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Body Language

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People can't live without each other since we are social beings. As soon as we are in contact with others we are communicating. For this purpose, we can make use of both spoken and written languages. In this way, we make the content of a message clear to each other. However, we can also communicate without words. This kind of communication gives us information about the relationships between people. The difference between the words people speak out and our understanding of what they really mean comes from non-verbal communication, otherwise known as "body language". By developing your awareness of the signs and signals of body language, you can understand other people more easily, and communicate with them more effectively.

Body language is a kind of non-verbal communication, where thoughts, intentions, or feelings are expressed by physical behavior, such as facial expressions, body posture, gestures, eye movements, touch and the use of space. Body language, or a subset of nonverbal communication, complements verbal communication in social interaction [1].

While the importance of body language in communication, management and science has become popular only recently, human beings have relied on body language instinctively in many ways for many thousands of years. Philosophers and scientists connected human physical behavior with meaning, mood and personality. Unfortunately, body

language studies and written works on the subject were very sparse until the mid-1900s.

The evolutionary perspectives of body language are fascinating, in terms of its purpose and how it is exploited, which in turn feeds back into the purpose of body language at conscious and unconscious levels. Human beings tend to lie, deceive, manipulate, and pretend. For various reasons people frequently mask their true feelings. In expectation of these “masking” tendencies in others, humans try to imagine what another person has in their mind. The need to understand what lies behind the mask obviously increases according to the importance of the relationship.

Katherine Benziger’s theories of brain types and thinking styles provide useful additional perspective. Women tend to have more empathic sensitivity than men, which naturally aids body language awareness and capabilities.

It is now generally accepted that certain basic facial expressions of human emotions are recognized around the world - and that the use and recognition of these expressions is genetically inherited rather than socially conditioned or learned. While there have been found to be minor variations and differences among obscurely isolated tribes-people, the following basic human emotions are generally used, recognized, and are a part of mankind’s genetic character: happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, surprise, anger.

Charles Darwin was first to make these claims in his book “The Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals”, published in 1872. Darwin’s assertions about genetically inherited facial expressions remained the subject of much debate for many years.

As with other behavioral sciences, the study of body language benefited from the development of brain-imaging technology in the last part of the 20th century. This dramatically accelerated the research of connections between

the brain, feelings and thoughts, and body movement. We should expect to see this effect continuing and providing more studies for body language theory based on experience and observation.

The complexity and nuances of facial expression reflect the diversity and subtlety of human emotion. People wear their personalities on their faces. These are the reasons why we are fascinated by portrait photography. A well-known psychologist Paul Ekman discovered seven basic emotions conveyed by seven basic facial expressions that people around the world recognize. These are:

Sadness: The eyelids droop; the inner corners of the brows rise; the corners of the lips pull down.

Surprise: The upper eyelids and brows rise; the jaw drops open.

Anger: Both the lower and upper eyelids tighten; the brows lower and draw together. Intense anger raises the upper eyelids as well. The jaw thrusts forward, the lips press together, and the lower lip pushes up.

Contempt: As the only expression that appears on just one side of the face, in contempt one half of the upper lip tightens upward.

Disgust: The nose wrinkles; the upper lip rises; the lower lip protrudes.

Fear: The eyes widen; the upper lids rise, as in surprise, but the brows draw together. The lips stretch horizontally [2].

Psychotherapists have discovered that if you mimic or reflect back someone's body language, even in a subtle manner, that person feels that he or she is understood [3]. Experimenting with body language possibilities in a playful way with your subjects might help everyone relax as well as open doors to interesting poses. For example, a famous American model, television personality and actress, Tyra Banks tells her models to push a posture or facial expression to

its extreme limits, then pull it back in the show “America's Next Top Model”.

To make the long story short, we want to say that many psychologists believe that non-verbal communication reveals as much, or even more, than speech. The physical appearance of people, the way they dress, how they move and position themselves, speaks volumes. Much of what happens with body language is actually unconscious. People can monitor and control it to a certain degree, but often their physical movement conveys their feelings when they aren't verbalizing them, even when they don't want to or can't verbalize them because those feelings are unconscious. For example, research suggests that people, without even realizing it, lean slightly forward when thinking about the future, and slightly backward when thinking about the past. The body doesn't know how to lie.

References:

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