

### Match Your Body Language To Your Words

Is your body saying what your mouth is? If your body language is sending a signal that doesn't back up your words, you'll lose credibility, which is the last thing you want during an interview.



Karen Friedman

What your body says is more important than the tone or message; 55 percent of meaning comes from your body language, 38 percent of meaning from the way words are said and 7 percent from the words that are spoken, according to widely used statistics by Albert Mehrabian.

"Most people are unaware because they are so focused on what the right thing to say is," says Steven Katz, author of *Lion Taming: Working Successfully With Leaders, Bosses and Other Tough Customers*. "But the real trick to succeeding in an interview is understanding the basics of body language."

So how can you be sure you are projecting the right image and confidence to back up your words -- without becoming intimidating? Follow these tips.

#### **1. Set the mood, says Nicholas Boothman, author of "How to Make Someone Like You in 90 Seconds."**

You want to be sincere in your communications, but sometimes your body might need a little more stimulation.

Boothman suggests thinking of a time when you were curious, resourceful, welcoming or enthusiastic. Try to emulate those feelings during the interview because if you're feeling strongly, your body talk will speak just as loudly as your words and tone.

#### **2. Make eye contact. Looking someone in the eyes may seem obvious, but it's the most direct way of connecting with someone.**

"When you make eye contact, you are making a connection with the person you are speaking to which increases your credibility and makes that person feel that you are genuinely interested in them," says **Karen Friedman, president of Karen Friedman Enterprises**, which helps people to communicate effectively during interviews.

Good communicators will hold eye contact with another person without feeling awkward. The objective is to be natural and unassuming; don't stare and make your interviewer uncomfortable.

### **3. Pay attention to facial expressions.**

A smile goes a long way to showing employers you're interested in the position and what they're saying. It also conveys happiness and confidence, both appealing attributes.

Be consistent with your tone, posture and expression. Keep a smile in your tone, as well, Katz says.

You may want to practice answering questions in front of a mirror -- and making sure your expressions match your words so that you are effectively communicating your point.

Watch your face so that you don't arch your eyebrows, Friedman says. That expression will convey skepticism.

### **4. Keep your body language open.**

Try matching your body language with your interviewer. If the person is leaning forward, then do the same. Mirror the same tone of the interview and speak at the same pace.

Open body language is not a threat, Boothman says. It conveys confidence without intimidation - key to getting your point across and being liked. With subtle connections between you and the person to whom you're speaking, the interviewer will think more positively when a connection is subconsciously made.

"People decide if they like someone within two seconds," he says. "When they like you, they'll see the best and look for opportunities to say 'yes.'"

Ask open questions that begin with who, what, why, when, how and tell me about. Those will help you stay open, as well as keep the conversation flowing and the communication line running smoothly.

### **5. Mind your gestures.**

Your hands, head and movements work to express and reinforce the ideas you're talking about. Gestures can create energy and enthusiasm, which an interviewer can pick up on, Friedman says.

Keep your movements varied and smooth so that you're calm, collected and authoritative.

Don't fold your arms across your chest or place your hands on your hips because you'll appear defensive, she says. Likewise, pointing your finger or holding your hand out in a stop position will come across as aggressive or threatening, Friedman adds.

## **6. Give feedback.**

Take the opportunity to nod and acknowledge what the interviewer is saying. Look interested and do whatever it takes in order for the person to understand you are paying attention, Boothman says.

It's also wise to admit when you don't know something. If you are working to make up an answer, your body language will speak more loudly than your words. The employer will appreciate your honesty, which goes along way in creating a good relationship with a potential boss.

Another recommendation from Boothman: show your personality in the interview while communicating your message and responding to the other person.

In the end, your communication skills are essential. And the basic interview rules also apply to help you communicate clearly through your body, tone and words. Prepare, practice and dress the part.

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