

# BODY LANGUAGE



LEARN HOW TO READ OTHERS AND  
COMMUNICATE WITH CONFIDENCE

ELIZABETH KUHNKE



CAPSTONE  
A Wiley Brand



“In the field of interpretation of body language there is simply no one as expert as Elizabeth Kuhnke. Her new book, *Body Language*, confirms her extraordinary knowledge of the subject. This book is a must for everybody!”

**Libby Appel, Artistic Director Emerita at  
Oregon Shakespeare Festival**

“Whether you are a manager, a recruiter, a sales person, a candidate or a client, Kuhnke’s book is essential reading. It takes a complex subject and renders it accessible to all.”

**John Lucy, HR Director at Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP**

“*Body Language* is essential reading for anyone who wants to really understand people beyond words. Whether you’re trying to decode corporate politics, or get on with the in-laws – I would highly recommend this book.”

**John Kelly, Off Trade Director at Heineken Ireland**

“To rely on words alone is like viewing the world through the wrong end of a telescope. Expand your appreciation of all language a person brings to a conversation. This book will help you decode the non-verbal signals that posture and expression bring to the dialogue.”

**Russell Hampshire FCA**

“A real hands-on guide that helped me to understand the messages my body sends and then taught me how to align them with my verbal communication. It also serves very well to interpret other people’s emotions. If you care about relationships reading this book is a must.”

**Günter Schäuble, Head of Corporate Finance & Tax at  
Schindler Group, Switzerland**

“If you are looking for a book that combines the theory of body language with insightful exercises and techniques that you can practice yourself, then this is the book for you. *Body Language* comprehensively reveals the most important information on nonverbal communication that everybody should learn.”

**Kasia Wezowski, co-founder of  
The Centre for Body Language**

“Straightforward, accessible, and filled with useful tips and exercises, this book is a ‘must have’ for HR professionals and business leaders.”

**Emma Lyon, Fellow CIPD and International HR Director**

“Clear, congruent communication – in which your body language matches your spoken words – is vital if you want people to understand your message. Elizabeth’s tips and exercises are simple, practical and easy to implement.

I highly recommend this book.”

**Beverley Sorsby, Head of Human Resources,  
Professional Services**

# BODY LANGUAGE

Learn how to read others  
and communicate with  
confidence

**Elizabeth Kuhnke**

**Illustrations by Curtis Allen**



**CAPSTONE**  
A Wiley Brand

This edition first published 2016  
© 2016 Elizabeth Kuhnke

*Registered office*

John Wiley and Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ,  
United Kingdom

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

The right of the author to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book and on its cover are trade names, service marks, trademark or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher and the book are not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. None of the companies referenced within the book have endorsed the book.

**Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty:** While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with the respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services and neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

***Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data***

Names: Kuhnke, Elizabeth, author.

Title: Body language : learn how to read others and communicate with confidence / Elizabeth Kuhnke.

Description: Hoboken : Capstone, 2016.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016012012 (print) | LCCN 2016016289 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780857087041 (paperback) | ISBN 9780857087072 (ebk) |

ISBN 9780857087034 (ebk) | ISBN 9780857087072 (pdf) | ISBN 9780857087034 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Body language.

Classification: LCC BF637.N66 K8397 2016 (print) | LCC BF637.N66 (ebook) |

DDC 153.6/9-dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016012012>

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-857-08704-1 (paperback)

ISBN 978-0-857-08707-2 (ebk) ISBN 978-0-857-08703-4 (ebk)

Cover design: Wiley Cover image: © Toby Bridson/iStockphoto  
Illustrations by Curtis Allen

Set in 9.5/13pt ITC Franklin Gothic Std by Aptara, New Delhi, India  
Printed in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall, UK

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1 What Your Body Language Says About You	9
2 Listening	21
3 Building Rapport and Networking	33
4 Persuasion	41
5 Assertiveness	59
6 Meetings	77
7 Interviews	93
8 Negotiation	103
9 Sales	115
10 Managing Others	129
11 Attracting Others	147
12 Detecting Lies	159
13 Dealing with Conflict, Aggression, and Confrontation	171
14 Cross-Cultural Communication	181
<b>A QUICK GUIDE TO FINDING OUT ABOUT SOMEONE WITHOUT ASKING</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>201</b>



# INTRODUCTION

---

*“When the eyes say one thing, and the tongue another, a practiced man relies on the language of the first.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

---

**Y**ou're probably familiar with this scenario: someone is saying one thing to you, while their body seems to be saying something else – and you're left feeling confused. Do you believe the spoken words you're hearing or the body language that you're seeing? Global research and anecdotal evidence consistently show that the truth lies in the manner of delivery.

Not that words don't matter. They do. But if the words and the delivery don't match, your listeners are going to believe what they observe rather than what you're saying.

**“Without uttering a syllable, you can convey your thoughts, feelings, and intentions through your body language.”**

While your spoken words convey information like facts and data, your body reveals other information like your attitude, intentions, and general state of being. And, while you may tell a white lie or two to save someone's feelings, or may create total fabrications to protect your interests, don't be surprised if your body gives the game away. For example, let's say that a colleague is given the job that you wanted and you say "I'm happy for you". The only problem is: your eyes are squinted, your brow is furrowed, and your fists are clenched. Your words are saying one thing while your body is saying something else. No wonder your co-worker turns away in disappointment or even worse, disgust.

However, all is not lost. By being aware of the messages your body sends out, and by practising specific gestures, postures,

and expressions, you can create the impressions and convey the messages that you want to communicate. In addition, by observing and interpreting other people's actions, you have the upper hand when it comes to understanding their mindset and responding to their behaviour.

**“I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be until I finally became that person.”**

–Cary Grant

So, if you want to enhance your interpersonal communication, learning how to read other people's body language and being able to control the signs and signals that your gestures, posture, and facial expressions transmit is vital. Restated: *If relationships matter to you, if you want to know what people are thinking, and if you want to determine how people perceive you, learn about body language.* The more conscious you are of unspoken messages, the better equipped you will be to build relationships, anticipate reactions, and adapt your behaviour according to the environment.

Learning how body language works and how you can perfect yours takes commitment. To test your level of interest, start by asking yourself the following questions:

- Am I willing to accept that my posture, movements, and facial expressions have an effect on others?
- Am I willing to understand that my mood affects my behaviour and other people's reactions to me?
- Do I want to communicate with authenticity, clarity, and confidence?
- Am I willing to practise?

## BODY LANGUAGE

If you answered “Yes” to any or all of these questions, read on. Even if you responded “No”, the fact that you’ve gotten this far indicates that you’re interested enough in non-verbal behaviour to persevere. Who knows? By practising the suggestions I share with you, you could become an expert at conveying and interpreting the unspoken messages behind the spoken word.

## RECOGNIZING AND INTERPRETING PHYSICAL SIGNS AND SIGNALS TAKES PRACTICE

Throughout this book you will discover the meanings behind postures, movements, gestures, and facial expressions. You will learn how to decipher lies and demonstrate courting behaviour. You will learn both how to clarify your messages as well as camouflage what you’d rather not reveal. Before going any further, remember to *approach the study of body language with respect and responsibility*.

- **Consider the context.** Counting on one gesture to convey an entire meaning is about as sensible as counting on one word to tell an entire story.
- **Avoid commenting on what you observe.** Unless someone asks for feedback on his/her behaviour, keep your observations to yourself. Making negative comments about what you notice could lead to unfortunate consequences.

**“Read the signs. Reflect on what they mean. React appropriately.”**

## LOOK FOR CLUSTERS OF GESTURES BEFORE MAKING A DECLARATION OF MEANING OR INTENT

If someone says “I love you” with a cleaver-like frown line between the eyes, clenched fists, a curled lip, and flared nostrils, you might want to run away as fast as possible. If, however, the nostrils are flared while the mouth is partially open with a smile playing at the lips, the hands are open with the palms facing you, and the eyes are moist, you’d be right in recognizing the signs of sexual interest.

When you say “I’ve never been happier” with dull eyes and slumped shoulders, don’t be surprised if your listener asks you, “What’s wrong?” There’s no point in getting angry or denying that your words are saying one thing while your non-verbal behaviours are communicating something else.



“I’ve never been happier” – who do you believe?

## **WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?**

At this point, you might still be wondering why you should concern yourself with learning how to read other people's body language. You might be deliberating the importance of identifying different types of gestures, postures, and expressions. You might even be questioning the benefit of adapting your behaviour to suit the moment. If that's the case, consider the following scenarios.

Perhaps you want to know how your boss feels about your current performance, or are curious about what your partner is thinking. Perhaps you want to impress a potential employer or reject a possible suitor. *When you observe and interpret other people's body language, you gain access to their state of mind.* The more you know what others are thinking and how they're feeling, the more you will be able to choose how to react towards them.

**“If you want to create positive and productive relationships, being adept at reading the signs and adapting your behaviour is your gateway to success.”**

In addition, if you want to communicate your feelings without speaking, letting your body do the talking is the way to go. For example, you and your colleague can agree that when either of you puts an index finger by the side of their nose that means “stop talking”. You can set up a series of signals that indicate the time has come to leave the room. You can suggest your interest in someone through the way

you look at them, without committing yourself verbally in case the interest isn't reciprocated. Your body language can speak for you.

## **THE YODA SYSTEM**

Years ago, one of my teachers suggested the following system for transmitting, reading, and responding to non-verbal communication. She named it YODA, as in the Jedi Master. If you're serious about learning how to read and respond to others' body language, and if you want to enhance your ability to communicate effectively through your movements and facial expressions, this method is a good one to follow.

### **You**

- Accept responsibility for the impact of your non-verbal behaviours.
- Accept that your feelings, moods, and emotions impact on the signals you emit and those that you, in turn, receive.

### **Observe**

- Practise conscious observation.
- Increase the amount of detail you observe.

### **Decode**

- Identify other people's physical behaviours.
- Choose your best response.

### Adapt

- Adapt your behaviours to convey your intended messages.
- Adapt your responses to other people's signals.

You can apply this system whenever you want to interpret and respond to others' non-verbal behaviours. In addition, the structure offers you the opportunity to identify your own behaviours and the impact they might have.

## WHERE TO BEGIN?

In order to make this book relevant to your daily life, I have structured the content around specific scenarios. This way you can flip to the section that is relevant for you without having to search through material that may not be germane to your needs. Each section identifies detailed actions that you can expect to encounter and provides you with examples of effective behaviours you can adopt in response. In addition, at the end of each chapter you will find exercises designed to enhance your ability to communicate through the use of your gestures, movements, and facial expressions.

If you want to improve your ability to read other people's feelings and intentions, or develop your ability to reveal – or conceal – your own, you'll find the answers here. *In a nutshell, the purpose of this book is to help you recognize the power of body language and turn you into a top-notch communicator.*

Now, turn to a section that interests you and start reading.

# 1

## WHAT YOUR BODY LANGUAGE SAYS ABOUT YOU

---

*“There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,  
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out  
At every joint and motive of her body.”*

*William Shakespeare*

---

**F**eeling hot, engaged, and passionate? Feeling low, aloof, and cool? You don't need to answer that question. Your body says it all.

Standing proud and strutting your stuff indicates that you're ready and raring to go, while slumping your shoulders and shuffling your feet shows that you're carrying a heavy load. Hanging out on the sidelines with your arms crossed, a frown on your face, and your head burrowed into your chest suggests you're suspiciously watchful; meanwhile, engaging with a group of people, using open gestures and animated expressions, implies that you're prepared to party.

## THE INNER AND OUTER CONNECTION

What you might find interesting about non-verbal behaviour – and body language in particular – is the relationship between **values, beliefs, attitudes** – and **gestures, facial expressions, posture**.

For example:

If *openness* is important to someone, you can expect to see that **value** reflected in free, approachable, and receptive movements and facial expressions. If they value *privacy*, their body language is more closed and contained.

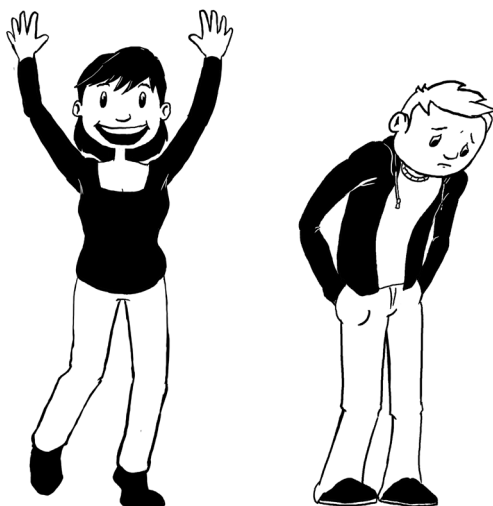
If you hold the **belief** that you're unworthy, insignificant, and somehow “lacking”, you might (1) overcompensate by being loud, brash, and seeking attention; or (2) withdraw, physically cave in on yourself, and avoid engaging with others. On the contrary, if you believe that you're an okay

person, you will likely greet other people with warmth, curiosity, and generosity.

If your **attitude** is “I can’t be bothered”, your facial expressions are slack and your movements lack spontaneity. When you embrace a “Go, get ‘em!” attitude, your body bursts with liveliness. Smiles surge across your face and you fist-pump the air as you jump for joy. Or a modified version of that.

In addition, consider the connection between **feelings and behaviour**. Whether you’re conscious of them or not, your **emotions, moods** and **state of mind** play out in the way your body moves.

For instance, feeling **upbeat and wanting to spread the love?** Note your gestures and facial expressions: smiling, open, with a spring in your step and a sparkle in your eye. Feeling **downbeat and demoralized?** Look at yourself now: limp, bowed, with little sign of life.



**“Even if you’re trying to hide what you’re experiencing, little leakages, “tells”, and mini micro expressions give the game away every time.”**

## **Little Things Mean A Lot**

A client asked me to join her while she interviewed a potential member of her leadership team. Both when she asked the candidate about his contribution to the success of the previous team he led and what value he could bring to the organization, I observed micro expressions flash across his face and body movements that indicated a high level of defensiveness. These consisted of:



- pursed lips
- flared nostrils
- tossing head and casting sky shots
- forced laughter
- fake smile
- shifting in his seat
- jiggling feet
- pulling backwards into his seat while crossing his arms and legs and tilting his head sideways.

Although the facial expressions were fleeting, they were telling, as were his body movements and gestures. Together, they conveyed the message that he was feeling the

pressure. And, no surprise... Turns out that the candidate wasn't all he claimed to be.

Had my client not trusted my observations, she could have made an expensive mistake. While he told a good tale – spinning and exaggerating here and there – his body's movements told a truer story.

Not even your **thoughts and intentions** are immune to reflecting themselves in your movements and facial expressions. For example, your boss says something that you **think** is the stupidest thing you've ever heard. Before you know it, your eyes are rolling around in your head, which is the rudest facial expression a person can display, next to gagging. At that point, you might consider looking for a new job, as you may have blotted your copy book by demonstrating your derision and disdain.

Another example. You see someone who catches your attention. And you catch theirs. Observe how your bodies speak. Your eyes connect and hold the gaze. Your lips slide into shy, sensuous, inviting smiles. Your chests and chins may lift as your bodies tilt forward, all of which indicate that your **intention** is to get to know one another.

*“It's amazing how many things you can do when you're just pretending.”*

*-Kim Gordon*

## **Applying the “As If” Principle**

Frequently, clients ask me to help them develop and project **confidence**. From the C-suite to the up and coming stars, confidence is the number one quality they all want

## **BODY LANGUAGE**

to possess. No matter how successful they are at their day jobs, each one has a little voice inside their heads telling them that they're not very good at demonstrating, for instance:

- poise
- assertiveness
- self-assurance.

Frequently they ask me how they can convey:

- calmness in a crisis
- conviction
- courage.

I tell them, "Act as if."

According to the "as if" principle, you can create whatever state you desire by acting "as if" you already have what you would like to have. Like a child at play, you pretend to be who – or what – you want to be. And bingo! Before you know it, you've convinced yourself and others that you are, in this instance, **confident**.

**“When you act “as if” you create a new reality for yourself.”**

The irony is, you don't even have to experience the feelings that go with the mental state you want to project, which is good news if, for example, you're feeling doubtful and you want to convey certainty. As long as you act "as if", the rest takes care of itself.