense? Are they leaning forward or backwards? Are their arms crossed? Are they facing you directly or at an angle?
Physical Contact	Physical Contact plays an important role in how we communicate with others. Touch can be functional and professional (taking one's blood pressure), social and polite (handshake) a sign of friendship (a hug) or romantic attraction. When physical contact is present, ask yourself is it appropriate to the situation? How does it make you feel?
Timing & Intensity	The timing of communication can also convey a message. Look for, the flow of information back and forth? Do nonverbal responses come naturally, quickly, slowly? Does the intensity of the other's communication behaviors seem active, relaxed, calm, disinterested, or extreme?
Trust Your Instincts	Notice your "gut feelings" during an interpersonal exchange. If you get the sense that someone is feeling uncomfortable, you might be right. This could cue you to check in verbally with the person to reduce the chances that a miscommunication will occur.
Consistency Between Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors	Nonverbal communication should match and compliment what is being communicated verbally. Notice if the person is saying one thing verbally while indicating something different nonverbally. For example, someone who says they are feeling "sad" while smiling.

**Pay Attention to
Multiple
Nonverbal Cues**

Avoid reading too much into any single nonverbal behavior. Consider all of the nonverbal cues that the person is showing. Try to identify the message that the integrated combination of his/her nonverbal behaviors are conveying.

Time to Practice

It takes practice to effectively develop the ability to recognize, interpret, adapt, and implement effective nonverbal patterns of communication. Throughout the next week, practice noticing and reflecting on nonverbal behaviors during an interpersonal exchange. Use the following worksheet to document and monitor your progress.

The person I was communicating with _____

Day and time: _____

Rate how well you think you did noticing and adapting to the following nonverbal behaviors:

	Not Well		Average		Excellent		Non Applicable
Facial Expressions and Eye Contact	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Tone of Voice	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Body Posture	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Physical Contact	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Timing & Intensity	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Consistency Between Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviors	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A
Paying Attention to Multiple Nonverbal Cues	1	2	3	4	5	6	N/A

Notes: Use the space below to reflect on this communication exchange? What went well? What could have gone more effectively? You also might comment on anything that you noticed about this interpersonal exchange that was not captured in the rating scale above.

[illegible]