

The Secrets of Body Language

**Your Guide to Reading
People's Nonverbal
Behavior And Mastering
Your Own**

By Vanessa Van Edwards

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Introduction:

Learning how to decode and interpret nonverbal behavior such as facial expressions, gestures, physical movements and vocal tone is an integral part of communication. As much as 93% of interpersonal communication is nonverbal, yet we often base all of our interactions on verbal content alone.

By using the latest scientific techniques summarized in this course, you will no longer doubt yourself or wonder what the person you are speaking with is thinking.

All of the tips, cues and clues in this course are based on academic research. For a full list of my sources, you can see my citation section.

Who Is This Book For?

Whether you are a teacher, businessman, police officer, husband, gardener or mother, this course is for you. If you have ever interacted with another person, this course can change the way you communicate with others.

What to Expect

Learning to decode human behavior will completely change the way you interact and listen to others. If you choose to use the principles in this course you will start to notice nuances to communication and aspects of people you did not see before.

True emotions that you had missed will now seem painfully obvious. It will be like watching people around you in High Definition. Facial expressions you never noticed will become clear and body language red flags will jump to your attention.

The tips in this course are based on the latest scientifically backed research on deception detection and nonverbal behavior.

I will start with the foundations of body language before reviewing the face and the seven universal facial expressions. Then we will dive into the body and how emotional states manifest in a physical way. Lastly, we will talk about human lie detection and body language.

About Me:

I have always been fascinated by people and what drives their behavior. As a behavioral investigator and author I am a research junkie. I love curating the latest scientific findings and translating them into bite-sized science that can be used in every day life.

In my columns for Forbes, CNN and the Huffington Post I often apply groundbreaking studies to modern day business and social trends.

My website, **ScienceOfPeople.org** has an in depth selection of free articles, videos and tutorials for my readers and fellow body language detectives. I have a number of ebooks specifically written for the needs of entrepreneurs, human resource managers, actors, parents, sales teams, doctors and other business professionals.

Part I: The Foundations of Body Language

It is important to know that most of our body language is innate, not learned, as was once believed. Researchers have observed congenitally blind children and even though they have never seen a face before, they still make the same facial expressions as seeing children.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia also studied congenitally blind athletes from around the world and found that despite the cultural differences and the fact that they had never seen another person, they made the same body language expressions when they won and lost matches.

This helps us understand how body language science works. If body language is innate and not learned, we can study it as a science and understand where it comes from and how to use it ourselves.

Part II: Microexpressions and the Face

Most of us look at our conversation partner's face far more than any other part of the body. The face is a veritable map of human emotions—if you know how to read it.

Human emotions are shown primarily in the face, whereas the body merely shows how one is coping with the emotion.

Our brains also pay a lot of attention to the face and make incredibly quick—and accurate snap judgments just by looking at someone's face. In one study, researchers had participants look at pictures of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) while their brain activity was being monitored.

Certain faces caused people's amygdala's to light up—the area of the brain where fear is processed. When asked about these faces, participants said they were most likely better leaders.

Subconsciously we believe the people who cause us to feel afraid, are likely more powerful and would therefore make better leaders!

The most interesting part of the experiment—the ones who caused the most fear and participants thought were the best leaders also made the most profits. Their brain was right!

Participants were able to accurately predict leadership abilities and profits just by looking at someone's face.

So, now that we know the face is important, what do you have to know?

Microexpressions:

Unlike our words, our facial expressions are very hard to control because they are based on emotions. They can be controlled if we consciously think about them, but are almost impossible to control all the time, especially when we feel an intense emotion come on quickly.

A microexpression is a very brief, involuntary facial expression displayed on the face of humans according to the emotions being experienced.

They often occur as fast as 1/15 to 1/25 of a second. Prolonged facial expressions can be a bit easier to fake, but it is exceedingly difficult to fake a microexpression.

Dr. Paul Ekman, whom you could say is the father of the field of microexpressions, discovered over 10,000 facial expressions. Critically he has confirmed seven universal expressions with specific meanings no matter the subject's age, sex, or culture.

These universal expressions are: disgust, anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, and contempt. Dr. Ekman realized everyone from remote tribes in Papa New Guinea to Japanese businessmen to American teenagers make these seven same facial expressions while experiencing corresponding emotions.

He also found congenitally blind individuals—those blind since birth--also make the same expressions even though they have never seen other people's faces.

Learning to read the seven microexpressions is incredibly helpful in understanding the people in our lives and their thoughts.

Below, I describe each of the seven emotions. I highly encourage you to practice the expressions in the mirror so you can experience for yourself how they look, and more importantly, how they feel.

You will find that if you make one of the universal facial expressions, you begin to feel that same emotion yourself! Emotions not only cause facial expressions, facial expressions also can cause emotions. This can be very helpful when trying to figure out the meaning of someone's facial expression.

When I speak with someone and they make a non-universal expression, I will try to mimic it and see

what emotions surface within me. This is a very simple way of literally feeling as your subject feels.

Here is a detailed description of the seven universal facial expressions and somewhat embarrassing pictures of me making them. I hope they are helpful!

1) Surprise:

Surprise is the briefest of emotions. It occurs when the subject is shocked about something said or done.



-The brows are raised and curved—they should look like upside-down U's

-Skin below the brow is stretched

-There can be horizontal wrinkles across the forehead

-Eyelids are opened, with the white of the eye showing above and below

-Jaw drops open and teeth are parted. The lips, jaw and mouth stays loose

2) Fear:

Fear is shown when someone feels terror or apprehension. This is easy to see in action if you have the subject watch a horror movie.



-Brows are raised and drawn together, usually in a flat line

-Wrinkles in the forehead are in the center between the brows, not across

-Upper eyelid is raised, but the lower lid is tense and drawn up

-Upper eye has white showing, but not the lower white

-Mouth is open and lips are slightly tensed or stretched and drawn back

3) Disgust:

Disgust happens when someone feels repulsion or aversion.



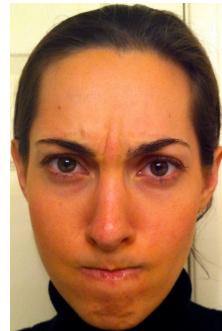
-Upper lip is raised

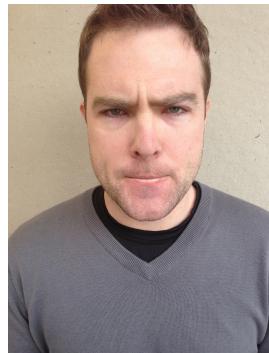
- Nose is wrinkled
- Cheeks are raised
- Lines show below the lower lid

4) Anger:

Anger happens when someone feels rage or extreme irritation.

I also have one of a man here so you can see that even though the faces (and sexes) are different, the same characteristics apply.





-The brows are lowered and drawn together

-Vertical lines appear between the brows

-Lower lid is tensed

-Eyes hard stare or bulging

-Lips can be pressed firmly together with corners down or square shape as if shouting

-Nostrils may be dilated

-The lower jaw juts out

5) Happiness:

Happiness is the easiest emotion to fake because a smile comes naturally to us. You can still discern true happiness or joy when you see the muscles

activated on the outside corners of the eye (crows feet).



-Corners of the lips are drawn back and up
in a smile

-Mouth may or may not be parted, teeth exposed

-A crease runs from outer nose to outer lip

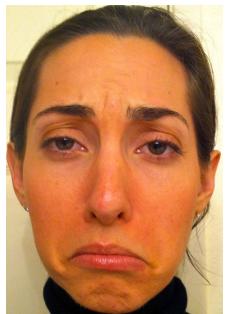
-Cheeks are raised

-Lower lid may show wrinkles or be tense

-Crows feet near the outside of the eyes

6) Sadness:

Sadness, sorrow or unhappiness is the hardest emotion to fake. It is difficult to engage the lips in a frown or pull the corners of your eyebrows up without having a genuine feeling of sadness.



-Inner corners of the eyebrows are drawn up

-Corner of the lips are drawn down

-Jaw is drawn back

-Lower lip pouts out

7) Contempt or Hatred:

Contempt, disdain, scorn or hatred look very similar to a smirk, and is often used as a pretense for being happy for someone to cover up jealousy. It is a simple one-sided mouth raise.



Once you practice these emotions yourself, see if you can detect them in the people in your life. You can also watch reality TV as practice. I have a number of videos on my ScienceOfPeople.org demonstrating microexpressions in the real world.

Here are a few additional notes about the seven universal microexpressions:

- Surprise and fear are often confused, as they are similar emotions. It is very important to know the difference between these two emotions. Think of the

question, “Did you know that Jim cheated on Laura?” A look of surprise on your significant other’s face would mean something much different than fear. Surprise would be an appropriate reaction to finding out about someone cheating. Fear might cause you to ask some additional questions about your significant other’s knowledge or behavior. The easiest way to tell the difference is by watching the eyebrows—surprise has upside down U’s and fear usually has eyebrows in a flat line.

- Anger can be confused with determination or concentration. This is why it is important to baseline someone and take note of how they look when they are concentrating, nervous or excited. The seven universal microexpressions are the same for everyone, but concentration can look vaguely like anger if you do not pay attention.
- Sometimes knowing which emotion you are seeing is just as important as an emotion you are NOT seeing. For example, if you accuse your subject of breaking an

office rule and they don't show surprise they probably knew they did something wrong and are afraid of getting caught. If you tell a friend some good news and they do not show genuine happiness they might be covering up feelings of jealousy.

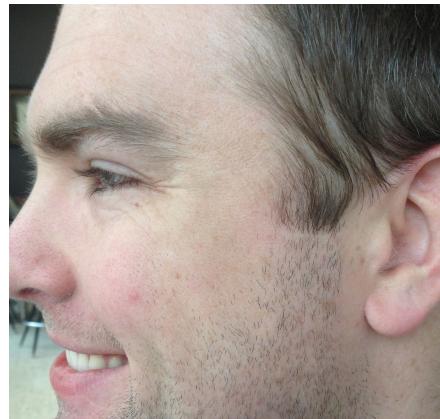
Below I have two side pictures of a real smile and a fake one. Can you tell which smile is real?

Hint: It's all in the crows feet!

A.



B.



Answer: B. This is the real smile because you can see the muscles along the sides of the eye are activated (crows feet).

Practice your microexpressions on yourself and see if you can see them in others!

Part III: Body Language

We are going to review different body language manifestations of emotion and how to use body language to your advantage. As we move through different body parts I will describe each part's corresponding kinesics (physical movements) and haptics (touching behaviors). I also will review proxemics (body distance between people and objects).

Before I review each part of the body, I want to explain two important body language behavior categories.

- 1) Blocking Behavior: You will see blocking behavior occur in almost all body parts. Blocking behavior happens when the subject feels threatened or encounters a topic they do not like. It means they are uncomfortable, in disagreement or feel disbelief. This is powerful because people actually close or rub their eyes to block out what they do not like. You will see many more examples of blocking in the body parts below.
- 2) Pacifying Behavior: Unlike blocking—where someone is trying to block out what is happening, pacifying

happens when someone is trying to calm themselves down or self-soothe.

A pacifying behavior is usually what happens after someone is in a blocking behavior situation. They are ill at ease, reacting negatively to something said or done. Rubbing or stroking is ingrained in us from childhood to be a calming action because as children our parents often rubbed our backs or heads while rocking us to sleep.

We will self-stroke in various non-sexual ways to calm ourselves down even as adults in public situations. Here are some other pacifying behaviors:

- Rubbing or stroking the neck, forehead or cheeks (like a parent does to a baby to calm down).
- Touching or stroking the arms or rubbing palms together.
- Playing with jewelry or hair.
- Licking lips or running tongue along the teeth.
- Running hands along the outside of the thighs.
- Hands wrapped in shirt or scarf.
- Picking ‘dirt’ out from under nails.

- Squeezing or pinching skin on hands or arms.
- Tapping fingers.
- Picking cuticles.
- Cracking knuckles or stretching and pulling on fingers.



Cracking knuckles is a pacifying behavior.

Nervous Defensive Body Language

When people are nervous or defensive it often shows in their body. Here are a few things people do when they are nervous:

1. Wringing Hands
2. Take up as little physical space as possible
3. Cross their arms
4. Touch their forehead in shame
5. Purse their lips
6. Their hands get cold
7. Touch or rub their mouth, neck, suprasternal notch.

Power Body Language

When people are feeling dominant, powerful or confident there are a few different body language moves that come out. They are:

1. Shaking the fist
2. Forehead “jabs”
3. Battle Stance
4. Cowboy Cross
5. Taking up a lot of physical space to claim territory

Positive Body Language

If you see the following body language signs it usually means:

1. Rubbing the Chin- The universal gesture for contemplation.
2. Licking the lips- Someone is excited to begin or start a project.
3. Rubbing the Hands Together- This is a gesture of excitement or getting ready to begin.
4. Open Palms- When someone shows you their palms it usually means they aren't hiding anything.
5. Runners Stance- This is what people do when they are getting ready to make a move—both mentally and physically.

Rapport Building Body Language

When you want to build a connection with someone or show them that you are on the same page you can use nonverbal cues to help. Here are some ideas:

1. Mirroring their body language
2. Matching their cadence
3. Steepling
4. Using the thumbs up gesture
5. Keeping your palms open

Suspicious Body Language

These body language cues are suspicious, you should look out for them in the people you are observing and try not to use them yourself.

1. Pointing
2. Hiding your hands
3. Lying
4. Crossing your arms

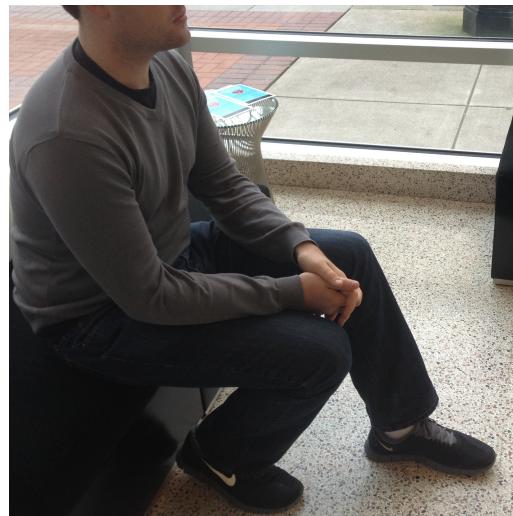
Here are some more detailed explanations of these body language behaviors:

Suprasternal Notch: This is the point right at the hollow of the neck where the collarbones meet. People touch this area when they feel distressed, threatened or insecure. Touching the suprasternal notch is a soothing gesture. Women will touch the spot with their fingers or rub a necklace that falls on that area. Men will often adjust their tie (which lies right above the suprasternal notch).



Touching the suprasternal notch is comforting for both men and women (men tend to touch their tie which lies directly over the suprasternal notch).

Runners Stance: The starters stance or runner's stance is when someone has one foot back and one foot forward and their heels are off the floor. This looks like someone is about to start a race and usually signifies that someone is impatient or motivated to get started.



Starters stance means someone is ready to bolt.

Physical Space: The legs are the body part that grounds us and moves us through the world. In general, when we feel upset or threatened we widen our legs to claim territory and get ready for an attack. The wider the legs the more confident or dominant the person feels. On the other hand, if someone has their legs tightly pressed together or compactly crossed, they feel vulnerable, shy or unsure.

When you see someone splay their legs it means they are trying to gain dominance, stability and control. If you watch people experience disagreement they almost never have their legs crossed. Instead they will often have their feet

spread wide as adrenaline pumps through their bloodstream.

Men do this to assert dominance or control in meetings or on dates. In Western movies cowboys almost always stand with their feet incredibly wide and thrust their crotch forward in gun duels to demonstrate the ultimate manly display.



Men take up space when they want to claim territory. It can be a positive mark of confidence as well as a negative sign of dominance depending on context and accompanying behaviors.

Crossed Arms:



Crossed arms protects our vital organs.

When subjects feel insecure, worried, scared or anxious, they frequently cover their chest with their arms or wrap their body in a kind of self-hug. They do this because it protects vital organs. People will tell you “they just feel more comfortable with crossed arms.” Well of course they do! If their arms are crossed, their vital organs are protected which lowers their heart rate and makes them feel more relaxed. This is a position of self-defense and is exactly why it is comfortable.

Arm Behavior: Our arms serve to protect our trunk and vital organs from threat. When cross

our arms on our chest we are usually reacting to some external threat, and subconsciously protect ourselves. We often cross our arms when we hear something threatening, confrontational or when we feel vulnerable.

Interesting Fact: Hitler used to raise his right arm in salute, but almost always had his left arm in front of his crotch. Subconsciously this could have happened because he was missing his left testicle and he wanted to protect the area.

Unfortunately crossing our arms isn't just a defensive posture, but the position also *makes* us feel more close-minded. This is the same concept as the face--not only do our emotions cause body language behaviors, but body language can also activate certain emotions.

Arm crossing compounds our already close-minded and fearful attitude. When you see someone cross their arms, you can help move them to a more comfortable mindset by asking them to sit down (if they are standing), or handing them a glass of water (if they are sitting) to get them to physically uncross their arms and out of the defensive mindset.

The opposing behavior to crossed arms occurs when we swing and move our arms freely. For example, children are more mentally free and tend to have freer range of motion with their arms. Typically, the more arm use you see the happier and more confident the person is.

Interesting Fact: When athletes win a race they almost always raise their arms and chin to the sky. Even blind athletes do this after finishing a race, even though they never saw others do this. It seems to be an inherent response to winning, and is the body language of pride and confidence.

Shame: When people are embarrassed or feel intense shame you will often see them lightly touch or gently rub the side of their forehead. This can be accompanied by a slight head nod or a sadness microexpression.



Steepling: Steepling occurs when someone brings their hands up towards their chest or face and presses the tips of their fingers together. This is a gesture of confidence, self-assuredness and even superiority. This can easily be done to inspire confidence in yourself and others during a meeting or interview. This is of particular benefit for females as it is seen as an assertive gesture,

not aggressive. Putting hands in the prayer position, a slight variation of the steeple, is a less confident gesture.

Rubbing Palms Together: When we rub our palms together it means we have a positive expectation of the subject at hand. The faster the pace of the rub, the more positive and excited we feel.



We rub our palms together when we are excited about something that is about to happen.

Pointing the Finger: Pointing a finger at someone is an aggressive act. It always rubs people the wrong way as it seems accusatory to

the receiving party. Doing this regularly can breed long-term mistrust.

Palm Behavior: The palms up position is the universal symbol for open-mindedness and trustworthiness as you are literally showing your hand. When people put their palms down as they speak it tends to rub people the wrong way because it connotes superiority and concealment.

Chin Stroking: As seen in most cartoons, chin stroking usually happens when someone is trying to decide something or figure out an answer. In sales you might see someone do this and then sit back with their arms crossed—this usually means they made a negative decision to refuse your request.



We stroke our chin when trying to make a decision or while figuring something out.

Synchronicity and Mimicry

Mimicry or synchronicity happens when your behavior mimics or mirrors someone else's. We do this subconsciously when we feel a connection to another person, but you can also mimic someone's behavior intentionally to build rapport. Of course you want to do this subtly and with caution. It is difficult to mimic someone in a genuine fashion. If they notice your attempts it can feel unnerving or forced. Matching someone's

cadence, tone or seating position is a delicate way of showing them you are on the same page and can be very effective and building a deeper relationship.

Part IV: Human Lie Detection and Body Language

Human Lie Detection is a deep science and I have entire courses on that topic, but you can learn a lot about deception detection from body language.

The most important things to remember:

- There is no “smoking gun” that means someone is lying.
- The best way to know if someone is lying is to look for mismatched words and body language.

When people lie, they have a lot to concentrate on and often forget about controlling what their body is saying. A liar has to:

-Know the truth

-Make up a false story

-Convince you of the false story and change the story or details based on your reactions.

-Keep the false facts straight in their head

-Try to think how an honest person would say it and then try to portray that emotion.

-Try to control their face during the lie

-Try to control their body during the lie

-Try to adjust their voice tone and pitch to be what an honest person does

These are a lot of different things to keep straight and this is why liars forget to control their body—they don't have enough brainpower!

I have included a few other tidbits for you, if you want to dig deeper into lie detection check out my other courses or my website ScienceofPeople.org.

Most Common Lying Gestures

Delayed or Mismatched Behavior:

Honest people have great synchronicity between words and gestures. They say they are sad and instantly a frown appears, they say they are excited and can't stop smiling. Watch out for people who have delayed or mismatched reactions. If they say they are angry, but their eyebrows rise in surprise this is a red flag. If they say they are worried but then make a worried microexpression, this is a red flag.

Frozen Bodies:

When people freeze their upper bodies it is usually because their limbic response is taking over. When someone knows they have to lie, they

typically feel fearful and their limbic brain tells their body to freeze so as not to attract attention.

Odd Smiles:

It is easier to control the bottom half of our face, so liars usually actively put their mouths in whatever feigned expression they want you to believe. Remember the one sided smile is actually the micro-expression for contempt. Don't confuse this for happiness! It means the person feels disdain or hatred at what you are talking about.

Nodding:

If someone is saying something positive they usually nod their head in a “yes” gesture. If they are saying something negative they should be shaking their head “no”. If their head movement does not match their verbal message, it is a red flag and a signal to dig a little deeper.

Eye Blocking:

When people squint, rub or shield their eyes, they are hearing or saying something they do not want to see or acknowledge.

If you want to dig deeper into lie detection check out my other courses or my website ScienceofPeople.org.

Conclusion:

Interpreting body language is an art based in science. Research tells us what our bodies do when we feel certain emotions. We have to interpret and act upon that knowledge in our own way.

Reading people also takes focus and concentration. You cannot effectively read people while looking at iPhones or multi-tasking. Giving someone your full focus will not only help you read them better, but will also show them you are genuinely interested in them—which is the best foundation for true relationships and connection.

Check out my website to get my free newsletter with tips and tricks, videos and other resources, including ebooks on body language and nonverbal behavior in:

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