

Make It Stick

*Activity Pack*

Body Language

 **Helping lessons learned through training become part of *how we work*.**

**To the Learner Leader…**

This suite of activities has been designed to reinforce the key learning from the **Body Language** course. They have been designed to be led by team leaders or designated trainers and do not require training experience, though for best results we recommend that whoever is leading the activities understands the principles of adult learning and has some experience in leading learning activities.

The suite of activities will provide you with up to six months of learning reinforcement. We recommend that an activity is run each month following the Body Language course.

When running each activity:

* Ask the group to reflect back on the original course they attended:
  + What takeaways did they have?
  + What have they tried to implement?
  + When revisiting some of these activities for a second time, ask them what additional ideas or thoughts they have in applying the concepts and tools in the activities to their job.

Each activity will take 10-15 minutes to run depending on the size of the group.

There is one activity to a page. Each activity has a brief introduction followed by instructions for the trainer.

We suggest the following to optimise your learning experience:

* Have the group meet away from their normal workspace
* Make sure mobile devices are switched off so that everyone fully engages
* Make the environment ‘safe’ and encourage everyone to contribute
* Run these activities with everyone standing – try running them outdoors in the fresh air
* Have other team members take the lead and run an activity – this will build confidence and leadership skills
* Don’t be afraid to improvise – the learning needs to be about you and your group so make it meaningful
* When debriefing an activity, get the group to reflect on what the activity means for them and what they will do differently or continue to do that underscores the learning points from the activity

**Activities in this pack**

1. Aligning verbal and non-verbal communication
2. What the eyes and mouth can express
3. Exposing deception
4. Taking a stand
5. Interpreting gestures
6. Using touch at work

**Activity 1: Aligning verbal and non-verbal communication**

**Introduction**

When your verbal and non-verbal communication (including your body language) is not aligned (or congruent) a number of thoughts may occur in the person or people opposite you:

* You are not sincere
* You are confused
* You cannot be trusted
* You are powerless
* You are dishonest
* You are hiding something

**Instructions**

Have each partipant pick one of the following sentences and repeat it to the rest of the group and when they do, their body language needs to send a different message to the words they are using. The rest of the group is to work out what their body language and non-verbal communication is actually saying.

*I would love to come to your farewell lunch, unfortunately I have an important client meeting that I can’t get out of.*

*Is that the time (looking at watch)? I have found our conversation fascinating but unfortunately, I am going to have to leave it there.*

*How dare you accuse me of not putting in enough effort after all I have done for you and this company.*

*I am sorry you didn’t get the job. We were overwhelmed with quality applicants and unfortunately on this occasion there were other applicants who performed better at the interview.*

Now have the same person repeat their statement to the group. This time their body language needs to match their words.

Debrief with the group and discuss why pretending to think one thing and say another can be betrayed by body language and cause increased stress for people.

**Activity 2: What the eyes and mouth can express**

**Introduction**

The mouth and eyes can convey a wide range of non-verbal messages about what someone is feeling.

Stress and lying can cause blinking rate to rise. Lack of blinking can be a sign of boredom, hostility or indifference. However, people with greater confidence establish longer eye contact than people who are uncertain or attempting to conceal something.

Raising your eyebrows momentarily is usually an unconscious reaction to greeting someone. Keeping them raised happens when we are scared or surprised.

It is certainly true that without a mouth we would have trouble getting our words out, but what non-verbal messages are communicated with the mouth?

**Instructions**

Break participants into pairs. One person is to assume the following poses for their partner. The partner is to note down anything specific about the expression on their mouth and in their eyes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **When your partner does this:** | **What do you observe of the mouth and the eyes:** |
| Think of something that fills you with joy and smile genuinely |  |
| Smile as though someone has tried to make a joke but has in fact insulted you |  |
| Stretch your lips in a straight line across your face without exposing your teeth and think of the Mona Lisa |  |
| Think of something that makes you angry |  |
| Think of something that makes you sad but try hard not to show your emotions |  |
| Think of something that you disapprove of |  |
| Think of something that you strongly disagree with |  |
| Think of something that makes you very anxious |  |

Debrief with the group – what did people notice about eye and mouth expressions and movements?

**Activity 3: Exposing deception**

**Introduction**

According to body language expert Allan Pease, when we see, speak or hear lies or deceit we often gesture to cover our eyes, mouth and ears. Similarly, when we are shocked or hearing bad news, we often attempt to cover our eyes or ears or mouth with our hands.

If a child tells a lie, they will often cover their mouth with one or both hands in an attempt to stop the deceitful words from coming out. If they don’t want to listen to a reprimanding parent, they simply cover their ears with their hands to block out the noise. When they see something they don't want to look at, they cover their eyes with their hands or arms. As they become older, these hand-to-face gestures become quicker and less obvious, but they still occur when they are lying, covering up or witnessing deceit. The following may occur when someone is trying to deceive you:

* They say less
* They speak more slowly
* They make more speech errors
* They pause for longer before answering a question
* They will be quicker to fill awkward silences
* The tone of their voice may be higher than normal

**Instructions**

Either split the group into pairs or have individuals speak to the group as a whole.

Ask each participant to spend a minute concocting a deliberate lie about themselves. They then think of something that is true about themselves. They then form these thoughts into two clear statements – one truth and one lie. Now in any order they wish, they tell their truth and their lie to their partner (or to the group). When they do, they should make a conscious effort to suppress all body gestures that may give away their lie.

Their partner (or the group) is to closely observe their delivery and decide which statement is true and which is a lie.

Debrief:

* Did their partner get it right?
* Did the person find this activity difficult? Why?
* What did the partner observe that convinced them of the lie?
* What is the takeaway message here?

**Activity 4: Taking a stand**

**Introduction**

Taking a stand, standing your ground and taking a position are all examples of expressions where you are asserting yourself. Asserting yourself translates into body language that includes how you choose to occupy physical space and how you choose to stand. There are four main stances that people take:

Straddle pose (a power position)

* Legs are straight
* Feet placed wide apart
* Weight is equally distributed

Parallel (a subordinate position)

* Legs are straight
* Feet are parallel and placed close together

Buttress (signals the person wants to flee)

* One foot turned at 60+ degrees to the other
* Most of the weight on a straight supporting leg

Scissor (a defensive gesture)

* Cross one leg over the other
* Keep your knees straight

**Instructions**

Can be conducted in pairs or as one group.

Each person is to make an assertive statement such as:

“When you come in late for work you are not acknowledging that I or others have had to cover for you, and it makes me feel that you don’t appreciate what we do.”

They are to make their statement four times, adopting a different pose each time as in the introduction). Others are to observe.

Debrief:

* How did the person feel when attempting to make the statement using different poses?
* What did the partner or group observe – how did the person sound and project themselves?
* How should we aim to stand and why?

**Activity 5: Interpreting gestures**

**Introduction**

Globally there are gestures that are commonly interpreted by most people with some cultural exceptions. The understanding of these gestures can be applied in a business setting.

**Instructions**

Ask the group to state how the following gestures could be interpreted (left hand column).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Gesture** | **How can this gesture be interpreted?** |
| A nod of the head | Signifies ‘yes’ or agreement. In Japan it means ‘Yes, I hear you’ and not necessarily ‘Yes, I agree’. |
| A slow nod when listening | Means the listener is interested in what the speaker is saying. |
| A fast or rapid nodding while listening | Means the listener has heard enough and wants the speaker to finish or they want a turn to speak. |
| Shaking the head from side to side | Usually means ‘no’. It is one of the first gestures that humans make. Newborns make this gesture when they have had enough milk. |
| Tilting the head to the side | This is a submission signal. It means that the speaker is getting their point across. |
| Raising the shoulders at the same time as pulling the head down | Implies a submissive apology when used in conversation. It is also used by subordinates approaching superiors and reveals the status and power play between individuals. |
| Having the head up when listening | Means the has a neutral attitude about what is being said |
| Having the head down when listening | When the chin is down, it signals that a negative, judgemental or aggressive attitude exists. |
| Standing with hands on hips | A power position. Hands-on-hips is a universal gesture used to communicate that a person is ready for assertive action. It lets the person take up more space and has the threat value of the pointed elbows that act as weapons, preventing others from approaching or passing. |
| Standing with thumbs tucked into the belt or the tops of pockets | Men use this gesture to stake their territory or to show other men that they are unafraid. |
| Males standing with legs spread | Almost entirely a male gesture who are trying to establish authority over others. |
| Male sitting with a leg over the arm of a chair | It not only signifies the man's ownership of the chair, it also signals that he has an informal, aggressive attitude. |
| Male sitting by straddling a chair | Most ‘straddlers’ are dominant types who will try to take control of others when they become bored with the conversation, and the back of the chair serves as good protection from any 'attack' by other members of the group. |

Debrief – ask the group how this could be used to their advantage when:

* Presenting information
* Negotiating
* Selling or promoting

**Activity 6: Using touch at work**

**Introduction**

Haptics is the study of our sense of touch. Touch is only possible inside the proxemical ‘intimate’ zone. So, touch as a component of communication and body language is very personal. Touch has a strong emotional component. The use of touch outside of family and friends is often governed by social norms and culture which determine what is acceptable, and in many cases, what is legal.

Some things to note about touch:

* The longer you touch the more intense the message
* The person who initiates the touch holds the authority
* Your gender determines to a large extent, what your touch means
* Inappropriately touching another person can be perceives as rude, threatening and intrusive
* If someone past you on the back when you are hugging them, they are giving you a signal that ‘enough is enough’

A good rule of thumb, from lawyers and etiquette experts alike: if you're considering anything beyond a handshake, proceed with caution.

Some touching could be intended as innocent but could be received in a negative way. Even seemingly simple gestures like hugs or pats can be viewed differently by different people.

And if there's any doubt at all as to whether the touch is appropriate, always reflect on how it would have felt differently if substituted for a handshake, the formal standard for workplace touch.

**Instructions**

Ask the group to discuss the following in a work context:

* When is it OK to touch?
* Where is it OK to touch?
* Where is it not OK to touch?
* What cultural dimensions should we be aware of in the workplace?
* How long should you touch for?