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Silent Signals

Body Language for the 21st Century.

By Ward Oxley

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About the Author

Ward Oxley left school in his early teens to earn money and help his family. He says that it was not easy but he learned a lot. He also earned quite a bit because he always worked hard as he moved from job to job and around various States.

He first encountered “silent signals” when he worked with a magician who used body language and other techniques, long before they became well-known to the general public.

Ward got a “real” job and settled down a couple of years later.

He said the lessons he learned from his friend have helped him immensely throughout his life.

He hopes that his book will help you as much. You can read and learn from it in comfort, but you will not get full value until you start using your new knowledge in the real world.

Why You Need to Know the Silent Signals

The pace of our modern world increases every year, along with the pressure on us as individuals in the workplace and our social activities.

This has brought many advantages, but one area that is becoming more difficult for us is clear communication with other people; business colleagues, clients, friends and even our own family.

This book will help you to better understand other people's messages and their real needs.

You will also get tested tips to improve the impression that you give the other people in your life.

You have probably been in situations where you did not feel that you fully understood what the other person meant? You may also have, at times, felt that the person or group you are talking to is not getting your message.

The methods in this book will help you to avoid both those occurrences, just as they have proved successful for many thousands of other people.

Improving your ability to understand the messages which people are sending you and improving your own communication skills can have obvious and lasting benefits in all areas of your life.

The effort required is not great; just consistent application of these suggestions, then careful review of your results and maybe making any small adjustments that might be required.

It is commonly accepted that most people get about ten percent of their communication inputs from words they hear. It's still worthwhile, of course, to work on our voice to improve clarity and range.

But, the other ninety percent comes from what we see, hear and feel.

So, using these silent signals to improve the delivery of our messages to other people in both social and business areas and gaining a better understanding of the signals which those around us are putting out can help greatly.

Of course, different people's results will vary. But, I believe you will see a

significant improvement when you apply my suggestions and review the results you get.

This is not hard work. It is very enjoyable, especially when you realize the benefits which even a little bit of effort can give you.

You will probably be surprised how quickly you get some improvement.

It can happen almost immediately because reading this book encourages you to be more focused on the words, gestures and messages of the other people. That will encourage you to put more effort in improving your rapport with other people and can help greatly in getting across your message in both social and business situations.

We will focus on “body language” but mention other areas when they are appropriate, including some which are less well-known.

The next section will cover the more obvious, but often misunderstood visible signals.

Visible Signals

We can learn a lot from studying people's stance, general attitude and how they place their arms, legs and head.

Status Signals

Powerful individuals and those seeking power within a group may signal their elevated status or their claims with silent signals.

The person who has the senior position in a group will usually display a more open attitude than many of the others.

In situations where everyone is seated, a powerful male may express his position by leaning back and clasping his hands behind his head. This is obviously a silent demonstration that they feel comfortable and in control of the present situation.

It also has a sexual connotation. I believe it's better to avoid this position as many people feel uncomfortable about the gesture and can transfer that to the person making it, even though they might not make their view known to that person.

Dominant people in a group may stand with their hands at their sides or even clasped behind their backs. They demonstrate their power by exposing their bodies, indicating that they don't need to erect barriers (defences) between them and others in the group.

The other people in that group will give the senior person more clear space than they give each other.

Personal Space

Some people will get very close to you, uncomfortably close.

This may be an attempt to intimidate you, but it might just be that they are used to a smaller personal space than you are.

You should think about this as you start to improve your own use of silent signals.

Have you ever noticed some people that seem comfortable around you

sometimes seem to tighten up and might this be because you are intruding on the amount of “breathing space” which they need to be comfortable?

Have you considered what personal space you need in social or business situations to feel comfortable?

If that’s more than most of the people around you, then you may be giving out negative signals without realizing it.

The Body

If someone you speak to holds their body straight, with their head tilted and they lean slightly toward you, you will know that they are focused on what you are saying.

Some people will lean more toward you; an attempt, either intentional or not, to intimidate you.

When someone has their body toward you but their head and eyes are focused elsewhere, you know that either they are not really interested or do not understand what you are saying.

Be aware of the negative signals which you may see, including clenching their fists or a fixed, false smile on their face. Unless you can change those expressions of negativity quickly, it’s probably best to make a polite exit from the conversation and look for someone who might be more receptive to your message.

Arms



If the person you are speaking to has their arms folded, then you are probably not getting through.

If they fold them across their body while you are talking, they are starting to resist you or your message.

If their hands are clenched, then they are strongly opposed to your message.

This attitude is likely to be noticed by others in the group and might affect the willingness of others to even listen to your message, so you should take some action to ease their negative

display as soon as possible.

Lift your own arm toward them with palm upward, and ask them for a comment or to point out something. This makes them the main focus for the moment and will probably encourage them to unfold their arms.

Then, they are unlikely to bring them up into the defensive pose because they are now more involved in the discussion.



Standing with your arms on your hips displays confidence and being ready for action.

But this pose, which is very similar to that adopted by a male bird trying to attract a potential mate by making itself look larger, is more likely to irritate than intimidate or impress.

Some women may adopt this pose but most usually just put one hand on the hip and leave the other in a relaxed position against their side. The impression that this pose is intended

to give is one of confidence and approachability.

Hands

The way someone shakes hands can tell you much about their attitude to you and their opinion of themselves.

A confident person with a genuine interest in you will present their hand at right angles to the floor.

People with low self-esteem may offer their hand with the palm slightly upward and people that want to show their assumed dominant position may push their hand at you with the palm downward.

You may have experienced an iron grip or a cold-fish clasp on occasions. Store the information which this gives you about the person and leave it at that. Also, be aware that some people offer a cold-fish grip because they have a medical condition or infirmity and not because they have “cold fish” personalities or attitudes.

Don't try to return the crushing grip when one is inflicted on you. Just get on with your conversation, finish it as soon as possible and find someone more

pleasant to talk to.

Rubbing your hands together is a common action to indicate that you have expectations of favorable outcome, at least as far as you are concerned. This may not impress the other people in the discussion.

Another gesture which many of us use is to point at the person we are talking with. It might be okay to do this occasionally but we should be careful to keep it to a minimum because it's too easy to create an impression that we are speaking down to our friend or colleague.

Legs

Generally, people that sit or stand with their legs apart are saying that they have confidence in themselves and their position.

People that sit or stand with their legs crossed while they are taking part in a discussion may be displaying their low self-esteem or showing that they are not really comfortable in that group.

But, many people just feel more comfortable with their legs crossed, so this is not a good indicator unless you detect other signals which reinforce that one.

The Head

Nodding the head to indicate agreement and moving it from side to side to signal “No” is something which most of us start doing before we can walk. The meaning of these signals is commonly accepted in most countries to.

You might make a slight nod and lean slightly towards the person who is speaking to you to encourage them to give more detail. Stuff

You should focus your eyes mostly on theirs while you are speaking. This will demonstrate your interest in them and also help you to gauge the impact which your words are having.

When we are really interested in what someone is saying, we often tilt our head and lean toward the person who is talking or demonstrating something.

That’s a good indicator we can look for.

Are the people you talk to focusing on you or someone or something

elsewhere in the room?



Sometimes, someone will raise their hand in front of their mouth when they speak to you. This may indicate they are not telling you the truth but it is not always a sure indication.

Some people will put their hand in front of their mouth because they think it gives the impression that they are thinking deeply.

But, if they do that while they are listening to you, it may be a sign that they don't accept what you are saying or that they are losing interest. If they also lower their gaze, you may have to work harder on keeping their interest or, perhaps, you probably should stop talking and ask them for a comment or to ask you a question.

Eyes

Our eyes, which someone referred to as the mirrors of our soul, should be focused on the person or group that we are talking to. But, never make your gaze become a fixed stare.

Many people betray a lack of interest or a pre-occupation with other matters by not maintaining eye contact with the person or group they are with, especially when someone else is talking.

You probably are aware of the importance of making and keeping eye contact with those you are talking to.

But, do you really know what makes this such an important factor in our business and social contacts?

Enlargement of the pupils in our eyes is a well understood signal of increased interest in what or whoever we are watching or listening to.

This has been well-known for years and has been cunningly exploited by some artists who increased the appeal of their pictures of sentimental subjects, such as small children or pet animals, when they drew the subjects' eyes much larger than the normal size compared to the rest of their faces.

This action of our pupils is mostly beyond our control.

That is one reason that many people, including deal makers and professional card players wear dark glasses; to make it harder other people to see and use their eyes' automatic reaction against them.

But, wearing dark glasses in situations where most around you are not is likely to give the impression you have something you want to hide.

Wearing dark glasses when you play cards for money, if it is not common within your group, is likely to attract unwelcome attention too, because some systems for marking cards are dependent on the filtering effect of particular types of dark glasses.

Professional games have systems which would detect such amateur cheating instantly, so dark glasses are not anything the players need to worry about.

The Voice

Many people's voices and how it varies, show what they are really thinking, without them realizing it. It may be quite different to what they say.

Sometimes they will start a conversation with a particular tone but, when they start talking about something which they attach great importance to, you will hear their tone change significantly.

This may be a more accurate indicator of their true feelings or intentions than the words which they say.

You can learn to control your voice so that it does not always reflect your true feelings, but this takes time and constant effort. It has to be coordinated with the other signals which you are giving out without visible effort.

Where the combined signals are not perfectly in sync, those watching will sense that something is not right, even if they cannot isolate the reason for their feelings.

The Breath

The impression other people get and the effectiveness of what you say may sometimes be affected by any sudden change in the rate and depth of your

breathing.

That can send a message to the people you are with which reinforces your words or contradicts them.

Don't give much significance to this in your own dealings. Remember that certain medical conditions, such as asthma, can also cause changes in people's respiration rate.

Scratching

What does it indicate when someone scratches their ear, nose or their eye?

It is usually because they feel an itch in that area.

But, if they are talking at the time, it may indicate that they are not telling you the whole story.

If they do it while you are talking, they may not believe you or they may be losing interest.

You could, perhaps, stop talking and let them ask a question or make a comment. That can help to draw them back into the conversation.

Stress Signals

Stress is one of the most common problems in our modern world.

It's hard to avoid entirely but physical signs of it can negatively affect our communication with other people.

We should always try to present a positive message in a confident way.

Avoid the obvious stress signals:

- Wringing your hands
- Pulling at your collar or making other totally unnecessary adjustments to your clothing when you are talking
- Putting your hand over or near your mouth when talking
- Moving about unnecessarily. Your mother probably told you fidgeting was not polite and she was right.

Some stress signals are almost completely beyond our control and are generated by our autonomic nervous system. These include:

- Rapid breathing
- Blinking faster
- Shivering when we are not cold

Most of these signals may be interpreted as signs of insincerity which is possibly a worse outcome.

So, it's worth taking action to reduce the effects of stress on us and our communication.

Stress Reducers

Simple exercises like taking a few deep breaths and focusing on the passage of air in and out of our lungs for a few moments can be very beneficial.

If you find that your body tightens up, especially your stomach and legs, when you are meeting new people or in an important meeting of any kind, you may find it helpful to loosen up beforehand.

If there is plenty of time, take a quick walk around the block.

If that's not possible, find a private area, such as a toilet cubicle. Stand straight and gently shake your arms as if they were made of rubber.

Then, flex your legs by raising yourself on your toes a few times.

I don't recommend that you have a drink of coffee or anything stronger before a meeting. The caffeine in coffee will tend to increase your pulse rate and your skin may become flushed.

Drinking alcohol to steady your nerves has never worked.

I have used simple meditation techniques to help me cope with stress of various kinds. You might consider taking a workshop or just learning from a good book.

The investment could pay dividends for years to come.

Excellent Exercise for Everyone

The benefits of exercise are obvious.

You don't need to pay for a structured program and personal trainers unless you want to or need the discipline they apply.

Walking, cycling and, especially, swimming are great ways to maintain or improve our general health which, of course, helps our communications as well as so many other areas of our lives.

I make sure I get three sessions of some type of exercise each week. Some do much more but that works for me.

The following exercise is one that anyone can do without investing too much effort, time and certainly no expense.

1. Stand straight with your arms loose at your sides.
2. Imagine that there is a cord attached to the center of the top of your head that draws you upward, as high as possible, while your feet remain flat on the floor.
3. Push your pelvis forward very slightly – if it's noticeable, you've pushed too far.
4. Take three slow, deep breaths and focus on them as you draw the air down to the pit of your stomach and then, after a short pause, slowly exhale.
5. Raise your arms above your head (unless there is a medical reason that you should not do this).
6. Stretch your arms upward slightly.
7. Slowly lower your arms back down to your sides in a gentle arc.
8. Practice your best smile.

Now you are ready for that meeting, presentation or just another day at the office.

First Impressions



The pace of our modern society delivers so many messages at every minute that we have become used to relying on quick, sometimes instant, judgments.

It's unfortunate that we commonly attach such great weight to first impressions because there can be many factors affecting the other person or the group we are connecting with which even the most empathic person is not likely to be aware of.

We're wired to carefully observe people more closely that first time when we meet for the first time, so we can categorize them as potential friends, lovers, business contacts or people to cross the street to avoid.

The other side of that is they're only going to give us about a minute to make an impression that will affect our relationship for years to come.

This is why people that pay little attention to how they appear to other people or how they approach them can have more difficulty in achieving the level of social or business success which they are capable of.

They probably consider these factors only when they know in advance that the meeting will be important to their future success; something like a job interview or applying for a loan?

But, you should try to give your best effort every time you meet someone. That will help to build your reputation as a person that is consistent and reliable.

I suggest that reviewing these tips can be of great benefit to you.

Meeting People

Why do so many of us find it difficult to introduce ourselves and start talking to people we have just met? After all, we've had a lot of practice as we've probably met someone new to us almost every day of our lives.

We may be held back by a lack of confidence in our own abilities. We may

also have had some bad encounters in the past which have contributed to that lack of confidence.

You just have to realize that each encounter is new for both of you. The other person almost certainly has no knowledge of those meetings that you might have bungled. They probably have a few similar experiences in their own history.

You just have to understand that these encounters are opportunities to improve our lives and also improve the way that we interact with people.

So prepare as well as you can and do your best. That's all you can do and no one can expect anymore from you than that.

We may also be affected by the importance of a particular meeting to our social or business future.

But, whether we are meeting somebody that may be a prospective partner or being interviewed for a better job, it's likely that they have their own reasons for wanting the meeting to succeed. They will be supportive if you show them that you are sincere and interested in them.

Sometimes, in a group situation, you may know some of those present. They can be helpful in introducing you to other people.

But, be respectful of them because they'll have their own reasons for being there and you need to fly solo as much as possible. This will also improve your ability to handle those situations where you do not know anyone among those present.



You'll probably be smiling - it's natural. But, have you ever studied the sort of smile which you offer other people? It should be natural and not overdone, with your front teeth showing a little. If your smile looks forced or you don't smile when you meet new people, then you should try a few smiles in front of your bathroom mirror, settle on one and put it to use on the very first possible occasion.

If your teeth are not in good enough condition for public view, that's something you need to get fixed as soon as possible.

Fitting into Groups

When you approach a group, be confident that they will open their ranks and accept you or, at least, give you a hearing. You can see that the study you make in private of the silent signals you are sending out can be very valuable in these situations.

If you approach slowly and show any hesitation, it is more likely that the group will be less welcoming.

Some groups, of course, will never readily when you approach. Give them no more than a couple of seconds and if there is no change, just move on to another group.

Sometimes, you will be admitted to the group but find little support or even mild aggression at your efforts to interact. That may come from just one or two individuals or from most of the group.

It's usually because these people have been treated in this way when they joined the group and they feel that you should be as well.

Some individuals may resist your approach because they have insecurities about their own position in the group or they may just be belligerent people. Whether you choose to deal with that, ignore it and focus your efforts on the more reasonable members of the group or just leave and find another group will depend on what value you place on joining that particular group.

Focus your efforts on groups of at least three people. The single people and groups of two are probably that way by their own choice - you will get better results with the larger groups.

Don't try to make a big impression when they first let you in. Take time to read the dynamics of group, who are the leaders and so on.

When you get the chance, respond with appropriate enthusiasm to something that is said and then introduce yourself to the group.

Adopt to the extent you feel comfortable, the body language which other

people in the group are exhibiting.

Maintain an open posture, but not an aggressive one. Keep smiling but don't let your expression become a frozen mask.

If the function is a fairly large one, make sure that you join more than just one or two small groups. This will help you to get a wider perspective of the people and organization involved.

Leave Them Smiling

I must add that, in my experience, the last minutes or so of a meeting can also be a very important. The impression that we leave with somebody must be based, in part at least, on what we say and our manner when we are leaving them.

Some people tend to switch off from the friendly manner that they used while they were talking to you as they focus on finding the next person they want to talk to.

This is helpful to you in realizing how little regard that person has for you.

But, it is also a warning for you to not move your attention too abruptly from a person or group that has given you time and attention.

Men’s Moves and Women’s Wiles



While the interaction between men and women has become much freer over the last few generations, we know from what we see in the media and hear from our friends, that many people have at least as many problems with their relationships as their parents and even earlier generations.

In this section, I’ll detail some of the gestures and other signals which men and women use.

Men commonly are more direct, often to the point that they are less successful than they might have been.

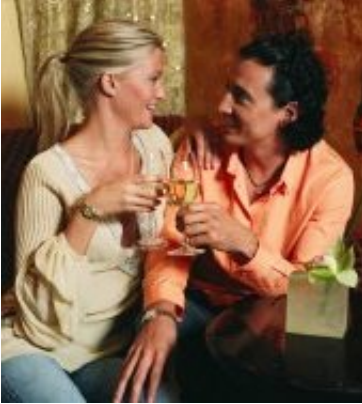
Of course, there are exceptions that seem to achieve their aims at a rate far above the average. Sometimes, they are more attractive than the average male, while some seem to instinctively recognize and focus those women who are most likely to respond to their approach on a particular occasion.

You might expect that people who have achieved or were born to an elevated status in the society would have few problems with their relationships. There is no doubt that power, status and wealth will bring many potential partners to them, but they may have just as many problems as anyone else in making their long-term relationships work.

Our society has created stereotypes that are generally accepted as the most attractive to us. Body language can help the other ninety-nine percent of us to more successful relationships.

The more rapid pace of our modern world has reduced the influence of family and other networks in bringing people together. Some people still meet their partners through family or other social groups in their communities but more of us leave the area where we have these connections and have to set up new relationships in new areas, even new countries.

There are plenty of books which focus on attracting the opposite sex.



Many of them seem to be stuck with the ploys which were successful in the middle of the last century.

Most of us have enough positive and negative experiences to be aware of how interested the person is in us.

Anyway, here are a few of the less obvious pointers which we all will exhibit to a greater or lesser degree.

These subtle changes are created by our own bodies without any effort on our part when we see and approach someone we are attracted to.

The pupils of our eyes will grow larger, something we cannot control or avoid. For some people, the sight of a juicy chocolate cake has something of the same effect.

The tone of our voice may become lower and our breathing slightly more rapid.

Men will, usually unconsciously, push up their chests and draw in their stomachs. They will place their legs apart and point their feet toward the person they're attracted to.

Women's posture will change, probably more subtly, to emphasize their physical features.

They'll turn toward you and lower their arm if there may have been an implied barrier.

Both women and men will smile more. Good teeth are widely accepted as an indicator of general good health so it is important for to keep them in the best condition possible, just like your mother used to tell you years ago.

We may adjust minor details of our clothing and many people, both men and women, will feel their faces coloring up. This visible signal may cause us a little discomfort but we shouldn't worry because it's likely that our potential partner will find it attractive.

If the man is with some friends, he will move to put himself between them and the woman.

A woman may focus more on the man and hold his gaze for longer than usual.

That's when things are looking good.

When they aren't interested, a woman will have little reaction to you, whatever you say or do.

They'll look past or through you and angle their body away from you.

They'll give more attention to their drink than you.

Don't let a turn-down ruin your day or try to ruin theirs.

Family Matters

For most of this book, I concentrate on helping you to use silent signals to improve your interactions with people you meet socially or in business.

This section is about helping you to get better rapport and cooperation with the most important people in your life – your family.

Reducing Friction

Friction in families is inevitable. There is no such thing as a family group which is always completely contented like a bunch of cows in a field. We are in each other's hair and pockets too much for everything to always be completely smooth going.

We need to aim for the best results and give due consideration to the needs and aspirations of each member.

As children grow, it's natural for them to test the boundaries and strive for greater status in the group.

Parents try to provide a supportive environment for their children to develop in while setting boundaries and standards.

Most disagreements are based on money or status (recognition, privileges and responsibilities).

Dividing housework and other chores to the point where all family members make a reasonable contribution might be easy in theory, but it's likely that there will need to be consultations and even enforcement from time to time.

Your knowledge and application of silent signals, while keeping in mind the emotional needs of all concerned, will help to smooth the inevitable bumps.

Children

Through their early years in your home, your children observe your actions and interactions with them and other members of the family. The experts say that is when parents probably have more influence than at any later time.

Parents are under great pressure from things the child may know nothing of. I believe they do their best but few have anything more than their own

experience as children to guide them when they start their own family.

Body language can help you to manage better.

Your body language can often demonstrate your view without words and watching their body language carefully may help you to know their real feelings about something you said or did.

Bad Influence

A common mistake which sets some parents on a path to a future collision course with their child is when the parent starts to demonstrate their power over the child by emphasizing their greater size or strength.

This may be unintentional and simply a reflection of how their parents, especially their father, imposed discipline on them. But the child may assume that power is always the best option if reasoning and other less confrontational methods are routinely ignored in favour of direct action.

It works while the child is small but can cause friction and may permanently affect the relationship when the child gets their own physical maturity.

It can also cause problems for the children who are influenced this way as they try to use the same tactic on their peers and other people they deal with.

Lies

Generally, it is easier to detect when children, rather than adults, are trying to conceal something.

Many children will put one or both hands near their mouths or avoid looking directly at you when they are trying to cover something up.

There are exceptions. Some children learn to mislead by imitating the false open gestures they see successfully used by the adults around them.

There's also times when the child thinks something they tell you is true and does not intend to mislead anyone.

Children's Body Language

The people I've asked about whether children use silent signals agree that babies start using them from a very early age. This is a defense mechanism

for human babies who are singularly helpless compared to other creatures' babies. Other creatures' offspring mostly have some basic skills to start looking after themselves if their parents don't, or can't, help them when they come into the world.

However much we consider ourselves more sophisticated and superior to the animals which we share the planet with, we all have the same basic instincts to strive for power, companionship, recognition and food.

As babies, we show some of these inborn behavior patterns, but we also learn and adapt the expressions and actions of the people around us.

Very young children mimic what they see other people do. It may look cute, but it is basically a tactic to win acceptance of the group by copying what older members do.

And, you can still detect some traces of those same signals in the behavior of many adults.

- An adult will withdraw from taking an active part in a conversation by staying quiet, put their hands in their pockets and lower their eyes or focus them away from you or the group you are with, just as a child does.
- I think that, apart from nicotine's addictive qualities, many adults get similar comfort from a cigarette or pipe as the child does from sucking its thumb.
- Some people, even though they don't cry in public, can't help showing the quivering or jutting lower lip or starting to rub their eyes, which are signals that a child is going to start crying.



Signals in Your Workplace

Reducing Interruptions

With many businesses adopting either open plan or cubicle style layouts for the majority of their staff, you probably find that you are getting more interruptions of a trivial kind.

You'd need to work out ways that you can reduce the interruptions and their effects on your own work.

Use some silent signals to get the message over to your colleagues without making a direct issue about it.

Turn your head to the visitor but keep your body angled toward your work.

Don't put down the pen or book that you were working with.

Don't offer them a chair or make any other signal which will encourage them to prolong the visit.

Making your Mark at Meetings

Be prepared. Research the topics on the agenda and mark those which you do feel you can make the best contribution to before you get to the meeting. Show by your readiness to make eye contact and your open stance that you are ready to make a contribution and open to the views of all those present. If you have time, prepare and rehearse the main points which you want to make.

Help the other people at the meeting to share your enthusiasm by varying the tone of your voice. The most exciting news can have little impact if you deliver it in a dull monotone.

If you realize that you made a mistake in the comments you've made, don't just keep going and hope that nobody notices. Correct it yourself straight away and you'll probably gain points with the other people present.

Listen to each person when they are speaking and ignore anyone that attempts to draw you in to a separate discussion that might be seen as disruptive.

Don't start such side conversations yourself.



Be aware of the attitude which each person brings to the meeting and, especially, when anybody displays a significant reaction, either positive or negative, to something you say.

Show your appreciation of others' contributions with words and also appropriate silent signals.

Do not let office rivalries or your private, negative opinions of anyone present prevent you from acknowledging and responding appropriately to any good points they make.

Power up Your Presentations

The tips and strategies which I share with you here are particularly important when you have to make a presentation.

That used to be the preserve of professionals. These days, most of us will be called on at some point to make a presentation on behalf of the organization we work for or perhaps a community group we belong to.

However humble the circumstances, making a good presentation can pay dividends.

You have to make an impact like you would up close and not have the effect diluted by the distance between yourself and your audience.

Be Comfortable

You might have been told the secret of making a great presentation is to “Be Natural”. But, in my view, which is based on making many hundreds of presentations and watching a lot of people who make their living from their presentations, the most important thing is to be comfortable and present an open attitude to those who you want to influence.

Stand relaxed, with your legs slightly apart. Stay balanced on the balls of your feet. If you lean backwards, so the pressure is on your heels, you might develop a cramp or, at least, present a less professional appearance.

If you have to make any extended presentation, don't sway or jiggle. Keep your legs slightly bent and your weight mostly on the balls of your feet. Make deliberate movements from time to time so that your legs do not become stiff.

Many people push their feet into shoes which are fashionable rather than comfortable. That's your choice, but comfort is much more important than style when you will be on your feet and under pressure for an extended time.

You should never risk damage to your feet for ill-fitting shoes because you will regret it for the rest of your life.

Visual Aids

The power of visual aids to enhance any presentation is well known but,

when they are badly handled or you use poor body language with them, you may lose that benefit and even turn off your audience.

- Double-check any equipment which is critical for your presentation. It doesn't matter if that's someone else's responsibility. If it's your presentation, then it's your reputation that is really on the line.
- Don't put more than a minimum of words on your slides. Get your message across in the fewest words possible because your audience will remember short messages much better.
- Don't repeat everything just as it is printed on the slide which you are showing. This repetition can give the impression that you don't think your audience is bright enough to understand the message on the slide without you repeating it.
- What you say while the audience is reading a slide must be directly related to the information on the slide.
- Don't turn your back on your audience or show any other negative body language. You should know your presentation thoroughly, so you don't have to read what is on the slides.

Making Your Points

Be aware of the reaction, or lack of it, from your audience. Private conversations and rustling of papers could be a signal that you're not holding their attention, but a silent group that are not writing notes or moving their eyes from you to your presentation and back may have the same message for you.

You need to know your material so well that you don't have to read notes. That will also help at those times when you need to change your presentation, or perhaps cover some points that are not in your notes, then return to cover the rest of your prepared material.

Don't fiddle. Use a pen or pointer but put them aside when you don't need them.

What can go Wrong?

Most books and courses about this subject give the impression that you just need to follow the directions to achieve almost instant success and there is little, if anything, that might trip you up.

Many people use the research of Professor Albert Mehrabian to contend that body language is always a highly significant factor in our discussions. But, the professors' research that they quote was limited to a specific type of response.

Body language is not a set of exact rules. I can only give you broad guidelines based on the research I have done in a wide variety of real-life situations that has worked for me very well for over thirty years.

We are not robots and the signals which each of us put out are affected by our personal circumstances, experiences, background and beliefs.

The effect on other people and their responses to our signals is similarly affected by how those same factors have affected them.

I've mentioned a few risks in the relevant sections which you need to be aware of.

This section is a list of some of the most common mistakes which people, even with some experience, make.

Different Languages

Just as people in different places speak different languages, their body language signals may differ significantly.

Gestures may have widely different meanings in different countries and cultures.

Get the Whole Picture

If you just judge a situation on one or two signals which someone shows, without considering other factors which are present, you have a high risk that you will get the wrong conclusions.

Here is a deliberately simple example. If you are talking to a group around a table and you notice that someone has their head down, as if they are

reading something in their lap, you might think that they are not interested in or accepting your message.

But, that may not be the real situation. They may actually be studying something related to what you are saying with a view to asking relevant questions when you finish speaking, or they may just be tired.

There may be people whose signals confuse you because there are factors which you are unaware of.

Some people may have an infirmity or temporary medical condition which results in their displaying what appears to be body language but are the result of the condition.

Sometimes, people’s reactions may be affected by other circumstances in their lives which are of far greater importance to them than what you are saying.

Don’t Look for Complex Motives

Body language and the other signals I discuss in this book are produced at a very basic level of our consciousness.

As you get some experience to judge your results from, you will probably find that relying on your instinctive reactions to the signals which are given out by those around you will give you better results than you might get by evaluating them for more time.

Don’t Expect to be Right Every Time

However skilled you become in detecting and understanding the silent signals, you will never get it right every time.

Some people will have you accepting whatever they say even when they have misled you in the past.

This can be someone that you are very close to and you desperately want to believe so that you ignore the signals, or perhaps a confidence trickster or person in authority whose skill at lying is greater than you can defend yourself against.

There will also be occasions where the combination of signals can be

interpreted in different ways and you won't always choose the right answer. Sometimes, people that are unsure of the response they think you would prefer, will suddenly change the signals which they are sending. You may sense this change in the signals but not realise which one reflects the truth in the situation.

I believe that you will, however, increase your accuracy and get better in time, if you keep practising and reviewing your results.

Don't Start with a Negative

Many people start almost every conversation with a negative comment. That might be about the weather, their job or even the person that they are talking to.

Even if the comments are intended and delivered in a light-hearted manner, they set a low starting point for the conversation that follows and everybody will have to work harder than otherwise necessary.

How to Practise

Using Audio and Video

Audio and video can be wonderful aids in improving the more obvious areas of how we present ourselves.

The first time you hear or see a recording of yourself is likely to give you a bit of a shock. Even your voice will seem quite different when you hear it as other people do.

Seeing how you move about and the often unconscious gestures you use, may give you an urgent desire to make some changes.

For those reasons, I recommend that you either record yourself or take any opportunity which comes to you where you can be recorded and you can get a copy of the result to enjoy and also to learn from.

The one exception that I believe you should avoid is the opportunistic media interviewer who tries to get random people in many cities to comment on current local topics and then broadcasts tightly edited snippets on the local TV or radio station.

It's called “ambush journalism” for good reason.

These segments are not focused on making those interviewed look good – they're just cannon fodder for the program. You have no time for preparation of any kind, no control over what the final broadcast will contain or leave out and, really, nothing to gain by participating.

Make your excuses and be very polite. An aggressive refusal might wind up being featured anyway!

Audio and video can only be a limited help with our silent signals. They can, perhaps, help us to realise where we might improve our signals by better alignment between our signals, gestures, appearance and what we say.

Our signals come from within us and we don't have the same level of control over them that we have of other factors in the way we present ourselves.

Workshops

We transmit most of our silent signals on a very basic level, so the value of

workshops is limited to helping you to understand their importance and to adapt or set up patterns of behavior.

I believe you have all the information in this book. You will get a clearer understanding of the techniques when you start to practise these techniques in real life.

You will learn more by practical experience in using the signals and adjusting them to fit you more closely than in workshops, but workshops can be valuable for discussing and practising the techniques with other people in a supportive atmosphere.

Only consider a workshop that is run by an instructor that you have confidence in.

As well as the instructor’s prepared material and your participation in the exercises, you will learn from the shared experiences of other participants from different social and business backgrounds and you can use the signals you get from the other people taking the course and, especially, the instructor, for practise.

If you are considering a workshop, ask for referrals to previous participants. You don’t want to attend just because the instructor is a nice person or everyone had a good time.

Ask the people you are referred to how the workshop helped them:

- ? Did they learn enough that was useful to them to justify the cost in both money and time?
- ? What was the most useful tactic or other information which they brought away from the workshop?
- ? Was the material mostly based on the instructor’s practical experience?

Does it sound like you would benefit too?

Like this book, the workshop will only benefit you if you practise what you learn and, whenever the chance arises, review your results. If necessary, go back through the course materials if you’re not getting better results when

you use the tips in your real life situations.

When you start to use the techniques in your daily context, it must be in a subtle way. If you appear to be studying your own movements and reaction to them, you will give a very negative impression of being self-absorbed.

I hope the next section which is about how to improve the signals which you send to others will be particularly helpful for you.

Improving Your Own Signals

You can improve the effectiveness of you own signals even though many of them are prompted by our most basic emotional and physical triggers.

These tips will help you to ensure that your signals are clearer and more effective, whatever the situation.

They may seem unnecessary because you’re probably doing fairly well already.

If what you’re doing now is meeting all your needs, that’s fine. But, this information might help you to do even better.

The system of signals that humans are born with is fairly good – otherwise we wouldn’t have survived this long.

But, as we grow and develop, our systems are affected by influences from our families and other people, including our peers, which may cause us to be less confident and effective when we, inevitably, have problems relating with some other people.

So, you could find some food for thought here and ways to improve the results you get by taking action in particular areas, whether it’s major modifications or little tweaks.

If you do feel that one or more significant changes might be worthwhile, start slowly and introduce them in small bits or you could cause more problems for yourself.

Is this Cheating?

Adapting our silent signals to the limited extent that we can is only intended to improve communication with other people.

It's not cheating unless we try to send signals which don't gel with our own core values. I've seen many people who have tried that and can assure you that it's very hard to do successfully.

It takes much less effort to streamline the delivery of the messages we are now sending which are in line with the values we developed through our lives.

The adjustments which I suggest are done for the same reason that you might have voice lessons to help you speak more clearly or adopt a different style of clothing because it is common where you work or spend a lot of your social time. None of that involves changing your core values.

Eye contact

This is one of the most important means of communicating with other people. We show our level of interest in what somebody is saying or doing by focusing on them.

They will know if we have our attention elsewhere and have a lasting impression that we do not value what they are saying (or them).

Keep Your Verbal and Silent Signals in Synch

You will have seen many people that say one thing while their silent signals broadcast an entirely different message. This is true of politicians and sales-people that don't really believe their own message.

It's probably made you feel uncomfortable or wary at the time, though you may not have been able to pinpoint the reason before reading this book.

This is an important point for you to remember; those who are listening to you will notice something wrong when your verbal signals don't match your silent ones unless, like some very successful leaders and sales people, you convince yourself that you really mean it - at least while you are saying it.

It's really hard to do this consistently.

You'll find that you get the best results when your verbal and silent signals align and both are consistent with your personal set of values.

Personal Space

When you meet someone for the first time, it's important to give them some space.

One of the most common complaints, especially from women about men, is that they come too close early in their first meeting.

Many see this as an aggressive action rather than an expression of interest.

It's usually easy enough to judge how much space a person needs to feel

comfortable.

When you have shaken hands and introduced yourselves, the other person will, without thinking, move to adjust the space between you so that it is comfortable for them.

At that first meeting, I suggest that you don't rush to reduce that space until your conversation has progressed and you can clearly see there is no problem in doing so.

Don't Score Points, Build Relationships.

Remember that each encounter and conversation which you have can be a building block in creating a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship.

Avoid the temptation to treat conversations as contests where you just try to score status or conversational points.

Making a Deal



Practicing the tips in this book about body language and other silent signals may be a great help to you when you are negotiating for a contract, a new job or just a discount on your next television.

Whenever you are talking to someone, and especially when you are trying to get their agreement on some deal or other, pay attention to their body language as well as to what they say.

Focusing like this will help you to better understand and be able to recall the points they make and their responses to your statements.

It is also likely to give them a good impression of you as a negotiator and listener.

You do need to be aware of their stance, and how they use their arms and feet. But, focus mainly on their face and, especially, their eyes.

Their words will only give you the information that they want you to have. But, these other factors can give you valuable clues to the main points which they are really focused on, as well as those that they regard as less valuable.

Rapport

Establishing a connection or rapport with each person that you deal with in a business or personal situation is not always easy, however much experience you have had.

The following suggestions may seem really obvious but think about whether you are using them to your best advantage in your daily encounters.

When you are in a group, try to give some attention to everyone there. Don't just focus on the most prominent or attractive people.

Pay attention when other people are making their points and respond to them in the way that you want people to respond to your contributions.

Don't make unnecessary or irrelevant comments. Stick to the topic under discussion unless you are sure that the group is ready to welcome a fresh subject.

Unless the focus of the discussion is fixing specific problems, don't introduce or respond to negative comments, especially about any person, whether they are present or not.

Animal Body Language

We cannot apply the guidelines which I suggest for human body language to animals though many people try to do exactly that.

That is the recipe for disaster, especially when dealing with wild animals, even those which have spent all or the major part of their lives in captivity, dependent on humans for their food and well being.

Even domesticated animals can be hard to judge.

When you watch or interact with animals, especially those which you don't know, be careful to not let your impression of their actions be affected by any presumption they are using more advanced thinking processes than they may be capable of.

Be especially careful with old, injured or unfamiliar animals.

Taking the Next Step

I hope that you will have as much success as I've enjoyed by using the tips in my book.

Start slowly and introduce any changes in small steps that are easy for you to do without drawing people's attention to them.

Watch people in the public spotlight as well as those around you for good and bad examples of using silent signals.

Don't give up if something doesn't work out the first time you try. Nobody that achieved any measure of success ever did that.

The important thing is to keep trying. You only fail when you stop trying.

Ward Oxley

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