Listening To Body Language

Look At What is Being Said

In order to master public speaking you will need to learn **body language.** How you speak with your body is equally if not more important that how you speak with your mouth and voice.

Do you know a basic way to tell if people are receptive to your speech or not. Do you know what to watch for to tell how well the audience is listening.. This particular body language is best observed when speaking one on one. It is so simple, you will find it surprising.

Further more, once you observe it, know what it is, you will have the raw materials to improve your speech to one or one thousand.

You can read and interpret body language when speaking to large audiences as well.

That knowledge will empower you to better avoid the speech that is unreceptive and in some cases, even alter your speech and your body language to make it more receptive. Before telling you what it is, let me tell you how I learned body language first hand.

My Body Language Story

Note...As you hear this story, think of experiences you have had and the body language people spoke to you with.

During my late 20's I discovered this wonderful knowledge of body language and it's relation to how others listen to us. People communicate verbally and through their body language.

There is much to be said on the subject. Some is controversial. This will focus on only one type of body language.

I grew up wanting to be like my Grandfather, a tool and die maker. I started working in a machine shop in Commerce City Colorado at 13. I progressed to the point of machine operator and when I couldn't progress any further, I moved on to the next job that held even more opportunity.

By the time the goal of tool and die maker was reached, my training had taken me to status of non-degreed engineer occasionally working research and development.

Day by day there was designing, machining and making things for all kinds of applications. It was not uncommon to have to be bonded for some of my work. Sometimes people's lives depended on my creations.

Still, I did not have the alphabet soup behind my name that proved what I was.

One day came the assignment to work with one of the real engineers. This was someone I admired and hoped to some day work with. His designs were my production work. Mine was the privilege of taking it from paper to working creation.

Although knowing the man and his work there was one thing I did not know. There was one vital flaw in my personality relating to my speech. It just about ruined my chance of making a new friend.

I wanted to impress him. You could hear it in my words and in the way I used them. It could be heard in my or should I say 'read in my body language' as well. Fortunately I did know one thing.

What I did know…was body language and how to interpret body language.

It was just the two of us in my work area in the machine shop. With the beginning of my one on one speech, he first crossed his arms. Knowing this was a bad sign, my speaking purposefully slowed down. But it was still the same kind of speech.

Basically it was speech to impress him. It wasn't helping with the folded arms and I was in trouble.

Next he crossed his legs. Get the picture, here is a man in a suit standing in front of me. He is twice my age and probably forgotten more than I will ever know or hope to know.

My hopes of befriending him are starting to look like smoke on a breezy day, soon to totally disappear. First his arms crossed, and then his legs crossed as he stood there. My brain was processing and interpreting the body language, "These are your signal to shut up."

It was at this point an experiment was started. Not in the Research & Development of machines but the R&D of human communication using, reading and interpreting body language. There was a need to back track to a place where he, an older man was comfortable and not threatened.

This was accomplished by three things...
1) Turning my statements of what I proposed to into questions seeking his advice and knowledge and wisdom.

My unspoken proposition was of impressing him. What he was hearing in my use of words and seeing was threats. Not what I intended. Yet it was his reality. Thus I needed to back down.

2) Crossing my arms with the start of asking the questions. Rather than giving the subliminal message of being closed to what he had to say it conveyed the message, I am venerable, please don't beat me up with your knowledge. The leg cross soon followed.

3) I shut up and listened. The more he talked, the more I kept quiet except to ask more questions. In the end, he said my ideas were good and should be implemented.

Interestingly, his legs were uncrossed first, then his arms as he began to speak.

Lessons to Learn

There were numerous lessons learned that day. The one for you to try and to learn…

Watch people speaking whether one on one or to ten or to thousands. Watch the arms. Watch the legs. Then try the same yourself. Try it when framing yourself in various roles, be it the expert or the one seeking knowledge. Look for the relationship between you speech in these roles and the receivers arms and legs.

Then try to get someone who has closed arms to open them using your speech. Make you speech so sweet and receptive that they can't help but welcome it and unfold the arms. In effect, using your words and the way you deliver them to control their body language.

One word of caution. If someone knows this, you will have a more difficult time controlling their body language. Also, if they are cold, well, you will have to use common sense.

He's the one that keeps you alive.

Extra: This was valuable as a nurse.

A patient once asked me if I was a doctor. The doctor on call had walked in ahead of me and was on the other side of the bed. What the doctor said was one of the nicest compliments a nurse could ever receive. "No he's the one who keeps you alive, he is your nurse."

Yet it is by the doctors orders that this happens. We never lost a patient on our watch that wasn't already going to go. This doctor was a true team player.

To accomplish health care requires a team effort. How forward can I be? When do you keep quiet? This is a constant challenge given all the personalities in the health care field. The knowledge of listening to body language was my biggest asset. It allowed me to know which doctors were open to suggestions from nurses and which were not.

Knowing when and who to speak up to allowed me to build relationships and friendships with numerous doctors. Once those relationships were established, it was nothing to be called from other floors by different doctors for a nursing consult. It enabled me to help with even more patients than I was assigned in any given night.

Let me add here that I worked at a hospital that had wonderful staff to patient ratios that allowed this freedom.

The field of my expertise and where I held a certification was Bloodless Medicine and Surgery. They in effect made me the case manager for those patients refusing blood, ironically, most were not for religious reasons.

You're the one who saved my daughters life.

You might think, why take on more work. Please understand, it was and still is my passion. Besides, no one could begin to pay for the privilege of what happened over and over.

It may be best understood by the events one day after one of my lectures. A line had formed to talk to me. One of the ladies present asked my name, if I was a nurse and if I worked at the local hospital. She then said rather excitedly, "you're the one. You're the nurse that saved my daughters life."

This was rather embarrassing as a number of the audience had surrounded me by this time. Additionally, everyone in the auditorium seem to hear her excitement and at that moment all eyes were on me.

This was news to me. My response, "You must be mistaking me for some one else." She then repeated my name, that I was a RN and that the doctors couldn't find enough good things to say about me. Most of all, they said I was the one that was instrumental in saving the young woman, her daughter's life.

Stories like this have happened to me dozens of times. Sometimes it was mothers, sometimes grandfathers. Most of the time, it was those very patients that I got a call from another place in the hospital requesting my help, for my knowledge, and to speak on the subject that I know and love.

To date, I have had over 600 patients who I have been requested to help with. One had lost an ominous 85% of his blood. None died. Not only were the patients winners, but the doctors who listened were winners too. This came from learning who could be spoken to freely based on their body language listening style.

Use this knowledge wisely, and in good health.