



The Basics of Body Language



Todd Hutchison
The Corporate Mechanic®



Millionaire Mentors

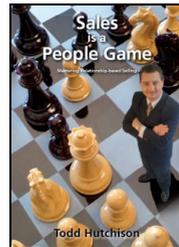
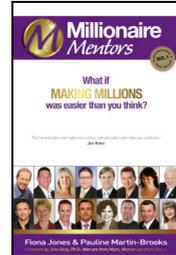
Millionaire Mentor

Todd Hutchison is a Millionaire Mentor, known as the *Corporate Mechanic*, and featured in the international best seller 'Millionaire Mentors' book. He specialises in business and people performance.

This eBook is a complimentary gift from Todd Hutchison to readers of the book.

To learn more about human dynamics, secure your copy of:

“Sales is a People Game”.



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1. Introduction

This short eBook does not delve in to the extensive science of body language interpretation. Alan Pease is regarded as a leader in educating the world on body language and one of his many books on the topic would be an asset to include in your book library and would provide much more detail on the topic.

Some key generalisations are illustrated in this eBook that will offer sufficient understanding of Western culture-based body language indicators.

These indicators may reflect further insight regarding the person's emotional state or the congruence between their words and their body language.

2. The Likeability Factor

In 1971, Albert Mehrabian's research concluded that there were three elements in any face-to-face communication: words, tone of voice and body language. He found that our liking for a person who puts the message across is weighted as:

- 7% for the words we use (verbal);
- 38% for the tone of voice we use (vocal); and
- 55% for the body language we convey (visual).

This means that our body language is the dominant factor that impacts on our ability to be liked, and therefore offers a great opportunity to build rapport in a short amount of time by focusing on the posture of your own body and that of the person you are building rapport with.

3. Understanding Clusters

If your body posture naturally is similar to that of the other person while you are engaged in conversation, you are regarded at a body language level to be 'in rapport' with one another. When both body postures are distinctly different, there is a chance that you are not in rapport, which could be an indication of a dislike or discomfort for one another, a difference in opinion or a challenge in the relationship.

The danger in trying to read body language is that it is very easy to make an inaccurate conclusion based on your intuition about what a body gesture means. The trick is that you cannot pass judgement on someone's body language based on a single gesture. There should be at least three indicators, called a cluster, before it should be judged that the relationship may be more positive or negative.

In reviewing body language, it is important not to jump to conclusions. Be aware of the context throughout the discussion, the influences of the environment and the time pressures that may apply. Take the following example that shows the importance of identifying a cluster of indicators:



A person with crossed arms may just be comfortable, cold, or could be indicating they are closed (to the conversation), aggressive or being protective.

At this stage, the crossed arms are not enough of an indicator of the person's state to be able to make an accurate judgement.

At this point in time you cannot adequately interpret this as a negative posture, as the crossed arms is only providing one representation of the person's state and there is no context to reading into it whether it is a good or bad signal.

When the arms are crossed and the body is turned and leaning forward the pose becomes more aggressive.

As there are only two bodily indicators, there is still not enough information about the person's state to be able to make an accurate judgement.



Now the eyes have become squinted (the eye brows are pointed downward and the skin under the eye is lifted), the body is angled and slightly forward, and the arms are crossed, we have a cluster of indicators to suggest this person is potentially hostile.

You already would be instinctively picking up on these signals.

4. Building Instant Rapport

We now know that similar body language is a signal that the people engaged are in rapport with one another. We also know that body language attributes up to fifty five percent of the likeability between people. At such a high percentage, this means that if you influence the body language factors you may also be having a significant influence on the other person's view of you.

This means that you can consciously adjust your body language to encourage rapport that becomes especially important when approaching an angry, aggressive or frustrated person that you are trying to deal with. It also is extremely important when mediating between two parties whose relationship has broken down, as your body language will influence their relationship. When you are not consciously focused on body language to deal with special circumstances, you will notice that the following techniques are often applied without any conscious awareness on your part, and that you tend to copy one another when in rapport automatically.

Influencing rapport is allowing you to create the best foundation for a positive conversation. It is about utilising the factors that influence the relationship so that the highest possible ability to engage with people is maintained. Saying that, it is used by professionals like negotiators and salespeople to speed the process of building rapport and the necessity to enable a positive relationship in the shortest possible amount of time.

To be in rapport with someone at a body language level, you can simply either match or mirror their body language. The picture on the left in the following diagram is an example of matching and the picture on the right is an example of mirroring.

5. Matching and Mirroring



Matching is where a person copies the posture of the another, so that each side of the body has the same position, either totally or partly. In the previous picture on the left, the body posture of the two people is the same. This is an example of a total match as the person on the left has their left hand on their hip, and the person on the right has their left hand on their hip.

Mirroring is similar to matching, but it is positioning oneself as a mirror image of the other person, as opposed to a same limb-to-limb copy. In the previous picture on the right, the person on the left has their right hand on their hip, which is mirrored by the other person's left hand on their hip. It resembles looking at a mirror image.

Sometimes it is not possible to fully match or mirror a person, and therefore a partial match may achieve a similar level of rapport. For example, a person may not be flexible enough to cross their legs in the same way as the other individual, hence by crossing at the ankles a partial match is achieved.

Partial matching is when the limbs are basically doing the same thing, but not to the same extent. The next image below shows crossed arms, however the hand positions are different.



The next image shows one person crossing their hands and the other has their arms crossed. This is a less obvious partial match.



Partial matching may also include only one half of the body, such as the example below where only the top half of their bodies is matching (although their hands are in different positions).



In the example below, one person has their legs crossed at the ankle level, whereas the other person has them crossed at the knees.



You will also notice that in all the previous sitting positions that the general body postures angle are copying one another and they are both in a good position to allow eye contact.

Crossed arms and legs are still indicators that would be best avoided to favour more of an open posture. The example below shows only the hands crossing in a more open posture.



6. Checking Rapport

Leading is the term used for testing the level of rapport that may exist. For example, if two people are automatically matching or mirroring one another, it would be assumed that they are connecting at a body language level.

To test this, if one person changes their position, then the other person would follow suit (such as both of the people folding their arms, and then one drops their arms and the other soon follows). You would then have positive proof of good rapport. You have also effectively led the person to a new position.

This is demonstrated in the steps on the next page.

Stage 1: this is where two people are either in a mirroring or matching position.



Stage 2: where one person changes position. In this example, the person on the right has dropped their arms into a crossed hand pose.



Stage 3: when the other person changes their position shortly after (an automatic response occurs to try and match or mirror to keep rapport). In this case they have again adopted a matching or mirroring position denoting a high rapport exists.



Some people may be of the opinion that matching and mirroring is a form of manipulation, however it should be realised that when you are automatically in rapport with someone you instinctively and unconsciously do the same thing. Furthermore, these techniques will generally only be required when you are in a potentially hostile situation or where the rapport is lost in a selling session and the salesperson has to take action to provide a stronger basis for re-establishing a healthy relationship.

Now imagine if a person had to deal with an angry individual who is demonstrating multiple negative body language gestures. They are best to adopt a matching or mirroring position and then, on creating rapport, test it by changing positions, leading the person to a more neutral body language posture.

They can effectively influence the angry person's emotional state by changing their own physiology and leading the person into a positive body language position that is likely to result in a more positive emotional state.

Matching and leading also applies to voice. By matching the speed of their voice, you can then slow or speed up the conversation by altering your speed as you speak that will influence their speech. The professionals will tell you there is a trick in matching their breathing patterns.

This explains how a therapist can bring the state of a fast speaking, anxiety-based person down to a calmer demeanour by matching their style and then changing the speed of their own voice and breathing pattern where the client does the same.

It is amazing to think that we can have such an effect on conversations from the way we interact.

7. Breaking Rapport

Breaking rapport is also possible by doing the reverse to matching and mirroring. You may have noticed when you are in conversation with someone and they break eye contact and watch something else around you, you instantly know you have lost them (at some level). A more subtle approach would be to change body language to be in a different pose to them to break the rapport, or turning the body away from them.

8. Personal Distance Zones

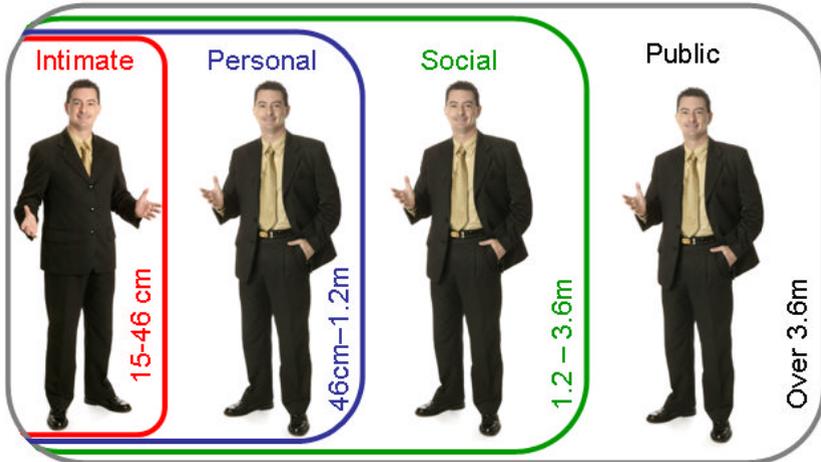
Have you ever noticed that the space we leave between us and other people has a significance. If you get too close to a person they may step back away from you, and that is an indication that you somehow entered their comfort zone that was not acceptable.

The term zone is used to indicate the different distances we leave between people in different environments. It will vary between countries and cultures, and it is also influenced by whether you live in a city or in a rural area. For example, city dweller normally stand closer than their rural counterparts.

In Alan and Barbara Pease's book, "The Definitive Book of Body Language", it defines four zones typically applied to Western cultures as:

- | | | |
|----|----------|---------------|
| a. | Intimate | 15 cm - 46 cm |
| b. | Personal | 46 cm -1.2 m |
| c. | Social | 1.2 m – 3.6 m |
| d. | Public | Over 3.6 m |

Clearly intimate zones are for loved ones or those we are engaging at a more romantic level, whereas personal space is where we may be in a two person conversation. Social space is more likely to be a small group of people interacting. The general rule is to stand away (as opposed to too close) and let the other person step forward to define the gap if in doubt.

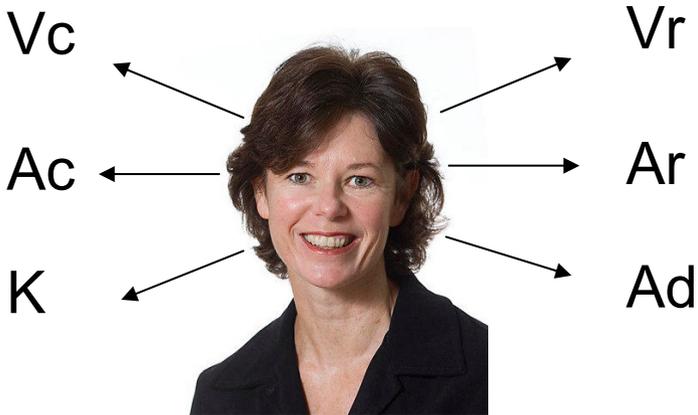


9. Eye Flick Movements

Eye movements or flickering has become a key area of science study and helps to identify what is happening within another person from a brain processing perspective. This becomes useful for dealing with a sales prospect, a criminologist dealing with a criminal, through to a parent communicating with their child. These eye movements, which can be very fast and subtle, are good indicators of what part of the brain is being accessed.

It was Dr John Grinder and Richard Bandler, the co-founders of NLP, who first identified a relationship between sensory-based language and eye accessing cues.

These cues are idiosyncratic and habitual for each person and offers indications to how the person is processing or representing a problem subconsciously. It can reflect whether they are thinking in pictures, sounds or feelings, as well as if they are engaging in internal dialogue (talking to themselves).



Vc Visual Construct /Create

Vr Visual Recall / Remembered

Ac Auditory Construct / Create

Ar Auditory Recall / Remembered

K Kinaesthetic (Feelings)

Ad Processing (Auditory Digital / Internal Dialogue)

The diagram above is based on the onlooker's view of the person (looking at them). It outlines all the eye movement cues (the initial flicker and not where the eyes end up looking), and is the typical mapping for a right-handed person. A left-handed person may have a reversed mirror image of the indicators (e.g., looking upward and to their right may be visual recall and not visual create).

Before making any judgements, you would have to test the eye movements by asking some basic questions that the salesperson would likely know the answer to. This process is called calibration.

The movement is sometimes subtle and very fast, so it is the immediate movement after a question is asked that is the one that counts. For example, if you asked, "Can you recall the colour of the roof tiles of the first house you grew up in?", then this type of question would have prompted the respondent to remember from a stored memory of a picture of their old childhood house. Momentarily their pupils would normally move upward and to their left. This is what is known as a visual recall or a visual-remembered access cue.

If you then asked them to imagine what it would look like if those roof tiles were coloured pink, then they would typically access the visual create or visual construct area by looking upward and to their right. Whilst the visual cues are upward, auditory cues are directly sideways. Basically, for both visual (images) and auditory (sounds) we move the eyes to our left to recall or remember something already stored in the brain, and to the right to create or construct something new.

When we look downward and to our right we tap into our feelings, and this explains why many people drop their head and look downward when they are feeling down. The old saying, "lift your head high and stand proud," actually has a physiological impact on us, by getting us to stop accessing our feelings.

Lastly, when we look down and to the left we are accessing our internal dialogue where we may be talking to ourselves, or thinking through a particular process. If asked about a complex strategy, we may access this area to think through the approach in preparation for our verbal response.

Eye movements can be useful as they can indicate how a person is processing information. This is important in many situations or professions, such as the salesperson monitoring the prospect, the doctor monitoring the patient, the coach monitoring the coachee, or the criminologist monitoring the criminal.

Unless you are very well trained in this science, it is dangerous to use it as a test of someone telling the truth (as eye movements are often talked about as being a good indicator if a person is recalling a real event or making something up). For example, the truth can largely be validated by asking well-constructed questions that would have clear responses.

These eye movements are not always substantial or obvious to the observer as they can be too rapid to read by the untrained observer, hence the calibration process is also used to judge the clarity of their signals.

Other uses of eye movements can help a person control their emotional state. When a prospect is feeling bad about an event, they will typically have their eyes down and to their right, locked into their feelings. Another person would need to help them change their eye position to influence their emotional state, possibly helping them overcome the negative situation they are dwelling on.

The changing of the eye position has a direct impact on a person's physiology. Just as an angry person cannot laugh and be angry at the same time, changing our physiology also impacts on our emotional states.

In summary, having an understanding and being aware of a person's body language and eye movements can provide key clues to a person's thinking processes and sometimes provides an indication of their intentions.

10. Gesture Indications

You will recall that you need a cluster of indications to form a picture, however you also need to understand what certain gestures are indicating, particularly if they are being repeated.



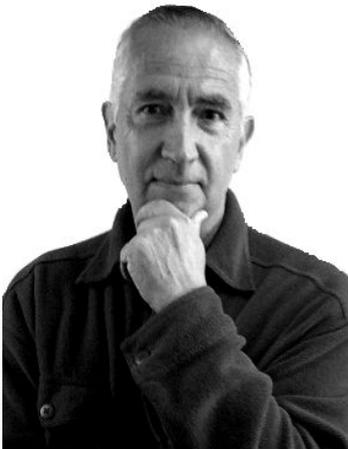
Deceit can be indicated through body language. Touching or rubbing the nose is usually an indication that the person is telling an untruth or is not being completely honest.



Touching the ear is an indication that they may have heard someone lying.



A pointer to the temple where the head is not being supported is an indication of interested evaluation.



Chin stroking is an indication that they are making a decision.



When the fist supports the head it is an indication of boredom.



Covering the ears is indicating that they do not want to hear what is being said.



Grabbing the ridge of the nose is an indication of disbelief. It is often accompanied with the shaking of the head.



Adjusting or playing with the tie is an indication of discomfort or that they are possibly lying.





Clasped hands may indicate a restrained, anxious, negative or frustrated state. The higher the hands are held the more difficult the person is likely to become.



Touching oneself or putting a finger or thumb into the mouth is an indication that self assurance is needed.



Both hands over the face suggest they cannot believe what they witnessed or they are ashamed.



Hands covering the mouth are an indication that they are telling or holding back from telling an untruth.



Fidgeting is an indication of boredom or disinterest.



Using a pen as a pointer at a person is an indication that they feel they are not being heard.



Placing objects in the mouth is an indication they feel under pressure.



Open hand on the face suggests a sense of tiredness.



Touching both temples suggests a sudden realisation.



Covering the mouth suggests they are telling (or have almost let out) a lie.



Scratching the head indicates a feeling of uncertainty and an attempt to think.



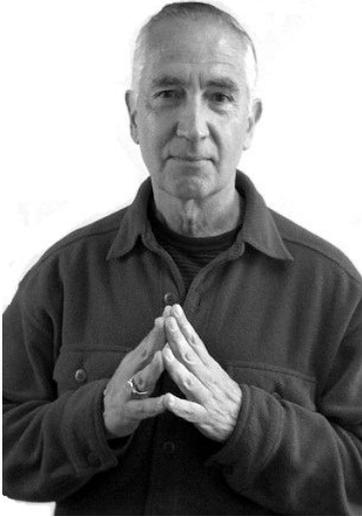
Slapping the forehead is an indication of self-punishment or great self-disappointment.



Rubbing the back of the neck indicates a feeling of being threatened or angry.



Eye rubbing is an attempt to avoid looking at something or someone.



The hands in a steeple position indicate confidence and self-assurance. A high steeple is adopted usually when speaking, and a lower steeple is adopted usually when listening.



Opened hands that are upward indicate a non-threatening honest posture. When combined with a shoulder shrug it conveys honestly not knowing something.



Crossed arms with clenched fists indicates a hostile attitude.



Crossed arms with one hand hiding indicates an attitude of defiance.



Double gripping of crossed arms indicates a feeling of insecurity (a type of self-hug).



Partial arm fold is an indicator of tension, uneasiness or stress.



Glasses in the mouth suggest they are stalling for time.

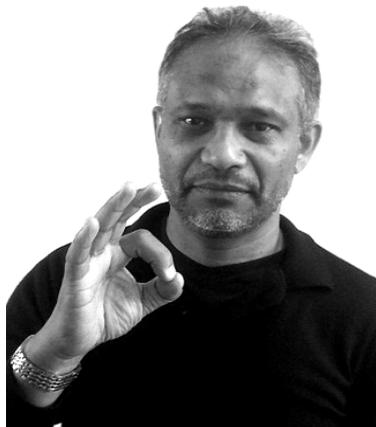


Looking over their glasses is an act of intimidation.

Hand signals are quite important. Whilst there are a number of universal hand signs, they can still mean different things between different cultures.



A sign for V for Victory.



A universal sign for Okay.



A sign for Shhh or be quiet.



A sign for it is good or okay, however it can also mean 'up yours'.

11. Final Thoughts

In summary, body language indicators help paint a more detailed picture of the person being observed, known as a cluster. There needs to be at least three individual signs to be able to make any judgement.

Understanding body language simply advances your ability to better engage with people, and pick up on the many different messages they may be presenting unconsciously.

There is no greater way to build personal relationships than spending quality face-to-face time with them.

When rapport naturally exists, our body language will naturally match or mirror, however taking proactive action on establishing similar body language can speed the process of likeability.

It is about using our learnings to help create a positive foundation for constructive discussion. Body language is an excellent tool in this regard.

It is the authenticity of the person who sincerely wants to brighten the life and experiences of another that will become evident not only through their body language, but reflective in the content of their conversations and bodily actions.

Remember that understanding body language is a great way to build better and more productive relationships, and in business it is critical, as we all like to do business with people we know, like and trust.

12.About the Author

Todd Hutchison, known as the Corporate Mechanic, is an international business consultant and behavioural specialist. He is an accredited trainer, Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) and certified Master Coach.

Recognised as a pre-eminent leader by the WA Business News, Todd has been awarded by the National Speakers Association of Australia and is a Fellow of Leadership Western Australia.



He has some seventeen qualifications, including a Masters in Business and Administration from Deakin University, and a Masters in Commerce from Curtin University of Technology. In addition, he is a certified Master Coach, Master Project Coach, Project Management Professional, Master Project Director and Master Practitioner of Neuro Linguistics Programming.

While working as an academic Director of a health technology research centre, he began his passionate pursuit of understanding human dynamics. Todd continues his studies in neuroscience, psychology and coaching to expand the understanding of human behaviour and its relevance to personal and team performance. He is a founding Director of the 'Institute of Mind and Behavioural Sciences' and the 'International Institute of Project Coaching'.

Having successfully established a number of businesses and achieved awards for his performance, Todd has demonstrated that success starts with your thinking, and is a living example of how you can follow your dreams.

You can contact Todd through email on todd@peoplerich.com.