

# Non-Verbal Communication

Non-Verbal communication can be the loudest message in the room. Being conscious of our own Non-Verbal communication and that of others facilitates more effective and accurate communication among all team members. Body language, facial expressions and posture sometimes unconsciously communicate what we are thinking or feeling. Knowing each other on a personal level enhances the ability to 'read' each other and interact in productive ways.

## Description

When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages. These messages don't stop when you stop speaking. Even when you're silent, you're still communicating nonverbally.

What comes out of your mouth and what you communicate with your body language can be two totally different things. Faced with mixed signals, the listener has to choose whether to believe your verbal or nonverbal message. Invariably, they're going to choose the nonverbal because it's a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts your true feelings and intentions.

The way you listen, look, move, and react tells the other person whether or not you care, if you're being truthful, and how well you're listening. When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you're saying, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don't, they can generate tension, mistrust, and confusion.

### **Tips for all Team Members for reading non-verbal communication**

**Pay attention to inconsistencies:** Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said. Is the person saying one thing, and their body language something else?

**Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group:** Don't read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all nonverbal signals: eye contact, tone of voice and body language. Are the nonverbal cues consistent—or inconsistent—with what the words are saying?

**Trust your instincts:** Don't dismiss gut feelings. If you get the sense someone is not being honest or that something isn't adding up, you may be picking up on a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal cues

# Facilitator Role

Becoming a better communicator means becoming more sensitive to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, as well as your own.

## Non-Verbal Communication Cues can play 5 Roles:

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<i>Repetition</i>	Non-Verbal repeats and supports the verbal message. Example: Saying 'yes' and shaking the head 'yes'.
<i>Contradiction</i>	Non-Verbal contradicts the verbal message. Example: Saying 'I agree' but looking away from the speaker
<i>Substitution</i>	Non-Verbal overrides or is more powerful than a verbal message. Example: Saying 'I feel fine' when the eyes are dull and glassy
<i>Complementing</i>	Adding to a verbal message. Example: Saying 'great idea' and giving a high five
<i>Accenting</i>	Adding an emphasis to a verbal message. Example: Saying 'I disagree' and pounding the table

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## Types of nonverbal communication and body language

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<i>Facial expressions</i>	The face is very expressive, showing countless emotions without a word. Unlike some nonverbal communication, facial expressions are universal - happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.
<i>Body movements and posture</i>	Your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand, or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a wealth of information to the world. This type of nonverbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and subtle movements.
<i>Gestures</i>	Gestures are woven into the fabric of daily life. We wave, point, beckon, and use our hands when we're arguing or speaking animatedly—expressing ourselves with gestures often without thinking. The meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so be careful to avoid misinterpretation.
<i>Eye contact</i>	Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of nonverbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person's interest and response.
<i>Touch</i>	We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following: a weak handshake, a timid tap on the shoulder, a warm bear hug, a reassuring slap on the back, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on the arm.

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*Space* Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for space. That need differs depending on culture, situation, and closeness of the relationship. Physical space communicates many different nonverbal messages, including signals of intimacy and affection, aggression or dominance.

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*Voice* It's not just what you say, it's how you say it. Other people "read" our voices in addition to listening to our words. Things to pay attention to include timing and pace, voice volume, tone and inflection, and sounds that convey understanding, such as "ahh" and "uh-huh." Think about how someone's tone of voice, for example, can indicate sarcasm, anger, affection, or confidence.

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## Questions helpful in evaluating nonverbal communication

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*Eye contact* Is eye contact being made? If so, is it overly intense or, just right?

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*Facial expression* What is their face showing? Is it masklike and unexpressive, or emotionally present and filled with interest?

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*Tone of voice* Does the person's voice project warmth, confidence, and interest, or is it strained and blocked?

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*Posture and gesture* Is their body relaxed or stiff and immobile? Are shoulders tense and raised, or relaxed?

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*Touch* Is there any physical contact? Is it appropriate to the situation? Does it make you feel uncomfortable?

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*Intensity* Does the person seem flat, cool, and disinterested, or over-the-top and melodramatic?

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*Timing and pace* Is there an easy flow of information back and forth? Do nonverbal responses come too quickly or too slowly?

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*Sounds* Do you hear speech sounds that indicate caring or concern, agreement or dissension, confusion or understanding?

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