

Uses of Non-Verbal Communication

There are a number of different uses of non-verbal communication. Here are a few of these:

Modifying speech

Non-verbal communication has a significant effect on what is communicated. Modifications include:

- Positioning of body relative to other people and things
- Shape of whole body
- Movement of limbs, head and fingers
- Micro-movement of muscles
- Skin colour and texture
- Voice pitch
- Texture of voice tone
- Speed of speaking
- Sweating
- Bodily smells (e.g. pheromones)

Speech modifiers are particularly significant when taken combination with speech and when used at key points in speech, for example in creating emphasis.

Replacing speech

Communication can be done without speaking. For example:

- Pointing with feet, legs, hands, head or whole body
- Gestures with fingers, hands and arms.
- Tilting of head
- Movement of any combination of the 90 muscles in the face.

Replacement for speech can be direct one-for-one gestures with clear meaning or may be less obvious or conscious movements that signal requests, attitudes and intent.

Controlling conversation

Conversation is a process of turn-taking in talking. Non-verbal signals are used a great deal in requesting, offering and managing control of who is speaking. This includes:

- Butting into speech to take control.
- Speaking louder or faster to retain control.
- Pausing to allow others to butt in.
- Stopping to request others to speak.
- Leaning forward and moving to request speaking.
- Looking away or moving back to show non-readiness to listen.

Conveying personality and status

Non-verbal communication extends beyond bodily actions to anything that sends messages. This includes much about who you are, and in particular where you fit into the social hierarchy. Such items include:

- Dress, including style, tidiness, coordination.
- Personal adornments, from jewellery to watches and badges.
- Office and desk space at work, including size and type of computer, chair, etc.
- Items owned, from cameras to cars to houses.

Expressing emotion

Emotions are particularly expressed through non-verbal communication, where the voice and body can tell a lot more about how you feel than your words. In particular, if you feel unable to express emotions verbally, your words and body language can easily conflict, sending messages that may be interpreted as stress or deceit.

So what?

So when you communicate, use your whole body and align it with your words.

Watch yourself to understand what your subconscious is thinking and feeling -- it is not always obvious to your conscious mind.

Also watch other people, of course, reading the deeper meaning of what they do not say.