

*The most important thing in communication
is to hear what isn't being said.*

Peter F. Drucker



Module Eight: Non-Verbal Communication Skills

Our body language dictates much of what we are feeling inside. Understanding effective body language is essential for an administrative supporter in building relationships throughout the organization. In this module you will explore body language, which will help you monitor your own body language as well as those

around you.



Body Language

Our body language is a large portion of how we communicate. The position of our arms, the expression on our faces both tell what we are really feeling inside. Trying to hide it makes it even worse.

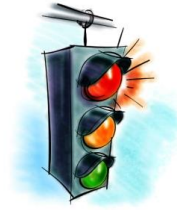
The best deterrent to negative body language is to know that body language is a large factor in how you communicate information.

Body language comprises almost 55% of what we are saying in our communication. We cannot hide it. We have to make an effort to address our feelings and emotions before we engage a person in conversation. Not addressing it may send the wrong message to the recipient of your message.

In the next lesson, we will identify some of the negative body language that we may mistakenly send to our recipient.

The Signals You Send to Others

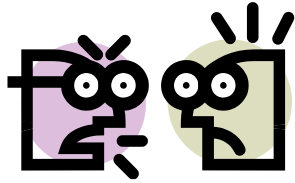
Negative body language comes in many forms. Below is a list of some common body language that sends the wrong message.



- Keeping distance
- Folding arms tightly
- Leaning or turning away
- Using only fleeting eye contact
- Small pupils
- Tapping foot or drumming fingers
- Tightening lips
- Hunched posture
- Fidgeting
- Clenching hands
- Fiddling with objects
- Looking over your shoulder or averting their gaze
- Shrugging shoulders
- Negative grooming gestures, such as pushing their nail cuticles back or picking fluff off their clothes
- Looking at the floor
- Fiddling with collar
- No touching, not even accidental

Half the battle of addressing negative body language is awareness. The other half is being conscience of it when you are doing it. Before engaging with someone, try to check your emotions. Are you nervous or upset? Are you frustrated or bitter about something? Addressing it a head of time will help you be better prepared.

Here is a quick note on positive body language. In order to demonstrate positive body language, do the opposite of the list of negative one. That's it.



It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It

Our tone is often times difficult to detect. That is because it is usually a result of our environment. Many times we are in the middle of getting something done or concentrating on a task and we are not in the interaction mode. Perhaps we are having a stressful day and we are stewing in it to the point that we are frustrated.

These conditions affect our tone. We may be willing to help someone, but it comes across as out of obligation. No one likes to be helped out of obligation. It makes them feel like an inconvenience. Being short in your responses or sighing are the tonal messages we send to our recipient that we are bothered and do not want to really do what they are asking.

In order to address this you could do the following SMILE technique:

- Smile first
- Make eye contact
- Initiate the conversation
- Lighten up
- Energize the conversation

Do not take yourself so serious that you forget that a major portion of what you do as an administrative assistant is to interact with other people. By you having the right tone and attitude when interacting with others will help you advance your career.

Remember that your tone is more influential than your words. This is true especially over the phone. In fact, your tone over the phone is more of a factor than your words, because you lack the influence of your body language. Even if they cannot see you, you should smile into the phone. It makes a difference.

Case Study

Most psychologists in the world know the importance of non-verbal communication and how it can affect people all around you. Despite of this, not many actually know how to apply such skills in real life. This wasn't the case with Maria. When she was faced with a very difficult situation over a change in her company's policies, no one seemed to express themselves and say what should be done. Maria couldn't either as there was a chance that doing such a thing may cost the company. Instead, she relied on her non-verbal communication skills and looked around the room to see how everyone was acting. She saw a person folding his arms when faced with a decision, and others looking at the floor.

This made her realize what each person in the meeting was thinking about and therefore made her be able to communicate efficiently and get her point across. When she would see that someone didn't agree, Maria quickly changed the approach to the subject in cause to make sure that everyone is happy which has finally lead to a successful policy change for the company.