

Communication

OBJECTIVES/RATIONALE

Many people take communication for granted. When they speak or listen, they assume that the message given or received is being understood. In reality, most messages are distorted, incomplete, or lost on their way from one person to another. It is estimated that 80% of a message gets distorted or lost as it travels through an organization. The student will identify types of verbal and written communication, nonverbal communication, and communication filters.

TEKS: 121.26 (c) 1A, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3D, 3E

TAKS ELA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

KEY POINTS

POWER POINT

- I. Impersonal Communication
 - A. one-way communication processes
 - B. used to give basic information such as company policies, instructions, facts
 - C. generally, organizations use memos, letters, e-mail, voice mail or bulletin boards (quick easy ways to “get word out”)
 - D. limitations of impersonal communication:
 1. people receiving information usually have no opportunity to ask sender questions or to clarify vague wording
- II. Interpersonal Communication
 - A. occurs when people involved talk and listen (dialogue)
 - B. for true communication to take place:
 1. message must be understood by person receiving information in same way the sender intended
 2. feedback is the way to make sure message has been understood
 - C. limitations of interpersonal communication:
 1. takes more time than impersonal type
- III. Communication Filters – biases, attitudes, and emotions that color our perceptions of others
 - A. **semantics**
 1. words are labels that stand for something and the meaning of words lie within us
 2. many words have less precise meanings than others and are interpreted by different people in different ways (important to be precise and explicit)
 - B. **emotions** – the most powerful communication filter
 1. sender who is emotional or angry is perceived differently
 2. emotions can prevent receiver from hearing what speaker has to say
 3. emotional state can make listener too susceptible to speaker’s point of view
 4. important to detach self from emotional feelings and think of verbal content
 - C. **attitudes** – beliefs backed up by emotions; deeply embedded ideas and feelings
 1. receiver bias towards accents, ethnicity, mannerisms, dress, demeanor, physical characteristics
 2. sender bias towards listener’s ethnicity, mannerisms, dress, demeanor, physical characteristics
 3. receiver and/or sender bias towards others opinions (abortion issue, religious preference, gender orientation, political viewpoints, social perspectives)
 4. when impressed with speaker’s looks, voice, dress, etc., receiver is more likely to be

receptive to message

- D. **role expectations** – control how people expect themselves and others to act
 1. expect person to stay within confines of particular role and tend not to listen when they talk “outside” their expected role (example: your best friend, who has never dated, is telling you how to treat boy/girl friend)
 2. refuse to allow people to change their roles and take on new ones (example: elections to cheerleader, homecoming queen, team captain, job promotions)
 3. sometimes people use roles to alter the way they relate to others (example: see themselves as brainy, outgoing, macho, etc.)
- E. **gender bias** – tendency to color messages received from opposite gender
 1. a “women” place/ man’s work

IV. Nonverbal Messages – the “silent messages” of our body

- A. research indicates that our nonverbal messages carry five times as much impact as verbal messages
 1. when verbal and nonverbal messages match:
 - a. give impression that we can be trusted and that what we are saying reflects what we truly believe
 2. when body language contradicts spoken words:
 - a. listeners become confused, lose trust, question credibility in the speaker
- B. Language of the Eyes
 1. transmit more information than any other part of body
 2. because eye contact is so revealing, people generally observe unwritten rules about looking at others
 - a. amount of eye contact is dependent on culture
 - b. in the United States, direct, prolonged stare between strangers usually considered impolite, even aggressive
 - c. people entering elevators or other crowded areas will glance at others briefly, acknowledge their presence, then look away
 - d. in business settings people expect more direct eye contact

general rule: when communicating in business setting, eyes should meet other person’s about 60 to 70 percent of time
- C. Common “Eye Language”
 1. deceit – touching eye, increased blinking of eyes, averting eyes
 2. like being in someone’s presence – dilated pupils
 3. dislike being in someone’s presence – constricted pupils
 4. expressions: sparkling eyes, playful eyes, deceitful eyes, sad eyes, scared eyes, etc.
- D. Gestures:
 1. sending a nonverbal message every time individuals cross arms, place finger by mouth, clench hands, cross legs
 2. gestures indicate whether people are open or closed to communication, how comfortable individual is in given situation, who is the true leader of a group
 3. often individuals who agree with speaker will mirror speaker’s posture or expressions
 4. gestures common in American culture have dramatically different meanings to people from outside U.S.
 - a. nodding head up and down means “yes” in most countries, but means “no” in Greece and Bulgaria
 - b. common American gesture of nonchalantly folding arms in front of you shows disrespect in Fiji
- E. Proxemics – how people define their personal space and position themselves around others
 1. Edward Hall—American anthropologist who pioneered study, which determined spatial needs of humans

2. comfort zones – invisible buffer by which we define our personal space
 - a. public comfort zone – (4 feet to 12 feet)
 - 1) range of distance that is place between individual and strangers
 - 2) (i.e. sales person, new acquaintance, maintenance person, etc.)
 - b. social comfort zone - (1 ½ feet to 4 feet)
 - 1) range of distance that is placed between individuals at social functions
 - 2) (i.e. weddings, church, parties, neighborhood gatherings, etc.)
 - c. intimate comfort zone (6 inches to 18 inches)
 - 1) range of distance that is placed between individuals with whom we are emotionally and physically close
 - 2) (i.e. family members, spouse, boy/girl friend, close friends, etc.)
3. population density factor
 - a. people from highly populated areas limit their personal space out of spatial necessity.
 - b. people from rural areas extend radius of personal space
4. cultural factor
 - a. Europeans and Asians have a social zone that is comparable to our intimate zone

V. Who is Responsible for Effective Communication?

- A. both sender and receiver share equal responsibility
- B. communication loop is complete when receiver understands, feels, or behaves according to message of sender
- C. receivers must provide senders with enough feedback to ensure that accurate message has passed through all the filters that might alter it

VI. Improving Personal Communication

- A. send clear messages
 1. don't talk too fast
 2. don't be too verbose
 3. be aware of communication filters
 4. ask purposeful questions to make sure you were understood
- B. use words carefully
 1. use simple and precise language
 2. avoid words that might be vague
 3. avoid technical language and trendy jargon
- C. use repetition
 1. studies show that repetition is an important element in ensuring communication accuracy
 2. use parallel channels of communication: verbal instructions followed by memo
- D. use appropriate timing
 1. not wise to communicate when receiver is extremely busy, angry, etc.
- E. develop listening skills
 - a. research from Ohio State University
 - 1) amount of time people spend on different parts of communication process: listening—45%, speaking—30%, reading—16%, writing—9%
 - 2) people listen at a 25% efficiency rate in typical situations
 - 3) discrepancy between rate of speaking and rate of hearing—
 - a) people speak approximately 150 words per minute
 - b) listening capacity is about 450 words per minute
 - c) because message is usually much slower than our capacity to listen, we have plenty of time to let minds roam, think ahead and plan what to say next

VII. Active Listening – process of feeding back to speaker what listeners think speaker meant

- A. cultivate listening attitude

- B. focus full attention
 - C. take notes
 - D. ask questions
- VIII. Empathic Listening
- A. practice objective listening
 - B. accept what is said even if you don't agree
 - C. take time to hear what the person has to say

ACTIVITIES

- I. Prepare and present skit using inappropriate communication skills. The students who are observing will write down "bad" communication techniques. (See Activity Guideline for Communication Skits)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Activity Guideline for Communication Skits

<http://www.queendom.com/communic.html> - on-line communication skills test

Beyond Words: A Self Study, D. Kacher, Revised -2000

Key for self-study

<http://www.officewallropes.com/communication.html>

<http://www.careercraft.com/comm.html>



sites for effective communication techniques

<http://www.johnmole.com/articles18.htm> - body language site

[http://www.p.vt.edu/cdrom/tools/tools1.html#One-on-one\[interpersonal\]skills](http://www.p.vt.edu/cdrom/tools/tools1.html#One-on-one[interpersonal]skills) - good site for interpersonal skills

ASSESSMENT

Successful completion of skit

ACCOMMODATIONS

For reinforcement, the student will complete self-study, *Beyond Words*.

For enrichment, the student will take on-line communication skills test. (See MATERIALS NEEDED for site address.)

REFLECTIONS

Activity Guideline: Communication Skits

OBJECTIVE:

Have the student create meaningful skits that demonstrate poor styles of communication.

GOAL:

Enhance awareness of good and bad communication techniques.

- Give a copy of one of the following communication scenarios to each group of students
 - Skit preparation should be limited to approximately 15 minutes.
 - Each skit should take no longer than 3 minutes.
 - The student audience will critique each skit and identify poor verbal and nonverbal communication techniques.
- 1) **job interview** (the interviewer has bad communication skills—talks too fast, gets off subject, asks personal questions, distracted by phone calls, etc.)
 - 2) **college interview** (the student has poor communication skills—inappropriate clothing, chews gum, talks about how popular he/she was in high school, etc.)
 - 3) **group presentation** (at least one student in group of presenters demonstrates communication faux pas)—poor posture, fidgets with pen, hair, necklace, uses vague sentences, looks at their feet, turns back on audience when writing on board, etc.)
 - 4) **class memo for club event** –memo is messy, vague, rambling fails to give definitive information for club event, etc.
 - 5) **telephone conversation** (conversation between store manager and emotional, irate customer)—customer is too loud, emotional, fails to sound logical, threatens, engages in name calling, etc.
 - 6) **conversation between members of opposite sex who are attracted to each other** – both parties are nervous, somewhat tongue-tied, silly, fidgets with hair, watch, etc.
 - 7) **conversation between best friends** (best friend is talking about his/her recent breakup and listener is not very sympathetic)—acts distracted, changes subject, pulls out candy bar and begins to eat, “rolls eyes” when friend isn’t looking, answers, ah-huh, etc.
 - 8) **conversation with teacher** (student is shy and unable to have a meaningful dialogue concerning science project)—student fails to make good eye contact, student’s voice is low and barely audible, student taps foot on floor and has body partially turned away from teacher, student’s shoulders are slumped, student uses vague, indecisive language.

Name _____

Date _____

Self-Study Exam

1. Briefly define incongruent body language.
2. Name the two basic palm positions and explain what each signifies.
3. When one person's hand is limp during a handshake, this is referred to as the _____ handshake.
4. You are called in for a consultation with your teacher. When you arrive, he is leaning back in his chair with hands clasped behind his head. How would you interpret your teacher's mood?
5. A universally understood gesture used by a group to take the place of words is called:
6. Describe the "Texas Vice."
7. A woman is holding her wrist behind her back. This is generally an indication of:
 - a. confidence
 - b. boredom
 - c. feeling of superiority
 - d. attempt at self control
 - e. arrogance
8. Name a factor that determines an individual's spatial needs?
9. A signal given in conjunction with verbal conversation is called:
10. Give a brief explanation of what is meant by "taking gestures out of context."

11. A group of individuals are waiting for the elevator. One individual has her arms folded across her chest and both hands tucked under the armpits. Most likely she is feeling:
- a. cold
 - b. defensive
 - c. reserved
 - d. insecure
 - e. scared
12. How would you position your hand during a handshake if you wanted to demonstrate dominance?
13. The “cowboy” pose is taboo in:
- a. Australia
 - b. Europe
 - c. Middle East
 - d. Caribbean
 - e. South America
14. Hand steepling generally signifies that an individual feels confident. If that individual also has his/her head tilted back, the posturing now reflects:
- a. attentiveness
 - b. deceitfulness
 - c. boredom
 - d. arrogance
 - e. day dreaming
15. Twisting of a neck chain or strand of hair generally indicates:
16. Objects or body parts that are twisted, rubbed or picked are called _____.
17. The range of distance that is placed between individuals at social functions is approximately:
- a. 4 feet
 - b. 1 foot
 - c. under 1 foot if alcohol is served
 - d. ½ foot
18. The palms-up position expresses:
19. List three deceit gestures:
20. You are talking with a customer who keeps looking away and rubbing her neck. She is probably:
- a. frustrated
 - b. anxious
 - c. suffering from whip lash
 - d. bored
 - e. embarrassed
21. What is the facial gesture that usually signals skepticism?

22. When an individual averts his/her eyes and increases the rate of blinking this more than likely indicates:
23. List three reasons why we might allow certain strangers into our intimate zone.
24. When a person's non-verbal cues and spoken words are incongruent, what feelings might the listener experience?
25. Briefly explain how certain inherent body language might evolve into more refined gestures.
26. Name two types of professionals who might be "connoisseurs" of non-verbal language.
27. You are at a party and a person you are introduced to presents you with a limp hand to shake. This individual is possibly:
- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. a pianist | d. a wimp |
| b. a surgeon | e. suffering from arthritis |
| c. a southern bell | f. all of the above |
28. Clenched hands is generally a sign of frustration or negativity. Research indicates that negativity is stronger when the clenched hands are positioned _____.
29. Using the thumb to point at someone signifies:
30. What can an "ear-rub" gesture indicate?
31. "Gut feelings" are really . .

32. If you wanted to appeal to another individual, the best position of the hands would be:

33. The “politician’s handshake” is suppose to demonstrate”

34. A single arm crossed over the chest more than likely indicates:

- a. arrogance
- b. boredom
- c. irritation

- d. apathy
- e. insecurity

Key: Self Study Exam

1. when nonverbal language does not match with what is being said
2. palm upward – appeal or request; palm down – stop or hold down
3. “dead fish”
4. relaxed (even smug)
5. emblem
6. aggressive handshake that crunches knuckles
7. d
8. population density in which he/she was raised
9. cue
10. trying to attach meaning to a single gesture instead of observing cumulative gestures
11. a
12. turn hand so that your palm is facing downward
13. c
14. d
15. general anxiety
16. manipulators
17. a
18. submission, beseeching or urging
19. mouth guard, nose touch, eye rub
20. a
21. one lifted eyebrow
22. that the individual is lying
23. any three of the following: altered mental state (intoxication), intense experience (disaster, etc.), sexual attraction, professional necessity, in large group of people
24. confused, uncertain, or uncomfortable
25. child responds with to lying with big gesture (hands fly over mouth); teen responds with more subtle gesture (finger at edge of mouth, biting fingernail)
26. politicians, gamblers, charismatic leaders, etc.
27. f
28. higher on torso
29. disrespect
30. individual is perplexed
31. subconscious ability to interpret body language
32. turned so that the palms were both facing upward
33. companionship, warmth, and/or sincerity
34. e

Self-Study

Beyond Words . . .

Understanding and Interpreting Body Language

Detna K. Kacher

This self-study will discuss and explore gestures, posture, facial expressions, and personal space.

OBJECTIVE: To make students more observant and perceptive to non-verbal cues of other individuals.

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

As homo sapiens, we pride ourselves on the seemingly unique ability to verbalize feelings and ideas. Thoughts can be expressed, exchanged, and analyzed from spoken words. Oddly enough, little attention is given to gestures that accompany these spoken words in everyday conversation. As highly evolved human beings, words are considered the pinnacle of civilized communication and oftentimes tend to be taken at face value. While the mouth and voice may be articulating one story, gestures and posture may be telling a completely different story (Reece & Brandt, 1996). By taking time to observe and study the nuances of human postures, one can gain greater insight as to the true nature of peoples' actual feelings. This understanding is beneficial for building better casual and working relationships, and for maintaining personal relationships.

KEY TERMS

For quick recognition, these terms will appear in bold print when first introduced.

Cue – an action or signal given in conjunction with spoken words.

Emblem – a physical act that is universally understood by a group and intentionally used to take the place of words. (i.e. nodding one's head up and down to indicate "yes")

Gestures – movements of the body, head, arms, hands, and/or face to express feelings and emotions.

Manipulators – objects (pencil, keys, glasses, necklace, etc.) or a body part (hair, fingernail, ear, etc.), which an individual will rub, pick at, or manipulate in some fashion. Specific manipulators, while not having particular significance in and of themselves, usually indicate general anxiety (i.e. twisting hair around finger, rubbing foot against leg, jingling keys, etc.).

Illustrators – physical acts, which by themselves have no meaning but are used while speaking to help explain the verbal content.

Proxemics – the study of how and where people space themselves when interacting with one another.

COLLECTIVE GESTURES

It is important to note that one should not always try to attach meaning or significance to a single **gesture**. This is referred to as “taking a gesture out of context” (Pease, 1981). Instead, individual gestures should be observed in clusters. The sum total of posture and gestures provide a more accurate picture of the person you are observing. To base an interpretation on a solitary gesture would be like trying to analyze a news article or story from one sentence. Without the benefit of supporting sentences, a single sentence could be interpreted many different ways. The actual meaning of the scenario would be lost. This holds true for body language. Each gesture is like a sentence, and the sum total of postures and gestures eventually relates a “non-verbal story”.

INTUITION AND VERBAL AGREEMENT

We have all experienced situations in which we feel that the person to whom we are talking simply does not “ring true.” In other words, your intuition tells you that certain people are not being straightforward even though their conversation sounds logical and appropriate in context. This “intuition” results from your subconscious ability to read another person’s nonverbal **cues** with the spoken words. If the spoken words and body language do not match, you may feel confused, uncertain, or uncomfortable about that person and not consciously understand why (Pease, 1981). Interestingly enough, many people typically ignore body language and give greater credence to verbal communication even when they feel confusion about an individual (Skolnick, 1986).

A significant number of adults and children who have been victimized in some fashion, often acknowledge (in retrospect), ambiguous or sinister feelings about the individual who ultimately violated them. What seems to have happened is that they picked up on incongruities between verbal and non-verbal communication that put them on guard. Since most people tend to recognize non-verbal signals on a subconscious level, they often find no rational reason to be afraid of their potential perpetrator and dismiss their ominous hunch.

Although ignoring incongruent body language and spoken words is generally benign and does not ultimately lead to physical violation, recognition of incongruities can give insight concerning more subtle forms of duplicity and provide the observer with greater understanding about people with whom they are dealing on an everyday basis (Elgin, 1980).

DEVELOPMENTAL EVOLUTION OF INHERENT GESTURES

Behavioral Scientists have found that there are some basic communication gestures, which are universally alike and believed to be inherent (Morris, 1994). Some examples of these **emblems** are: smiling, frowning, nodding the head forward to indicate “yes”, turning the head from side to side to indicate “no”, wrinkling the forehead to indicate confusion, and shrugging the shoulders to indicate that you don’t know something (Axtell, 1991). While we are children, these inherent gestures tend to be exaggerated and easy to read. When a mom refers to her “mother’s intuition” or states that she can “read her children like a book” she is actually giving acknowledgement to the overt readability of children’s uninhibited body language.

When children are small and tell a lie or say something which they know is “naughty”, their hands immediately fly over their mouth as though to keep the inappropriate words from escaping (**Figure 1**). This gesture is thought to be inherent and continues to be used throughout a lifetime in more subtle and varied forms (Pease, 1981). For instance, a teenager might bring one hand up to the face and rub around the mouth when trying to bamboozle his/her parents or a teacher (**Figure 2**).



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

An adult may bring the little finger to the edge of the mouth and lightly stroke the corner or touch a front tooth. Sometimes adults will refrain from using their hands and bite a lower lip, purse the lips, or skew the mouth from side to side (**Figure 3**). This is an example of how body language evolves over a lifetime.

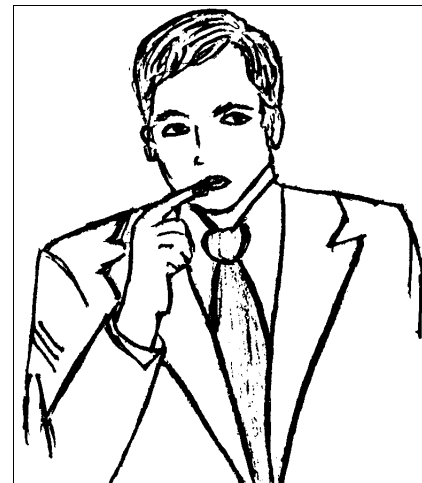


Fig. 3

PART 2

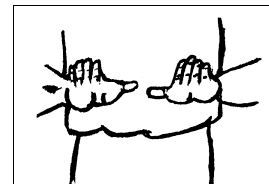
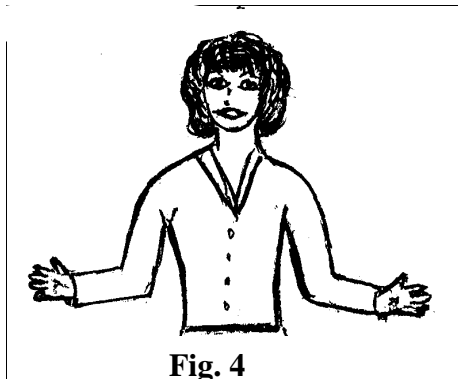
BODY LANGUAGE

THE PALM

Historically, an open palm has signified honesty, truth, allegiance, and submission (i.e. Pledge of Allegiance with palm over heart, palm over Bible or held upward and exposed when swearing to the truth in a court of law). (Morris, 1994).

TWO BASIC PALM POSITIONS:

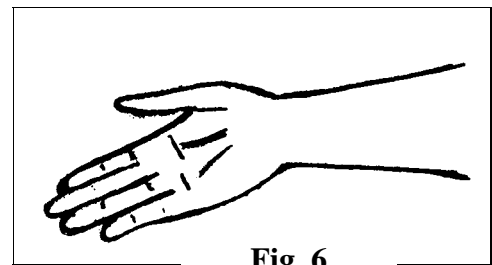
1. open palm in upward position – gesture that signifies an appeal or request to others (**Figure 4**).
2. open palm facing outward or downward – a gesture that indicates desire to stop or hold something down; a signal of restraint (**Figure 5**).



THE POWER OF THE PALM

The position of the palm conveys a soundless summon of authority and power over others. Three primary palm positions can be observed in the context of everyday conversation: the palms-up position; the palms-down position; and the closed palm with extended finger position (Pease, 1981).

The palms-up position expresses submission (**Figure 6**). It is used when beseeching or urging people to do a task or favor. For instance, a girl wants a fellow co-worker to assist with a task. When making the request, the girl used the palms-up gesture. The fellow worker is less likely to feel that he or she is being given a command. Instead, the request comes across like a query for support rather than an order. The fellow worker is less likely to feel threatened, intimidated, or resentful about the request.



The palms-down position expresses authority (**Figure 7**). When requesting help from a co-worker of equal status, the palms-down is often interpreted as a dominance signal. The co-worker might feel as though you regard him/her as a subordinate instead of an equal and feels resentful or hostile. However, this palm-down position is acceptable to subordinates who expect supervisors, team leaders, and managers to demonstrate authority (Axtell, 1991).



Fig. 7

The closed palm with extended finger expresses authority that borders on tyranny (**Figure 8**). Oftentimes, the people who use (or abuse) this gesture hammer their fist in rhythm with their words. The visual effect is likened to that of a pounding gravel or club. This gesture is said to be indicative of people who want to pound their listener into submission. The closed palm with pointed finger is a very intimidating gesture and results in negative feelings from the recipient (Pease, 1981)

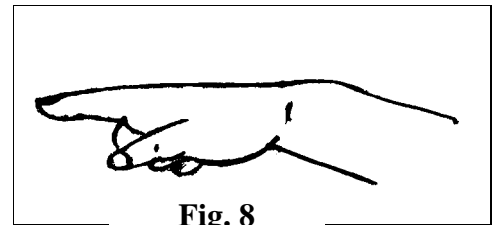


Fig. 8

VETERANS OF PALM DECEPTION

Certain individuals use the palms-up position to their advantage. Consider politicians. Body language is an important consideration in the grooming of a politician. The next time you watch a seasoned politician state his or her platform and ask for your support, try to observe his/her hands. They will generally be exposed in a subtle, palms-up fashion as though appealing to the public. Don't forget, this position is also one of submissiveness and demonstrates to the voters that he or she is their public servant! It reinforces the "trust me—I am a humble individual and need your support" tactic.

PALM TO PALM (Handshakes)

Three basic attitudes are transmitted through the handshake: dominance, submission, and equality (Pease, 1981).

Dominance is shown by turning your hand so that your palm is down during the handshake (**Figure 9**). Your palm does not need to be parallel to the floor, but should be facing downwards in relation to the other person's palm. You have probably heard the phrase about "people trying to get the upper hand"—this is an example of the physical origin of that phrase. If you want to let a person know that you are assertive or in control, the dominant palm position during a handshake will convey your message.

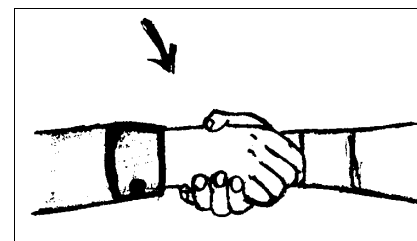
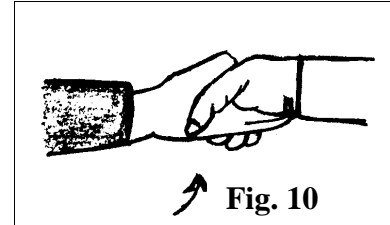
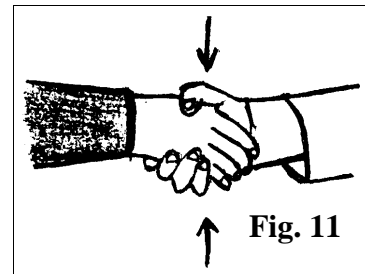


Fig. 9

Submission is shown by turning your hand so that your palm is facing upwards during the handshake (**Figure 10**). Behavioral scientists see the palm as the vulnerable side of the hand. Offering your hand with the palm up has been compared to a dog rolling on its back and exposing its belly to demonstrate trust and submission. This is a very docile, and sometimes passive, position and can be used when you want to permit someone to feel in control of the encounter taking place.



Equality is shown by turning your palm so that it faces neither up or downwards (**Figure 11**). This handshake lets a person know that you consider him/her as an equal. Sometimes when two dominant people shake hands, instead of an equality handshake, they both strive to point the palm down. A symbolic struggle takes place resulting in a vice-like crunch.



Although certain people might offer a palm-up handshake, this may not always signify submissiveness. If, for instance, an individual has a medical condition such as arthritis, he or she might place the hand in a submissive position to avoid a firm grip. Professionals who make their living with their hands (i.e. pianists, surgeons, etc. may offer a submissive handshake to protect their hands (Morris, 1994).

HYBRID HANDSHAKES

The Two-Handed Handshake

The “two-handed” handshake is demonstrated by the initiator clasping both hands around the recipient’s hand (**Figure 12**). It is intended to give the impression of companionship and warmth. Sometimes this is referred to as the “politician’s handshake” (Axtell, 1991).

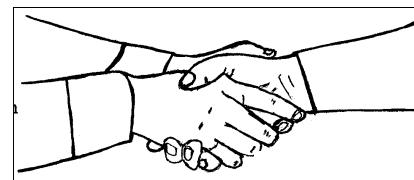


Fig. 12

Although this handshake is frequently used by those who wish to demonstrate a sincere depth of friendliness, many people feel uncomfortable with the intimacy, which this handshake evokes.

Grasping the Arm Handshake

This is a variation of the glove handshake whereby the initiator shakes a person's extended hand in the conventional fashion while grasping the receiver's upper arm with the free hand (**Figure 13**). Once again, this is intended to demonstrate sincerity and warmth but is often seen as a violation of personal space since the initiator's left hand invades the receiver's intimate zone (Morris, 1994).

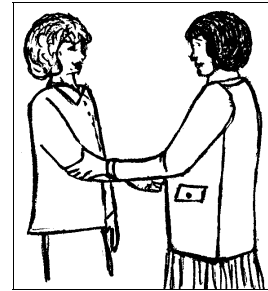


Fig. 13

The Knuckle Cruncher Handshake

This is the hallmark of the aggressive handshake whereby one or both participants firmly squeeze the offered hand (**Figure 14**). The knuckle cruncher is sometimes referred to as the “Texas Vice”, suggesting that Texans are domineering, assertive folks. While this handshake is not limited to Texans, it does seem to be exploited by men as opposed to women. Behavioral scientists feel that this greeting behavior is due to a socialization process, which encourages boys to employ this handshaking technique in order to demonstrate their assertive, powerful, and/or “manly” attributes (Simmons, Irwin, & Drinnin, 1987). It is an exaggerated variation of the “firm handshake”.

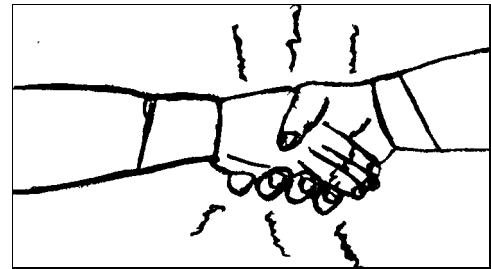


Fig. 14

The “Dead Fish” Hand Shake

Whereas the knuckle cruncher is the hallmark of aggressive handshakes, the dead fish handshake is the hallmark of passive handshakes and carries negative connotations (Pease, 1981). The “dead fish” hand is limp and unresponsive to the other party when offered in greeting (**Figure 15**). This handshake is generally considered to demonstrate a weak, apathetic, or submissive individual. Traditionally, this was an acceptable (and appropriate) handshake for women. A woman was permitted to “present” her hand to others, but any female who returned a firm handshake was not deemed “womanly”. For women who are socialized to embrace a submissive female ideology, this gender specific handshake is still considered correct and proper.

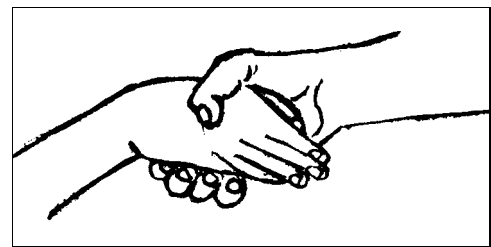


Fig. 15

The Fingertip Handshake

This handshake occurs when one party stops short of grasping the other participant's palm and instead clasps her/his fingers (**Figure 16**). Sometimes this happens when one participant (due to lack of confidence, anxiety, or intoxication) misses his/her mark and mistakenly grabs the fingers. Other times this technique is used when people want to maintain greater spatial distance and less intimacy with the person he or she is greeting (Pease, 1981).

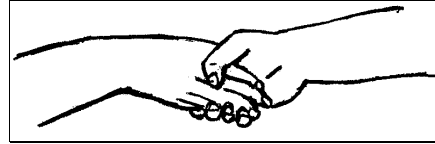


Fig. 16

The Straight-Arm Extension Handshake

The initiator of this handshake will offer a straight, extended arm (**Figure 17**) in greeting. The primary purpose is to maintain distance and formality. People who use this handshake are often thought of as reserved (Morris, 1994).



Fig. 17

THE HANDS

Hand Clenching

This gesture can have several meanings. When the individual holds the clutched hands at chest level and against the body (**Figure 18**), this is often an indication of personal pleading (Morris, 1994).



Fig. 18

When the clenched hands are at the chin or chest level but not next to the body (**Figure 19**), this is a signal of frustration or negativity (Pease, 1981). Next time you are at a meeting and the topic of conversation becomes heated, look around. Has anyone placed their elbows on the table and clenched their hands in front of their chin or mouth? That might be a good time to take a break.

Sometimes the clenched hands might rest in an individual's lap or by his/her side. Research has indicated that the higher the clenched hands, the stronger the frustration or negativity (Pease, 1981).



Fig. 19

Hand Chop

This is an aggressive gesture that speakers sometimes use when they want to accent what is being said. The hand is extended and slices down through the air in a karate-like fashion sometimes making contact with the palm of the opposite hand (**Figure 20**). This gesture seems to be symbolic of cutting through verbal arguments and debris in order to make a clear, concise point. Although this is a forceful and aggressive gesture, it does not have the violent connotation, as does the chopping fist with extended finger.

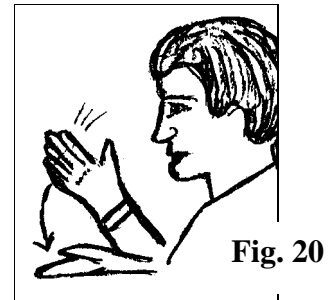


Fig. 20

Hand Steepling

Individuals who feel confident frequently use this gesture. When the steepled hands are in the raised position (**Figure 21**), the individual is usually speaking (offering ideas, comments, etc.). If the individual assuming this position also has his/her head tilted back, the posturing reflects arrogance. When the steepled hands are in a lowered position (**Figure 22**), the individual usually is listening. Researchers have noted that women tend to use the lowered steeple position more than the raised position.

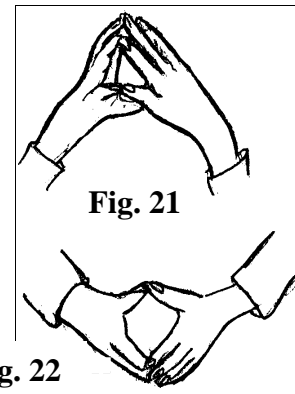


Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Hand-Holding Behind the Back

When an individual holds both hands behind the back, this is a gesture that signals confidence (**Figure 23**). This pose is often associated with royalty and /or people who regard themselves as socially or economically “superior”. It allows the individual to expose the trunk of his/her body and signals an unconscious act of fearlessness.



Fig. 23

Handholding behind the back should not be confused with wrist or arm holding (**Figures 24, 25**). These gestures indicate an attempt at self-control (hence the phrase, “Get a grip on yourself”). This pose seems to signify an individual’s attempt to control his or her temper and keep the arms from striking out. Generally speaking, the higher up the hand grips the arm, the angrier the individual and the greater the attempt at self-control.

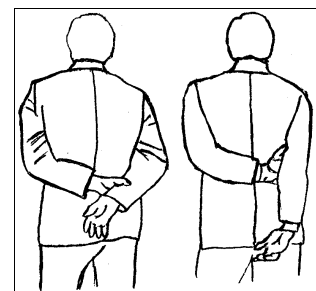


Fig. 24

Fig. 25

Thumb Presentation

Presentation of thumbs is a gesture, which signals superiority or dominance. Thumbs are most often displayed from pockets and are usually part of a gesture cluster that signals an authoritative attitude (**Figure 26**).

Sometimes the thumb is used to point at people. When it is used in this fashion, it is a signal of disrespect.

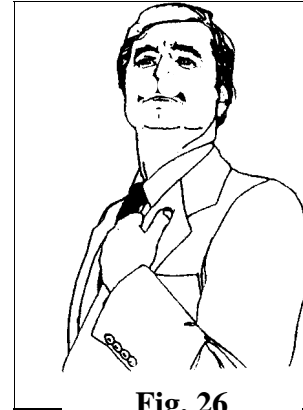


Fig. 26

FINGERS & HAND TO FACE, HEAD & NECK

Finger(s) to Mouth

When an individual places a finger (or fingers) in the mouth, this is a signal that he or she is under pressure or feeling insecure (**Figure 27**). Whereas the young child might suck on a thumb or finger, an adult might gently bite down on a fingertip or fingernail. This gesture is an unconscious appeal for assurance.

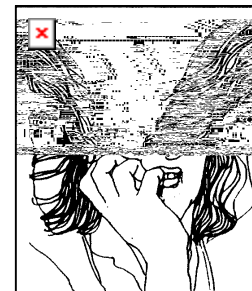


Fig. 27

Hand to Chin & Cheek—Evaluation Gestures

1. Indifference/Boredom Gesture (**Figure 28**)

In Figure 28, the individual is resting his jaw and cheek against his hand as though to support the weight of his head. As most of you already know, this is a signal of profound indifference or boredom. The gesture seems to imply that the individual is so weary that he/she can barely hold his head up. The degree of indifference or boredom can be accessed by observing the droop of the head and how much support the hand is offering. The more assistance the hand offers, the greater degree of boredom (Pease, 1981).

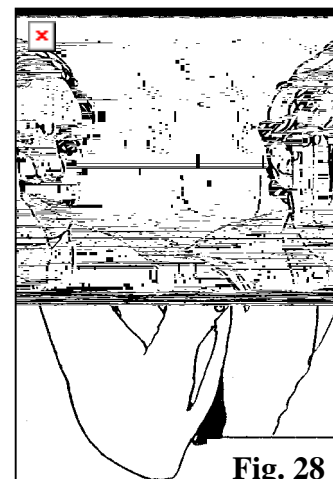


Fig. 28

2. Gesture of Interest (**Figure 29**)

If the hand is closed and resting on the cheek with the index finger extended towards temple (and is not used as a head support), this is a gesture of interest (Pease, 1981). Men tend to hold their head in a vertical position, whereas women may tilt their head slightly to the side where the hand is resting. Even though an individual might maintain the closed hand position, once the hand begins to act as a head support that is an indication that the individual's interest is beginning to wane. Sometimes you might notice a variation of this gesture, which includes the inward extension of the thumb to support the chin (**Figure 30**-not shown). This is an indication that the listener, while interested, is having critical or negative thoughts (Pease, 1981).

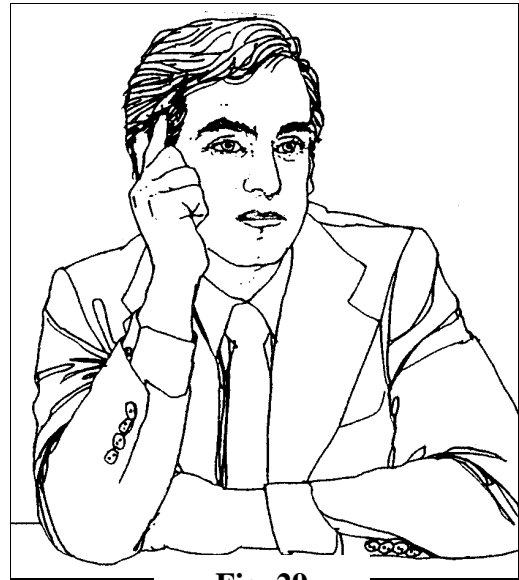


Fig. 29

3. Forming a Decision Gesture (**Figure 31**)

When one hand moves to the lower jaw and begins a chin-stroking gesture, this is a sign that the individual is forming a decision about something (Morris, 1994). Men who have beards might stroke their beard between index finger and thumb.



Fig. 31

Decision-Making Variations

Sometimes people will use **manipulators**, which are close at hand when they are forming a decision. For instance, some individuals might remove their glasses and study their form or put the tip of the extended arm support into the mouth. Other individuals might stroke a pencil or pen or put the writing implements into their mouth (Fast, 1991).

Next time you are in class or a meeting, try to observe the people around you. Who is giving a boredom signal? Who is interested? Anyone seem critical? Are there any decisions on the horizon? Are you watching for gesture clusters? You might observe an individual who initially gave signs of boredom gradually begin stroking his or her chin. You have read the silent language of an attitude in transition—words are not necessary for interpretation.

Hand to Mouth, Ear, or Eye—(Deceitful Gestures)

1. The Mouth Shield Gesture (*speaking no evil . . .*)

This is when an individual's hand covers the mouth either partially or in its entirety (**Figure 32**). If an individual who is speaking uses this gesture, it is a signal that he/she is exaggerating or lying. If, however, someone covers his/her mouth while you are speaking, it indicates that the listener doesn't believe you! Some people are aware that their hand to mouth gesture might give away their true feelings and will feign a cough right as the hand shoots up to the mouth (Pease, 1981).

A variation of this posturing is also used when an individual feels that he/she is on display and feels nervous. The individual might bring a hand up to the mouth or side of the face in an effort to partially cover the face and lend symbolic support to the head. Even actors and TV personalities rely on this gesture when they are interviewed.

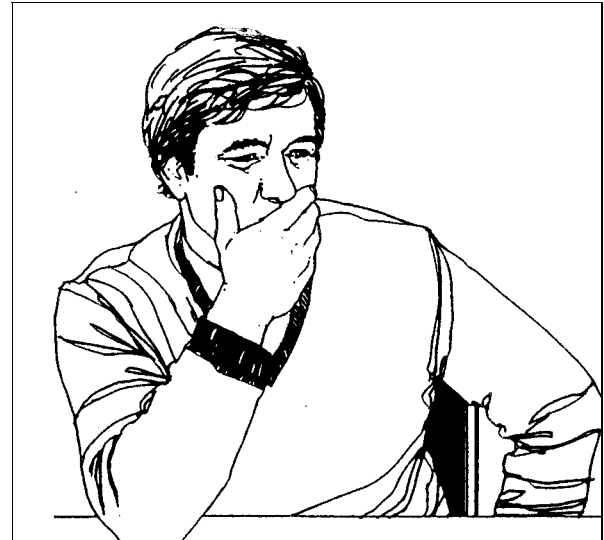


Fig. 32

2. The Nose Touch Gesture

This gesture is a modification of the mouth shield. Instead of doing something so obvious as covering the mouth (as children do), the individual bypasses the mouth and lightly rubs below the nose (**Figure 33**). Some people may actually comment that “their allergies are acting up”! That explanation may indeed be partially true. Researchers have determined that lying can cause a physiological response, which causes the sensitive nerve endings at the base of the nose to tingle and itch (Pease, 19981). One way to determine if the speaker's statement is credible is to observe his or her nose touching frequency when you move on to other conversation topics. Remember that gesture clusters will be of the utmost importance when deciphering more refined body language such as this.



Fig. 33

3. The Eye Rub

This is a subconscious gesture that is used when a person is intentionally trying to deceive others. The individual brings a forefinger to the eye and will rub while glancing away (**Figure 34**). Whereas a teenager will obviously look down at his/her feet when trying to deceive, an adult employs more sophisticated techniques like the eye rub, which distracts the listener and permits the deceiver to break eye contact.



Fig. 34

4. Ear Rub

When the ear is rubbed between the thumb and forefinger, this is a subconscious gesture indicating that the listener does not wish to hear something, or has heard enough (**Figure 35**). This is generally an adult gesture. Children, on the other hand, will cover their ears with both hands in an attempt to block out what they are hearing.

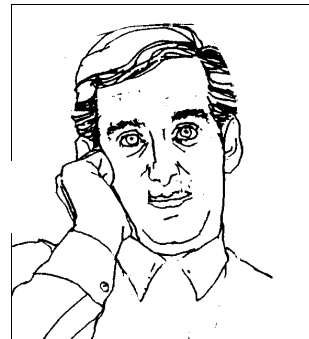


Fig. 35

Hand to Neck: Back Neck Rub (**Figure 36**)

This gesture generally has a couple of implications. Sometimes people who are lying will rub the back of the neck while looking down and avoiding your gaze. Other times this gesture is also used as a signal of frustration or anger. When this happens, the individual will usually slap his hand on the back of the neck and massage it as though the neck is sore (Pease, 1981). This gesture seems to promote the “pain in the neck” saying.

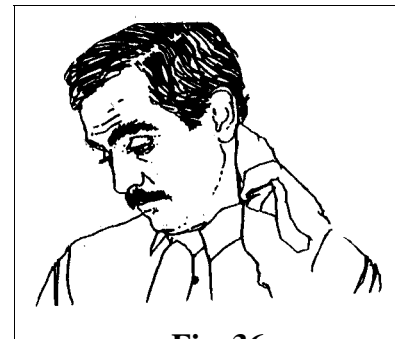


Fig. 36

Hands to Head

Clasped Hands Behind Head (**Figure 37**)

In Figure 40, the individual leans back while supporting head with clasped hands. This generally signifies that the individual is relaxed and even smug. This gesture is sometimes referred to as the “superiority gesture” (Pease, 1981).

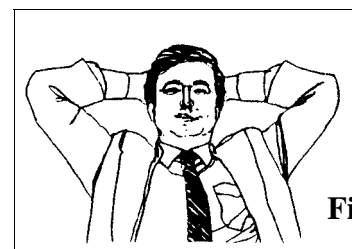


Fig. 37

Language of the Arms

Folded Arms

This is a common posture whereby an individual will casually fold his/her arms across the chest (**Figure 38**). Although this posture may mean nothing more than a physical response to the cold, it more often signifies a defensive or insecure attitude (Fast, 1991). Whenever arms are crossed over the chest they act as a barrier (to verbal attacks, intimidating people or situations, etc.) How do you know if someone is on the defensive or merely cold? If both of the hands are tucked under the armpits, this generally signifies a response to the cold (Pease, 1981).

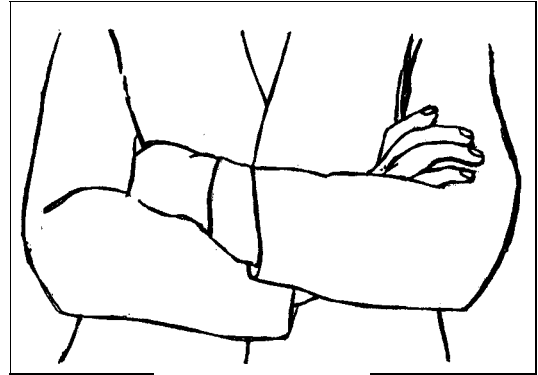


Fig. 38

Folded Arms With Clenched Fists (**Figure 39**)

The individual who strikes this pose is signaling defensive and hostile feelings. This posture might be accompanied by a clamped jaw and flushed face. The person portraying this gesture cluster might be provoked into an attack (Pease, 1981).

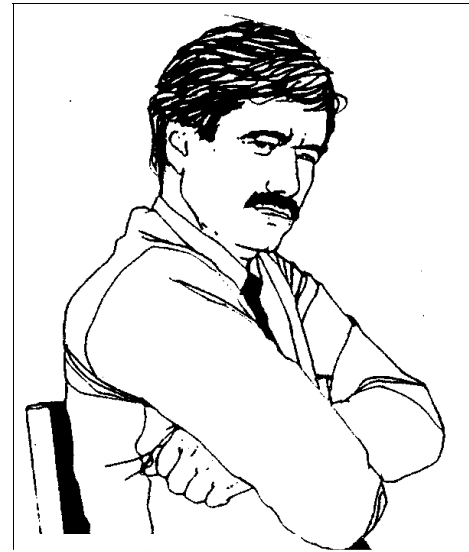


Fig. 39

Arm-Gripping (**Figure 40**)

This is similar to the standard arm-crossing posture except that both hands tightly grip the upper arms to secure the position. This variation usually indicates insecurity and fear. You might observe this posturing from people who are waiting to see the dentist as they try to protect and get a grip on themselves (Pease, 1981).

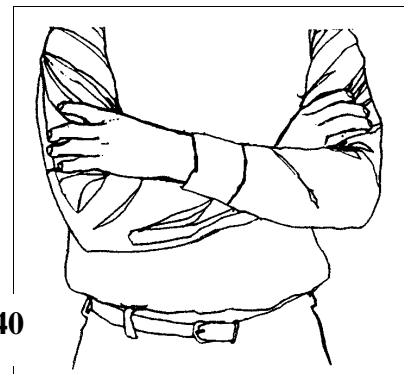


Fig. 40

Single Arm Cross (Figure 41)

This is a subtler version of the full arm cross and is a non-verbal defense mechanism which signals insecurity. Another signal of insecurity is holding hands with oneself. You will observe that holding one's own hands frequently occurs when people are in large groups (award ceremonies, funerals, etc.) where they are apt to feel insecure (Pease, 1991).



Fig. 41

Sophisticated Arm Cross Barriers

This posture is often intermittent and takes place when one arm reaches across the chest to touch a watch, shirt cuff, shirt button, or bracelet (**Figure 42**). This gesture provides a discreet, temporary barrier every time someone adjusts a watchband or straightens a shirtsleeve. A notebook or purse carried in front of the chest is another barrier disguise.

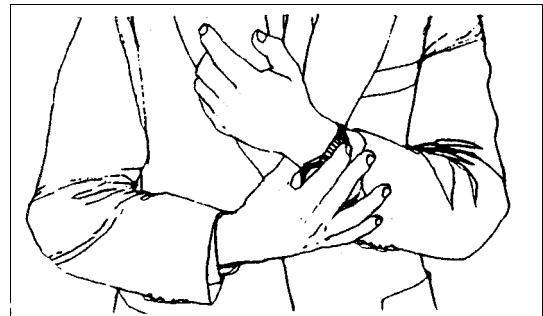


Fig. 42

Language of Legs and Feet

Leg Crossing

1. At the Knees (Figure 43)

This is a relaxed social leg crossing posture that is assumed by both men and women in Europe. In America, this posture is generally limited to females and is thought by many to be essentially effeminate (Axtell, 1991).

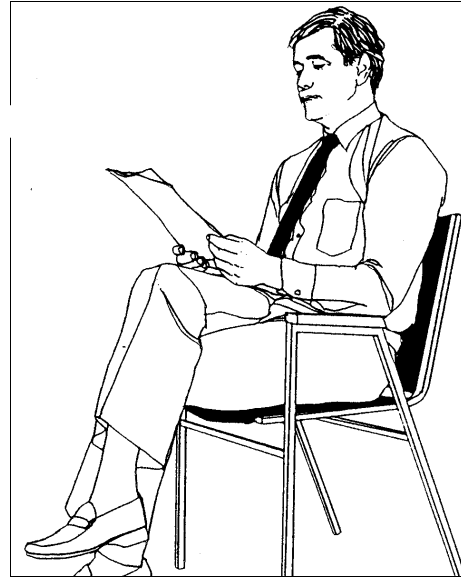


Fig. 43

2. Ankle on Knee (Figure 44)

This is sometimes referred to as the “cowboy” pose and is a predominantly male form of leg crossing in the Western world (particularly in the United States). The connotation of this posture is one of assertive relaxation (Pease, 1981). Now that it is acceptable for women to wear slacks and jeans, many assume this leg posture when sitting. It carries the same “assertive relaxation” signal as with males; some individuals see this pose as unwomanly when assumed by females. This sitting posture is not acceptable in the Middle East since any display of the sole of a shoe is an insult (Dresser, 1996).

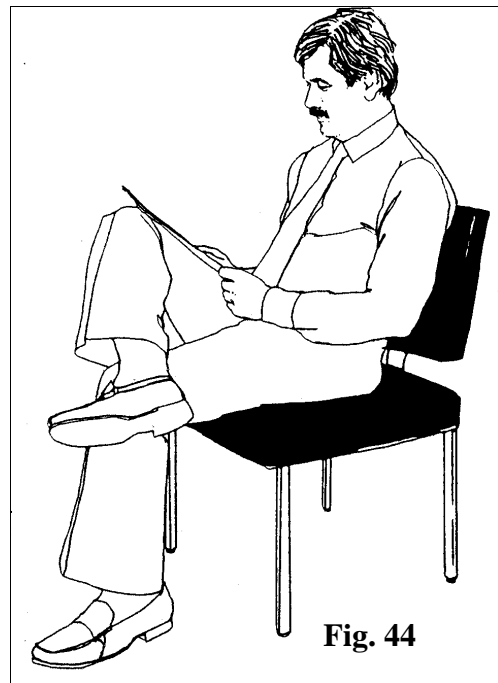


Fig. 44

3. Leg Lock Position

This is a posture where the legs are crossed at the knee and the free foot is tucked behind the ankle of the stationary leg or locked to a front leg of the chair (**Figure 45**). This is generally a gender-specific posture since men find this leg position uncomfortable. Many women who assume this posture, do so when they are cold. Others sit with their legs locked when they feel nervous or defensive (Pease, 1981). The foot acts like an anchor and provides a pseudo form of security. If this is the case, the locked legs will be part of a gesture cluster that includes other defensive or anxious gestures.

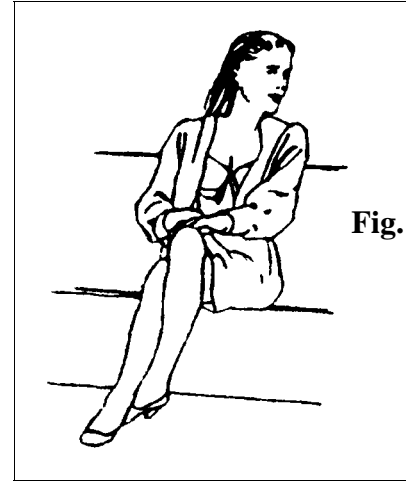


Fig. 45

4. Ankle to Ankle Leg Cross

Whereas an attentive subordinate might sit forward with leg uncrossed, someone who is more self-assured and relaxed might assume the crossed-ankle position (**Figure 46**). This is considered the most polite, demure form of leg crossing. It is used by people posing for formal pictures and sends a message of proper form and decorum. This leg crossing is generally the result of a socialization process, which encourages acceptable posturing for “ladies” and “gentlemen” (Skolnick, 1986). If this posture is part of a gesture cluster which includes clenched hands in the lap, or folded arms, the message changes to one of negativity or defensiveness.



Fig. 46

Feet Gestures

Foot Tapping or Wagging

Whether standing or sitting, repetitive tapping or wagging of the foot is an indication of impatience, boredom, or nervousness (**Figure 47**). The redundant foot movements are said to reflect a latent desire to run away (Pease, 1981).

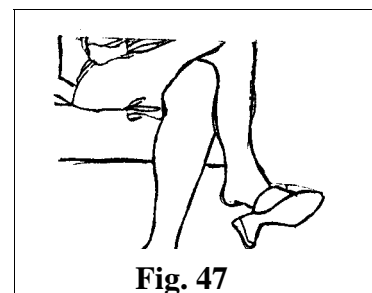


Fig. 47

Language of the Hair, Head, and Face

Our Crowning Glory . . . Hair

Hair Stroking and Head Tossing

The individual absent-mindedly runs fingers through his/her hair or swishes hair behind the shoulders with a toss of the head (**Figure 48**). This is an unconscious gesture, which occurs when an individual finds someone attractive (Pease, 1981).



Fig. 48

Hair Twisting

Sometimes you will notice an individual who will twist a strand of hair around his/her finger (**Figure 49**). This is generally a sign of nervous distraction (Morris, 1994). A variation of this is the twisting of a neck chain.



Fig. 49

The Head

Head Tilt (**Figure 50**)

A slight tilt of the head to one side indicates interest on that individual's part. This seems to be an inherent gesture and is not limited to the human species. Darwin noted that animals also tilt their head to the side when interested in something (Pease, 1981). Women tend to use the head tilt gesture more than men do. Oftentimes, when women uses this posturing in the presence of a man, it is an indication that she finds him attractive (Fast, 1991).

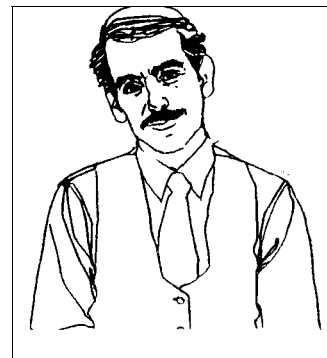
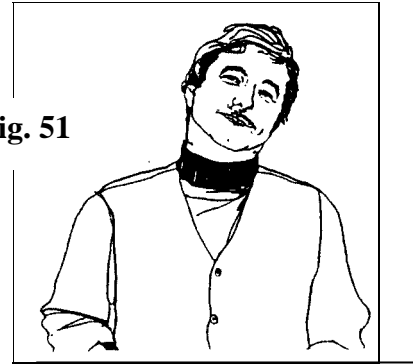


Fig. 50

Backward Head Tilt (**Figure 51**)

When an individual holds the head in a slightly backward tilt in the presence of others, this is an indication of perceived superiority and (sometimes) contempt for those he/she is interacting with (Pease, 1981). This gesture probably gave rise to phrases like, “looking down his nose” (at someone), or “she has her nose in the air”. This posture is generally regarded as a “snobbery” gesture.

Fig. 51



The Face

Lifted Eyebrow

When one eyebrow lifts while the other remains in the natural position, it signals skepticism (**Figure 52**). This is a well-recognized gesture that is readily noted and interpreted.

Fig. 52



Raised Eyebrows (**Figure 53**)

This gesture can indicate a couple of things. The rapid lift of both eyebrows and widening of the eyes is most often an unconscious reaction people display as part of greeting behavior. This reaction can also represent a “flirting” gesture and is different from greeting behavior in that the raised eyebrow position is sustained slightly longer and/or the gesture might be accompanied by a sideways glance (Pease, 1981).

Fig. 53



Wide-Eyes (**Figure 54**)

When eyes open wide this is an indication of surprise. If this gesture is accompanied by blinking, it indicates innocence. Blinking is not always an indication of innocence—only if the eyes are wide *and* making eye contact with someone else. If, however, someone averts his/her eyes and increases the rate of blinking, this is an indication that the individual is lying (Pease, 1981).



Fig. 54

Nose Flare (**Figure 55**)

Slight flaring of the nostrils is an indication of agitation or indignation bordering on anger. These emotions actually provoke an unconscious physiological response marked by muscle constriction on both sides of the nose that result in a flared nose (Pease, 1981). Sometimes this will occur as part of a gesture cluster, which might include, clenched teeth, twitching eye, pulsating temple, or clenched fists.



Fig. 55

Skewed Mouth (**Figure 56**)

This is a distorted version of the smile that is indicative of sarcasm. This facial gesture is one that is widely recognized and interpreted.

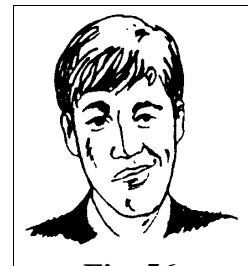


Fig. 56

Smile With Clamped Teeth

A smile that exposes clamped teeth is an attempt on the part of an individual to portray good humor and control when that individual is actually irritated or angry (as determined by the bared teeth).

Proxemics

In the 1960s, an American anthropologist, Edward Hall, pioneered a study, which determined spatial needs of humans. He called this study, **proxemics**, in reference to the word *proximity* (nearness) (Skolnick, 1986). Since that time, entire areas within the disciplines of behavioral science have been devoted to the research and the study of spatial needs. Studies in proxemics have revealed that the geographic location and population density in which individuals were raised determines how people define their personal space and position themselves around others.

Nowadays, many American cities and suburbs have experienced an explosion in population and ethnic diversity. As technology and communication continue to grow, our global village will continue to shrink and notions about acceptable proximity to others will be challenged (Reece & Brandt, 1996). This cultural collision gives rise to personal space considerations in the work place and social settings. To avoid misunderstandings of peers, co-workers, and acquaintances, a brief overview of multicultural perspectives of will be presented.

DEFINING PERSONAL SPACE

Humans, like other animals, have a comfort zone, which surrounds their body and acts as an invisible buffer. We define the area within this zone as our personal space and treat this space as though it is an extension of our person. When this space is invaded, we feel violated and oftentimes threatened. The size of one's comfort zone and how folks space themselves from others is determined by the population density where individuals are raised (Pease, 1981). Those who grow up in densely populated areas are used to crowded conditions and tend to have a smaller comfort zone. People in less populated areas have a larger comfort zone and place more distance between themselves and others.

Comfort zones fall into three specific distance categories. The following description defines the three specific comfort zone distances for middle-class suburbanites who live in North America, England, and Australia. These distances will be examined and then juxtaposed with those of rural/urban areas and other cultures outside North America.

1. *Public Zone* (from 4 to 12 feet)
This is the range of distance that is placed between an individual and strangers (i.e. sales person, new employee, home maintenance person, etc.).
2. *Social Zone* (from 2 feet to 4 feet)
This is the range of distance that is placed between individuals at social functions (i.e. neighborhood gatherings, office parties, weddings, cocktail parties, etc.).
3. *Intimate Zone* (from 6 inches to 1 foot)
This is the range of distance that is placed between individuals with whom we are emotionally and physically close (i.e. family member, spouse, close friends, boy/girl friend)

The intimate zone is by far the most intense, personal space within the comfort zone. While we will tolerate a stranger's presence in our public zone and even our social zone, a stranger who penetrates our intimate zone often initiates the "fight or flight" physiological response within our bodies. Adrenaline is released into the bloodstream causing the heart to pump faster, blood pressure to rise, and pupils to constrict. Because the intimate zone is like an extension of our person, we feel violated to some degree when an acquaintance steps into this zone. This is why most individuals feel uncomfortable and on their guard when a stranger touches their hand or arm. How an intimate zone violation is perceived seems to depend on the genders involved. A man-to-man invasion of the intimate zone is perceived as threatening. Women do not seem to react as strongly to invasions by other women as do men and usually perceive these intrusions as uncomfortable encounters. Man to woman (or vice versa) is generally perceived as a sexual advance (which, under some circumstances, can also be threatening). Sometimes we will allow certain strangers into our intimate zone. Conditions that permit this are:

- an altered mental state (intoxication, et.)
- an intense experience (support groups, disaster circumstances, etc.)
- a sexual attraction
- a professional necessity (health care workers, grooming specialists, etc.)
- group crowds (malls, elevators, concerts, mass transportation, etc.)

THE POPULATION DENSITY FACTOR

When people are raised and live in highly populated areas such as the inner city, they limit their personal space out of spatial necessity. For city people to maintain a personal buffer zone, they are obliged to constrict their comfort zone radius to avoid infringement. Folks from rural areas, through, are brought up in wide-open areas. They extend the radius of their personal space far beyond that of inner city individuals. You might compare the sizing of personal space to the terminal growth of fish in ponds. If ten fish were placed in a small (5' x 7') pond, they will stay relatively small so as not to crowd the pond. If these same fish were placed in a large pond, lake, or streams, they could grow considerably larger without overcrowding their aquatic environment. As with animals, the final determinant for a human's personal spacing is dependant upon the "pond" in which he/she was raised.

Certain cultures, which are densely populated, or share living quarters with large extended families (i.e. European, Asian families), have a social zone that is comparable to our intimate zone. They feel comfortable with distances of 9 to 12 inches around acquaintances. Most Americans would feel uncomfortable standing this close and step backwards in order to maintain privacy within their established intimate zone. Moving closer to close the gap seems natural to many Europeans and Asians. They move forward, the American once again moves backward. Here we have a dance of culturally mismatched proxemics. Often both cultures caught up in this "dance" begin to feel offended.

Proxemics Scenario:

Jan Jenkins and Paul Martin are radiographers at General Hospital. One Monday, their department manager introduces them to a new staff technologist. Her name is Anya. She and her husband recently moved from Sweden to this country. The department manager asks that Jan and Paul take turns orienting Anya to the department.

A week later, the following conversation between Americans, Jan and Paul, takes place in the radiology lounge:

Jan "What do you think about the new tech?"

Paul "I was just getting ready to mention her. She seems nice enough, — but have you noticed how she moves in *real* close? I think she's coming on to me . . . Yea, she definitely has a thing for me."

Jan "Right!" smirking at his beer-belly and receding hairline, "you and every other guy in the department! She sidles up to everybody that way, you idiot, including the women. It makes me nervous to have someone in my face like that. What if my breath is bad or something."

Paul "She can get in my face any time! And you know what they say about Swedish women . . . I'm telling you, she goes for me."

Jan "Dream on."

Conversation between Anya her husband, Jon, at their house:

- Jon “What is it with these Americans? They are pleasant enough at work, yet act so cool.”
- Anya “Yes, the women certainly seem that way. Every time I go up to them, they step away.”
- Jon “That’s what I mean!” Have you noticed how they back off while talking? Most rude, most rude. You’d think I had bad breath or something.”
- Anya “Yes, I’ve noticed! Here is something strange, though—one of the techs, Paul, asked me to have a ‘drink’ with him after work! Is this customary? They all know I’m married.”
- Jon “You know how American men are—cowboys; no sense of decorum. I wonder if we’ll every feel at home here.”

Scenario Analysis:

Because Americans typically maintain a comfort zone of 2 to 4 feet with acquaintances and co-workers, they misinterpreted Anya’s spatial expectations in the work place. While Jan felt uncomfortable, Paul saw Anya’s physical proximity as a sexual advancement. Anya and her husband, on the other hand, were perplexed and offended when American co-workers stepped away from them. They did not realize that this “distancing” was a cultural reflex and misread their behavior as “cool” and “rude”.

Now it should be easier to understand how and why different ethnic groups form and maintain stereotypical notions and images. We tend to judge others by our own cultural standards. When they do not measure up to our standards we unwittingly put up barriers.

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