



BODY LANGUAGE

What are your gestures communicating to the team?

BY CAROL BROOKS, SR/WA

You may find it interesting to discover that it's far more than just the words we speak that shape our minds. Our body language actually plays a significant role in the capacity of cooperation, collaboration and contribution to our team—as long as that is what we're feeding into our mind. Experts say what we feed into our minds will eventually be displayed in our actions. It's the “garbage in, garbage out” philosophy of programming and reaction. So, here's the question that warrants deep examination: what message is your body language sending to your mind that might affect your individual commitment and performance to a group effort?

Most people listen only to what the other person is saying. And that's important. But the most effective way to *listen* to the other person is by *seeing* their body language. What are their gestures communicating? Body language expresses a person's truest feelings. You've probably heard the saying, “I can't hear you. Your actions are speaking too loud.” That's the significance of non-verbal communication. Although we tend to give our brains all the credit for directing our thoughts, studies suggest we use our bodies to think too. Even trivial movements influence how we behave. Reaching upward has been shown to make it easier for a person to recall happy memories. Conversely, reaching downward draws negative memories to mind. It's important to see and be alert to what your body language is saying to your mind. In

distress, and these same signals are transmitted to your subconscious mind. It records the message and says, "I have to do what I'm told." If your body language signals, "I'm a loser. I never get anything right," then guess what? Your mind will make sure you are a loser; you never get anything right.

Don't Be Deceived

You may be thinking that you can just out-talk your body language and make your mind believe otherwise. Not a chance! Experts say body language is 80 percent communication and it expresses its truest feelings. Body language never lies. We can choose what we present with our verbal, but we can't get away with being dishonest in body language. Therefore, there's no fooling your subconscious mind. And there's no fooling members on your team either. If you try to out-talk how you really feel, your team will notice the incongruence between your verbal and non-verbal communication. Then they'll question your honesty.

Modified Body Language

Even on a bed head day, there is a way you can communicate a powerful message with body language. You can change your gestures. Instead of walking around with hunched shoulders, stand tall and square your shoulders. Instead of lips pinned together, try smiling. Then notice how this affects your mood. It changes because you have changed your body language in a more positive way and those positive messages are then recorded in your subconscious mind. That's powerful!

Tip from the Experts

Powerful people sit sideways on chairs, drape their arms over the back, or use two chairs by placing

an arm across the back of an adjacent chair. They put their feet on the desk. They sit on the desk. They turn the chair around backward and straddle it. These relaxed postures all involve claiming space as expressed through body language. Recent research suggests that a powerful posture—from the tilt of your head to the turn of your toes—sparks a biochemical reaction in the body that actually makes you more powerful. By changing how you use your body, you can change your psychology and ultimately, the circumstances in your life.

Simple poses can flip an internal switch, making the world seem better, brighter and easier. Remember, your subconscious mind recognizes that talk is cheap, but body language is more authentic and therefore, your mind takes it as an order to perform.

What is your body language telling your mind? What is it telling your team? You can change the message with a more confident illustration of your body language. Before you attend an important client meeting or strategic staff meeting, take a moment to stand in front of a mirror and see yourself as others see you. ★



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the end, your body language shapes who you are and what you bring to your team. Here are a few tips to heighten your own sense of individuality and awareness to the power of body language.

The Power of Your Subconscious Mind

When you're having a bed head day, check your posture in the mirror. Are you hunched over? Brow furrowed? Lips pinned together? These are all signs of