

Beyond Words:
The Power of Nonverbal Communication in Interpersonal Interactions

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COM 120: Introduction Interpersonal Communication
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October 17th, 2021

An aspect of Interpersonal Communication that is of particular interest to me is nonverbal communication. As stated in interplay, nonverbal communication is defined as “messages expressed by nonlinguistic means. These nonlinguistic messages are important because what people do often convey more meaning than what they say” (Adler, 2021). This is similar to the statement, “Action speaks louder than words.” Nonverbal communication is a way for us to convey information without the use of words. It occurs through the use of body language including eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, body language, and more. For example, eye contact is an important type of communication. The way we look at someone can communicate many things. It shows whether we are paying attention and/or have an interest in what the other person is saying. Most importantly, eye contact helps keep the conversation going and for the other person to respond when needed. Our body language is another example of nonverbal communication. This includes body postures, gestures, facial expressions, eye movement, etc. The way we move or position our bodies convey different messages. For example, if we are talking to another person whose legs and arms are crossed while glancing at the clock, it could imply that he or she needs to leave and is no longer interested in what we are saying. However, if the person maintains eye contact and nods his or her head during the conversation, it can generally imply that he or she is ready to listen and be engaged in the conversation. The way we present ourselves can communicate information to people. All in all, we use nonverbal communication all the time whether we realized it or not.

Nonverbal communication relates directly to my own life in many ways. Because nonverbal communication expresses meaning or feeling without words, I have to be aware of my hand movements or gestures when I communicate with people. At the beginning of this semester, we were asked to complete the Communication Competence Scale handout. Upon completing

the handout, I realized there were some areas of improvement that I needed to work on especially when I am talking to other people. For example, my wife has noticed that when I get nervous, I will stutter my words and thoughts of what to say. I realized that I have a habit of biting my index finger when I get nervous too. If I am not biting my index finger, I start to move both of my hands as a way to help me form clearer thoughts. For some people, hand movements or gestures can be a conflict to what is being said and distracting. Another example of how nonverbal communication relates to my life is my body language. I noticed that when sitting down whether if I am doing homework or talking to people, I will shake my legs. Leg-shaking can be a habit some people have, but for others, it can be inner feelings of anxiety or irritation or both. When we shake our legs, it could imply we are bored, anxious, or stressed. Overall, I have to remind myself to be conscious of my hand gestures and body language because these are ways to communicate even when I am not using words.

According to Raymond H. Hull, “Nonverbal communication can be more powerful – and even, more influential – than what we say with words, and can have a tremendous impact on our success. Experts in interpersonal communication have estimated that nonverbal communication constitutes approximately 70 percent of what is involved in communication” (Hull, 2016). This percentage is higher compared to verbal communication. This is like the statement, “Action speaks louder than words” that I had mentioned earlier. Our body language and gestures, eye contact, facial expressions are ways we present ourselves to others without saying a word. This journal suggested that we speak with our eyes. For example, the way we move our eyes sends a message of what we are thinking. If we are talking to someone who is constantly moving his or her eyes to one side or the other, this could imply that he or she is not interested or disagrees with what we are saying. This can be distracting to us because we may find ourselves looking in

the direction that the other person is looking. As Raymond H. Hull stated, “Eye contact is a very important part of interpersonal communication. Our eyes give us away” (Hull, 2016). Therefore, it is important for us to maintain proper eye contact with people because it helps with the flow of conversations.

Nonverbal communication helps us to convey messages better than words. Peoples’ actions are not always parallel to words spoken. Nonverbal communication also helps us to recognize our ability to become better communicators and listeners. Therefore, it is important to be sensitive to the body language and nonverbal cues of others and ourselves because nonverbal communication is more impactful than verbal communication.

Works Cited

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