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Nonverbal Communication:

The Hidden Language of Emotional Intelligence



Even the best verbal communication skills are not enough to create and sustain Good home and work relationships require the ability to communicate emotion

Wordless communication conveyed through facial expressions, body language voice captures and holds the attention of others and gives you a powerful mean

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Nonverbal communication speaks louder than words

Why does nonverbal communication speak louder than words in close relationships? Words to create productive, safe, exciting and secure relationships. It takes the ability to send nonverbal cues that attract and hold the attention of others. Too often those we intend to send. When this happens, both connection and trust are lost

Ted, Arlene and Jack are all articulate speakers who say one thing but commu

results in their relationships:



Ted thought he had found the perfect love relationship when he met Sharon. Ted is very eligible. He is nice-looking, hardworking, and a smooth talker. Sharon seems to talk more to herself than to Ted. When Sharon has something to say, Ted interrupts her before she finishes her thought. This makes Sharon feel ignored, and she has lost out at work for the same reason – his inability to listen to others makes him the most admired person among the people he most admires.



Arlene is attractive and has no problem meeting eligible men – it's never a problem! Arlene is funny and a good conversationalist, but even though she laughs and radiates tension. Arlene's shoulders and eyebrows are noticeably raised, her voice is harsh to touch. Being around Arlene makes many people feel uncomfortable. Arlene's charm is undercut by the discomfort she evokes in others.



Jack gets along with his colleagues at work, but not with those who are close to him. If you were to ask them why, they would say that Jack is "too intense". Rather than looking directly at you with his eyes. And if he takes your hand, he lunges to get it and then squeezes it. Jack is a caring guy but has a terrible time being in sync with people. This awkwardness has prevented his advance to a managerial level at work. He just isn't seen as good with others.

All of these articulate, well-intended people struggle in their attempt to connect. They are not aware of the nonverbal messages they communicate.

The language of nonverbal communication

What is the language of nonverbal communication in work and home relationships? Nonverbal communication is emotionally-driven communication that answers the question "Do you understand and care?" Answers to these questions are expressed in their actions. They move and react. These elements will produce a sense of interest, trust, excitement, or they will generate fear, confusion, distrust and disinterest.

By observing thousands of examples related to the attachment bond, researchers have identified important nonverbal cues.

Nonverbal Communication: The Most Important Nonverbal Cues

- Eye contact** The visual sense is dominant for most people, and therefore nonverbal communication. *Is this source of contact missing?*
- Facial expression** Universal facial expressions signify anger, fear, sadness, joy, etc. *How do you show? Is it mask-like and unexpressive, or emotionally expressive?*

Tone of voice	<i>interest?</i> The sound of your voice conveys your moment to moment <i>the resonant sound of your voice? Does your voice project delight, or is it strained and blocked?</i>
Posture	Your posture—including the pose, stance and bearing of the lean, bend, hold and move your body in space—affects the way you look <i>your body look stiff and immobile, or relaxed? Are your shoulders sloped? Is your abdomen tight, or is there a little roundness? Is your breathing relaxed?</i>
Touch	Finger pressure, grip and hugs should feel good to you and good to others. “Good” is relative; some prefer strong pressure, others prefer light. <i>the difference between what you like, and what other people like?</i>
Intensity	A reflection of the amount of energy you project is considered. <i>has as much to do with what feels good to the other person? Are you flat or so cool you seem disinterested, or are you too melodramatic?</i>
Timing and pace	Your ability to be a good listener and communicate interest by timing and pace. <i>What happens when someone you care about makes a statement? Does a response – not necessarily verbal – come quickly? Is there an easy flow of information back and forth?</i>
Sounds that convey understanding	Sounds such as “ahhh, ummm, ohhh,” uttered with congruence communicate understanding and emotional connection. <i>More sounds are the language of interest, understanding and compassion. What are the utterances that you are attending to the other person?</i>

Together, these nonverbal signals communicate your interest and investment in the fact that these elements are experienced much more intensely in the pauses in the flow of language offer us the best opportunities for emotional communication to navigate pauses and send these signals will depend on your ability to manage your own emotions as well as the other person's.

Emotional awareness & nonverbal communication

How does emotional awareness improve nonverbal communication? Emotions are the glue that creates and maintains connection in relationships. Awareness of your own emotions makes you much more sensitive to other people's feelings.

Emotional savvy gives you the ability to:

- **Accurately read the emotional cues others send**—pick up on worry, stress, and anger.
- **Respond with nonverbal cues that reflect emotional understanding**—show notice and care.
- **Be congruent**—avoid confusing and confounding others with words that don't match your nonverbal cues.
- **Know if the relationship is meeting your emotional needs**—giving you a sense of connection in the relationship or move on.

Savvy nonverbal emotional communication is also an extremely important resource for avoiding conflict. Here are several examples of how this works:



Elaine is a drama queen. She is an actress and such a good one than others. Fortunately, Elaine's husband isn't fooled by the emotional fireworks. himself, "Do I really feel her upset in my body?" If the answer is "no," he trusts his good will toward Elaine. He knows that criticizing her behavior will comically pretends to get hysterical himself. Almost immediately Elaine calms Elaine's emotionally intelligent boss is also not fooled or bullied by her antics situation using humor.

Related Articles

- [Relationship Stress](#)
- [Emotion Communicates](#)
- [Playful Communication](#)
- [Conflict Resolution](#)
- [Defusing Emotional Stress](#)



Rosario's husband is withdrawn and depressed about the loss of him and she wants to help, but knows that giving pity or advice isn't helpful. F together where she doesn't say much, but encourages her husband to talk about walks she takes his hand now and then, and smiles reassuringly into his eyes. ' husband has started to act like his old self and begins going to job interviews.

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Hal is in business with his son, **Roy**, and needs to talk to him about Hal knows that Roy can become angry when criticized, but Hal feels that he can he confronts his son, he doesn't let Roy's defensiveness intimidate him. Hal spends the while to the positive emotions he feels for his son. There is nothing critical nonverbal communication. Roy cools down and listens with interest.

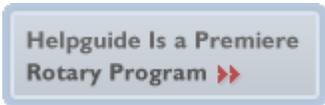
No part of nonverbal communication speaks louder than your emotions – and influence over others.

Stress management improves nonverbal communication

How can stress management help to improve nonverbal communication? Stress successfully communicate nonverbally. When you are agitated, withdrawn or touch and react differently than you do when you feel "just right".

When you are overcome by stress:

- **It is difficult to successfully send nonverbal communication.** Although perception, others tend to perceive you as angry or afraid of them.
- **It is more difficult to successfully receive nonverbal communication** the cues that others are sending you.
- **Your capacity to influence or accurately read others is impaired.** You "bad" rather than "good" impressions on others.
- **Your upset easily triggers upset in others.** Feeling upset is very contagious.



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The best thing about recognizing that you are stressed is that it gives you the opportunity to deal with it (see [Managing Stress in Relationships: Finding What Works Best for You](#)) who recognize that they are stressed, and as a result, restore their state of equilibrium successfully:



Kim is feeling overwhelmed by the new responsibilities that he has taken on. He is flattered by the offer of new responsibility, but can't get his mind around the task. His good buddy Frank is there to talk with. As he tells Frank what has happened, Frank helps him relax, and he remembers that he really is capable and competent for the new task.



Carol narrowly avoided an accident on her way home. Her fiancé has a big date with Rob. Not wanting to spoil the romantic ambiance, she decides not to tell him. Carol is so tense that when Rob hugs her, she involuntarily flinches. Seeing that she can't really hide her upset. After calming herself with several deep breaths, she tells him what happened. Relieved to know he's not the problem, Rob smiles.



Kevin has had an extremely stressful workday, where anything he wants to do is go to bed, but this morning his wife told him that she had something to talk to him when he got home. Kevin feels too tense and exhausted to be much of a listener before heading for home. After a half-hour swim, he has his energy back and a smile and a sincere look of interest.



Nancy is so nervous about taking her qualifying exams at work that the coffee she drank hasn't done her any good either, so she puts on her tennis shoes and goes for a run. Nancy has learned that running calms her down, and she is ready for the exam.



Frank is attending his first office party with his fiancée, **Vivian**. In the excitement of the names he can't remember, Frank fails to introduce Vivian. She feels hurt and tries to lose her temper. She excuses herself and takes a little walk to calm down. When she gently takes his arm. With a smile and in an understanding tone, she tells him the names of the people with names, but wants to be introduced. Frank relaxes and complies.

Fixing communication mistakes

How do nonverbal cues help you patch up communication mistakes? No one is perfect, and we all make mistakes in relationships, but with emotionally savvy, we can repair the damage.

Suppose that Ted, Arlene, and Jack, the three people we met at the beginning of the chapter, became *aware* of what they were doing. In addition, they became attuned to the “dance” involved in sending and receiving wordless messages. People who are skilled in nonverbal communication have off days. This is what has happened to Jack on an especially stressful day.

Notice what happens when each of them has fallen back into an old pattern, and how they use their new situation with their newfound understanding of nonverbal communication:



Ted notices that **Sharon’s** tone of voice has lost its warmth, and he remembers the last thing she said – he hasn’t been listening to her! Looking chastened and apologetically, Ted leans forward, takes her hand and looks directly into her eyes. He says “you’re forgiven” along with a questioning look that he picks up and answers. Ted’s ability to notice and accurately interpret the feelings of his coworkers has also given his career a boost.



Arlene notices that her date is tapping his fingers and she has been looking bored, and she feels tense all over. Taking a long deep breath and a swallow, her shoulders drop and her jaw relax. Arlene leans across the table and breaks into a smile. Her date smiles back and their eyes meet and hold. She has also used her new observations to become now much more comfortable interacting with others in her work setting.



Jack notices that his date seems to be leaning back and looks uncomfortable. He moves back in his seat, softens his gaze, puts his hands in his lap, and follows her lead. This change of behavior in Jack positively affects each of them. He is on guard, and seeing her soften makes Jack feel more relaxed and confident. Jack learned to notice and respond to the nonverbal cues of others at work, making his interactions much more enjoyable and greatly improving his interactions with colleagues.

Using technology to improve your nonverbal skill

The age of electrical and digital gadgets, including audio and visual aids, affords the opportunity to hear yourself as others do. It also affords the opportunity to view your own nonverbal cues that others send. The following devices capture you in real time. To the degree that you use these devices down when you watch them or view one frame at a time, you will become more aware of whatever you capture, the process itself will make you more aware of sending and receiving nonverbal cues.

communication – provided that you don't bring self-criticism to the task. Critical play supports it, so have fun!

See and hear yourself in action

- Video camera** Use a tripod and frame your face and hands in the viewfinder to capture expressions and body language. Start recording a conversation with a partner. When finished, both of you can watch your nonverbal communication. Listen to your words. Then rewind and replay in slow motion to see what you won't hear the words, but the images can be very revealing.
- Digital camera** Try asking someone to take a series of shots as you are engaged in conversation. You won't hear the words, but the images can be very revealing.
- Tape recorder** An ordinary tape recorder can be used to capture the tone and the timing and pace in a conversation. Listen most carefully to what you hear that are not words at all.

If you lack technical devices, you can always assume the role of a "fly on the wall" observing the nonverbal communication of others. In addition to looking at and listening to others, you can help others who also want to become more proficient nonverbal communicators.

To the degree that you communicate in this special, nonverbal form of language, you will enjoy all of the time – you will enjoy improved home and work relationships.

For the fourth skill see [Use humor and play in your relationships](#)

Related Links: Relationship Help Series

Part 1: Learning the Key Skills of Emotional Intelligence

- [Relationship Help: Building Great Relationships with Emotional Intelligence](#)
- [Managing Stress: Recognize and Manage Relationship Stress](#)
- [Emotion Communicates: Emotional Intelligence in Successful Relationships](#)
- [Nonverbal Communication: Language of Emotions](#)
- [Playful Communication: Repairing Relationships](#)
- [Conflict Resolution: Keeping Relationships Healthy](#)

Part 2: Quick Course in Raising Emotional Intelligence

- [Defusing Stress: Find Quick Stress Relief that Works Best for You](#)
- [Raising Emotional Intelligence: Experience Intense Emotions](#)

Part 3: Research Linking Attachment to Brain Development and Relationships

- [Attachment and Relationships: How the Attachment Bond Shapes Adult Relationships](#)
- [Brain Development: How Brain Development Influences Relationships](#)

Additional Resources

[Flirting and Body Language](#) – Discusses the nonverbal cues communicated by flirting in various situations. (BBC)

[Listening to Body Language](#) – Discusses the features of body language and the communication. (BBC)

[Introduction in Nonverbal Communication](#) – Lengthy article addressing a variety of communication for classroom teachers, but applicable in other situations. It includes diagrams to illustrate points made. (Fort Hays State University)

[Verbal and Nonverbal Communication](#) (PDF) – Materials from a student hand in their nonverbal communication skills. (University of San Francisco)

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modified on: 9/04/07.

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