*Lesson 17 20th February 2014*

*adapted from: http://www.tedxsalford.com*

***“The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn’t said.”****Peter Drucker*

Learning the secrets of body language could get you inside people’s heads and help you see what they are really thinking.

Non-verbal communication is one of the most fascinating things in the world. Some bodily expressions are universal across the borders of culture and even species. Hunched posture shows weakness and lower status, and spreading out indicates power among humans as well as chimpanzees. However, there’s much more to it. Anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell says that we can make and understand around 250,000 facial expressions.

The exciting thing about body language is that it’s unconscious. We are born with the ability to express ourselves with our bodies, e.g. think of a crying baby or dilated pupils when the mother is in sight. Verbal expression comes later.

Much of this communication without words is obvious, but if you improve your body language reading skills, you can understand people better.

Look for these tips for reading body language:

1.  **Pay attention to distance**How far your companion is from you, may tell more about their attitude towards you than a thousand words. The warmer the person’s feelings towards you, the nearer they will get to you. But remember that various cultures have different rules of social distance.

2.  **Head position**Tilted head usually indicates sympathetic feelings. Lowered head could mean that the person is hiding something. This might also be a sign of respect in some cultures.

3.   **Arms position** Crossed arms usually indicate defensiveness and could be a sign that the person is not convinced by what you say.

4. **Eye Movement** One of the hardest to control and thus the best to interpret the person’s thoughts. Eyes turning upwards left indicate inventing an idea out of nothing. Trying to remember something would take the eyes upwards and right. Constantly moving eyes from side to side could indicate nervousness.

5.   **Pupil size** Impossible to control, pupil size is connected to autonomic nervous system and therefore a good indicator of a person’s interest level. Expanded pupils signal interest, love or fear whereas retracted pupils reveal indifference. When tracking your companion’s eyes, remember that specific medication or drugs might induce dilated pupils.

6.   **Mirroring** If your companion is mimicking your gestures, it might be a sign of deeper interest and fondness.  Test it out by changing your position and see if they change theirs too.

7.   **Fidgeting** Feelings of guilt and nervousness might be revealed by excessive movement, playing with hair or watch, biting nails etc.

8.   **Listen carefully** The human voice has many qualities. Watch out for the tone and notice the differences on how things are being said.

While analysing others can be fun and useful, paying attention to your own body language is useful too. The various gestures, postures and expressions are mostly subconscious and you might be surprised how different your body language is from how you think it is!

Does this picture remind you of someone?

