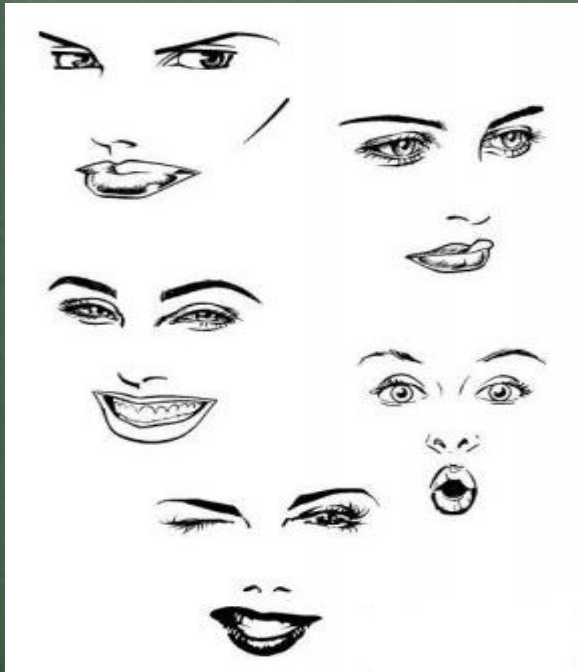


BODY LANGUAGE



Human beings are also known as "homo communicus" because they communicate with other members of the species.

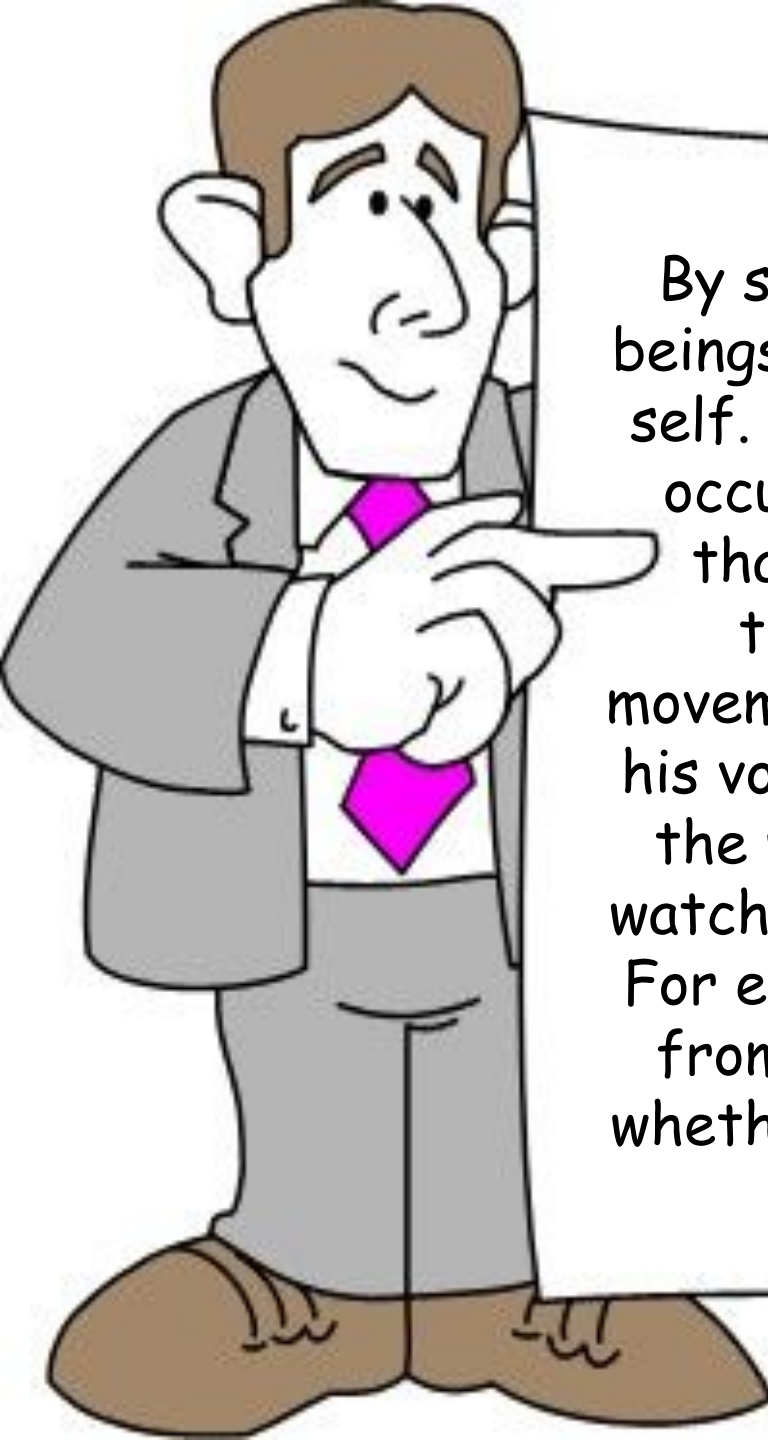
Before spoken languages were developed, they communicated with other members by using various parts of our body - face, eyes, limbs, body and sounds to convey their feelings, emotions, ideas etc.

However, interest in the subject started only after **Charles Darwin** wrote his book titled "Expressions of Emotions in Men and Animals" in 1872 and has increased after **Julius Fast** wrote his book titled, "Body language" in 1970. Also called non-verbal communication, it is a complex process involving people and the gestures, expressions and sounds they make to communicate with others.



Charlie Chaplin and other famous actors of silent movies may be considered to be pioneers in non-verbal communication skills as they conveyed meaning of their acting without uttering any dialogue. Non-verbal communication specialists enjoy watching cues and clues about the attitude and responses of other people by simply watching them in social functions, formal gatherings and in television shows. It is like 'birdwatchers' studying birds in order to understand their movements. Much the same way, young people develop the hobby of 'girl-watching' or 'boy-watching' in order to understand the meanings of their body movements.





By studying the actions of fellow human beings, one can ultimately learn more about self. Words and movements of body parts occur together with such predictability that, according to Prof Birdwhistle, a trained person is able to tell what movement a person is making by listening to his voice only; conversely, he is able to tell the words and phrases he is speaking by watching his gestures and expressions only. For example, a mother can easily make out from the sound of her infant child as to whether it has wetted the bed or is hungry or is just missing her.

Did You Know...

About one million different gestures, expressions and sounds have been identified. It would not be out of place to mention that English is the most widely understood language in the world and consequently most developed. It has about 750,000 words although the exact number keeps fluctuating as words are added and go out of use almost simultaneously. According to **Albert Mehrabian**, the average proportions of different types of communications are: Words (verbal communication) = 07 % Tone, pitch of the sound (Vocal communication) = 38 % Non-verbal communication (body language) = 55 % . According to **Prof Birdwhistle**, it is estimated that the proportion between verbal (face to face) and non-verbal communication is: verbal (face to face) communication = 35 % Non-verbal communication (Body Language) = 65 %

ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF BODY LANGUAGE



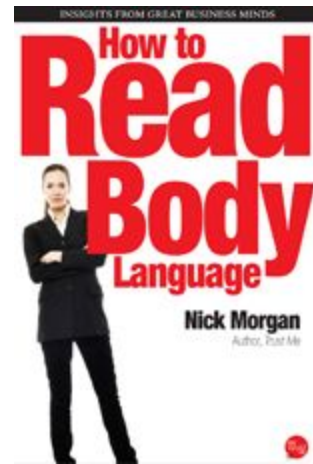
Advantages of Body Language: Resourceful managers make effective use of the power of the body language. They are able to take several advantages by taking note of the signs and signals of body language: It is a visual form of communication and is readily visible to the receivers of the message and facilitates decoding the message more accurately. Body language happens simultaneous to oral communication and supplements it, especially in face-to-face communications. Since body talks subconsciously, it adds intensity to the message. Without these gestures, expressions and postures, the communication may be bland. People are generally mindful of the body language. Its proper use can enhance the environment for business negotiations. It is a very good tool in face-to-face communication among small groups.



Limitations of Body Language: Some notable limitations of body language are: Since it is a non-verbal communication, it is not relied upon completely and is used as a supportive add-on. Written or oral communications are taken more seriously. Body language is heavily influenced by the culture of the country or the region; hence one has to be very careful in their use and understanding. Listener has to be extra careful to make note of the gestures, expressions and postures to draw meanings out of them and if he is not attentive, he can go wrong. Body language is not effective in large gatherings. It is a very good tool in face-to-face communication among small groups.



How to read body languages



Noticing the signals that people send out with their body language is a very useful social skill. Some of us can read it naturally and some of us are notoriously oblivious. Fortunately, with a little extra attentiveness, you can learn to read body language, and with enough practice it'll become second nature.



Steps



Pay attention to how close someone is to you.

The closer they are, the warmer they are thinking of you. The farther away that someone is, the less they actually care of the situation or person. If you move slightly closer to them, do they move slightly further away? That means they don't want your interaction to be any more personal than it already is. If they don't move further away, then they are receptive. And if they respond by getting even closer to you, they probably really like you or are very comfortable around/by you.



Watch their head position.

Overly tilted heads are either a potential sign of sympathy, or if a person smiles while tilting their head, they are being playful and maybe even flirting



Cocked heads mean that they are confused or challenging you, depending on eye, eyebrow, and mouth gestures. Think of how a dog slightly cocks its head when you make a funny noise.



On the other hand when coupled with a smile, a tilted head will mean they genuinely like you and are engaged in playful conversation.



Lowered heads indicate a reason to hide something. Take note if someone lowers their head. If it is when he is complimented, he may be shy, ashamed, timid, keeping distance from the other person, in disbelief, or thinking to himself or herself. If it is after an explanation, then he may be unsure if what he said was correct.



Look into their eyes.

People who look to the sides a lot are nervous, lying, or distracted. However, if a person looks away from the speaker, it very well could be a comfort display or indicate submissiveness. Looking askance generally means the person is distrustful or unconvinced



If someone looks down at the floor a lot, they are probably shy or timid.



Some cultures believe that looking at someone in the eyes is a sign of disrespect, so this could explain why someone is avoiding eye contact with you.



If their eyes seem far away, that usually indicates that a person is in deep thought or not listening.



See if they're mirroring you.

Mirroring is another common gesture. If someone mirrors, or mimics your appearance, this is a very genuine sign that they are interested in you and trying to establish rapport with you. Try changing your body position here and there. If you find that they change theirs similarly, they are mirroring.



Check their arms.

People with crossed arms are closing themselves to social influence. Though some people just cross their arms as a habit, it may indicate that the person is (slightly) reserved, uncomfortable with their appearance, or just trying to hide something on their shirt. If their arms are crossed while their feet are shoulder width or wider apart, this is a position of toughness or authority.



If someone rests their arms behind their neck or head, they are open to what is being discussed or just laid back in general.



If their hands are on their hips, they might be waiting or impatient.



If their hands are closed or clenched, they may be irritated, angry, or nervous.



Be aware of nervous gestures:

If someone brushes their hair back with their fingers, this may be preening, a common gesture if the person likes you, or their thoughts about something conflict with yours. They might not voice this. If you see raised eyebrows during this time, you can be pretty sure that they disagree with you.



If the person wears glasses, and is constantly pushing them up onto their nose again, with a slight frown, that may also indicate they disagree with what you are saying. Look to make sure they push up their glasses with an intent, not casually adjusting them. Look for pushing on the rim with two fingers, or an extra motion of wiggling the side of their glasses. The frown or raised eyebrows should tip you off.



