Body Language

Introduction

Our body language is an integral component in the communication process. Listeners make many assumptions about the speaker, based on the speaker’s body language; consequently, we must be aware of the type of messages we are sending. This activity is designed to help you build awareness of your body language.

Instructions

For the next few days, as you engage in conversations with your colleagues, families, and friends, note the type of messages you are sending with your body. Here are some suggestions to help you become more aware of your body language:

* + - In a business meeting or discussion with colleagues or students, note where everyone is sitting or standing and the proximity to one another. Is the manager sitting at the head of the table? Does she or he have more space around them than the other workers? What is the posture of your colleagues during the discussion? Are some colleagues’ body language more receptive than others? How about your own? Can you maintain a neutral face when needed?
    - Next, take mental note of your family members’ or friends’ body language when you are speaking with them. Is your body language in sync with theirs? If your body language matches that of your partner, it often helps at an unconscious level to support effective communication. Is that true for you? Are you making good eye contact? Are you actively listening by acknowledging their feelings? Are you rushing to fill in the pauses in the conversation?

We need to be aware of what messages our bodies are sending. It is a good idea to practice this body language awareness activity periodically. Answers will vary. This is a self-awareness activity only.