

## NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND CONFIDENCE

Dana Carmen ZECHIA<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, PhD, “Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy

**Abstract:** *When we speak about non-verbal communication we generally refer to body language. It is not important if we are facing a group of students, the people we are working with or a board of officials, the message we need to transmit might not be so important compared to how we say it. Non-verbal communication is a basic part of what we present. Our confidence leads to credible, important and interesting information. Most of the times people overlook this field dealing with improving confidence and self-perception in communication. We generally tend to build confidence but we rarely think how powerful the role of non-verbal communication to strengthen confidence is.*

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It is well known that good communication is the foundation of any successful relationship, be it personal or professional. It is important to recognize, though, that it is our nonverbal communication—our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and tone of voice—that speak the loudest. The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication or body language is a powerful tool that can help us connect with others, express what we really mean, and build better relationships.

Nonverbal communication is behavior, other than spoken or written communication, that creates or represents meaning. In other words, it includes facial expressions, body movements, and gestures. Nonverbal communication is talking without speaking a word. It is very effective, maybe even more so than speech. Remember the saying, “Actions speak louder than words.”

When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages. These messages don't stop when you stop speaking either. Even when you are silent, you are still communicating nonverbally.

Very often what comes out of our mouths and what we communicate through our body language are two totally different things. When faced with these mixed signals, the listener has to choose whether to believe your verbal or nonverbal message and, in most cases, they are going to choose the nonverbal because it is a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts our true feelings and intentions in any given moment.

The way you listen, look, move, and react tells the other person whether or not you care, if you are being truthful, and how well you are listening. When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you are saying, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don't, they generate tension, mistrust and confusion. If you want to become a better communicator, it is important to become more sensitive not only to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, but also to your own.

Your non-verbal communication which is more frequently but narrowly referred to as body language, is a universally overlooked area to improve your confidence in communication and general self-perception. The majority of people aim to build their confidence but rarely consider the power of communicating confidence non-verbally.

If you would like to improve your confidence around women then you have even more reason to read this article. Women love a confident man and they are extremely adept in picking up non-verbal signals. They will pick-up your non-verbal signals that you would not even have a clue about.

You need to have high self-awareness in order to be aware of your body language. It is a matter of knowing what you do in certain situations. When you have poor body language others can see fear in you. Here are four examples of body language that is counter-productive in developing confidence and how you can solve them to

not only communicate more powerfully but to internalize the confidence:

1. **Moving eye contact** - people with low confidence levels rarely make eye contact and when they do, as soon as the other person returns that eye contact the person looks away. You do not look silly looking the other person in the eyes. In fact, you look weirder and would be annoying the other person more so when you do not make eye contact.

Good eye contact will show the person you are listening and that you are interested in what they have to say. However, you can have too much of a good thing. Excessive eye contact is non-verbal aggression. Dr. Peter Andersen, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Body Language*, says you will make the other person feel comfortable with about 60% eye contact.

With practice I found that you will develop an intuition or 'gut-feeling' when you make the other person uncomfortable. As an example when you make too much eye contact, they will begin to not make eye contact with you or maybe fidget. At the moment, too much eye contact probably is not your concern as you are trying to develop confident body language but you still should be aware of the problems with excessive eye contact.

2. **Weak touch** - otherwise known as haptics, touch involves bodily contact. What haptics we are interested in to develop confident non-verbal communication is mostly the handshake. You will rarely use any other haptics other than a handshake in a normal social situation. It is not as if you normally go around patting people on the back or stroking their arm. That is just strange!

What did you feel when someone shook your hand with a soft handshake? I bet you wondered if they cared about you at all or if they lacked confidence to show this concern. This is a 'girly touch'. A good handshake depends on the receiving person. Most of the time you want a firm handshake but occasionally with say the elderly you do not want to be crushing their hand! When greeting ladies be aware that they do not have gigantic and hard hands like many men so just go a little less firm. A firm handshake shows you care and is an initial way of communicating confidence when meeting someone.

3. **Stay away** - looking at body positions relative to one another now otherwise known as proxemics. What I mean by "relative to one another" is the distance between you and the other person. You are most comfortable with an intimate or well known person being close to you as opposed to someone you just met. However, people with low confidence will have a much wider radius of comfort. A more confident person will not show fear when someone "breaks" their comfortable proxemics. This doesn't mean they are comfortable with the closeness, it just means they do not show the uncomfortably. They desire the other person to stay away but they cope with the situation. An excellent example of this that I can remember is two Australian Politicians on October 8 the eve of the 2004 federal election. John Howard was greeted by opposition leader Mark Latham aggressively. While Mark Latham did

pull John Howard towards him when shaking hands (aggressive haptics), Latham made his body position

Despite this, Mr. Howard non-verbally stood his ground in confidence by continuing the handshake and smiling towards the cameras. I am sure John Howard would have felt uncomfortable but he still gave out signs of confidence.

It was said Latham attempted to get revenge for Howard squeezing his wife's hand too hard at a press function which I found to be funny! If only they were both able to read this!

4. **Smile!**- If you want to convey confidence to your audience, turn that frown upside down. Smiling puts your audience at ease, and makes them feel personally engaged in the presentation, especially when this tactic is used in combination with consistent eye contact. Moreover, smiling sends the message that you are comfortable enough with the subject matter and presentation structure to have a little fun, making you seem a lot more confident.

5. **Carry yourself** - the last non-verbal communication technique I feel is valuable in developing confidence is kinesics. It involves body movement. Possibly the most important kinesics in confidence is posture. A slouched posture not only screams an unconfident person, but it has a physical and psychological effect on the person with the poor posture. The physical effect of slouching your shoulders forward is it causes your chest to compress inwards. Your chest compressing

aggressive by being extremely close and towering over the shorter John Howard.

simulates expelling air causing you to breathe shallowly. This means if you have poor posture you will have poor breathing.

The psychological effect of poor posture is poorer confidence. Using arguably the world's best golfer Tiger Woods as an example, he is taught to maintain good posture as he approaches each shot. By having good posture he is able to breathe correctly and physically get his body into the right state of confidence. From this his mind is able to focus on the shot ahead.

I know once golfers lose this state of confidence through poor posture, the effects are surprisingly strong. The golfer's chest begins to tighten and everything heightens. They then lose their state of control, calmness, and confidence causing poor performance.

The same relates to everyday life. To practice a confident posture, roll your shoulders forward, upwards, and then back down to almost complete a circle. Watch your shoulders as you rotate them and if they are behind to what they were prior to doing the activity and you are comfortable, you've done the activity correctly.

Having learnt about these areas of non-verbal communication, all that is left to do is practice your new skills. Do not make the mistake of no action. Your self development will not progress forward until you move forward. Go out and practice your confident non-verbal communication skills.

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