

Jane Lyle, Understanding Body Language (1989)

-transcript

BODY LANGUAGE



→ Postures

→ Stress

→ Social interactions

→ Lie detection

→ Orientation

→ Love & attraction

The basic principles of body language should be known and used for better understanding and communication.

Body language refers to the signals which are often sent unconsciously, potentially revealing some inmost thoughts or feelings which are not necessarily expressed verbally. For example, someone's body language may indicate that he/she is defensive or uncomfortable – and you can then do your best to diffuse the situation.

It can also send false signals to the observers, which do not convey the person's actual thoughts or attitude.

→ *unrepresentative body language*

For instance, one could be deterring friends or potential partners by using negative postures and gestures. Perhaps the person is shy, or uncertain about how attractive he/she is. This attitude will reveal itself in his/her body language, and send out the message that he/she is not interested or available for social contact. But this may not be the message he/she really want to transmit.

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Postures

Victorian psychologist William James made one of the earliest classification of postures, identifying 4 types:

- **APPROACH:** forward-looking postures which demonstrate attention and warmth of personality
- **WITHDRAWAL** (the opposite of approach): turning away, holding back. This posture signifies shyness, boredom, and are perceived as cold by the onlooker.
- **EXPANSION:** standing up straight, with an erect bearing. Extreme examples are the postures of pride and arrogance. Normally, however, this posture is adopted by confident, dominant individuals.
- **CONTRACTION:** posture which draws the person into him- or herself; dejected, collapsed positions of the body which indicate submission and possibly depression or disappointment.

By experimenting with different kinds of postures in front of a mirror, you will realize the strength of the difference in postures and in the messages transmitted. An awareness of postural messages can help you decide what kind of posture to adopt in order to make the most of an encounter, whether social or work-oriented.

Ideally, an upright, relaxed posture immediately suggests confidence. We say “chin up” when we mean “adopt a hopeful, assertive attitude to this situation”. But by referring to someone as “spineless”, we imply the opposite posture and state of mind; someone who cannot stand up to life.

Body memories

A person’s habitual posture seems to act as a record of past experience. For instance, individuals who have suffered from lengthy bouts of depression at some time will frequently retain the sagging, hopeless shape which identifies the illness. It has become second nature to them, and even when they have recovered their body recalls their unhappiness. Boys who shoot up in adolescence and find themselves inches taller than their friends will stoop, often quite badly, so as not to leave their peer group behind.

Yet by deliberately working on changing posture, both body and mind can be freed from the burdens of past trauma. Some researchers go as far as to claim that this approach can lead to insights as valuable as those afforded by traditional psychoanalysis.

The circumstances of our birth affect our later development too. Birth without violence has been pioneered by Dr. Frederick Leboyer, who believed that the majority of standard hospital deliveries take place in an unfriendly environment. The new baby emerges from the safe cocoon of the womb, where it has been surrounded by warm fluid and all sounds have been muffled, to be assaulted by bright lights, loud noises, and an atmosphere of confusion. Dr. Leboyer believed that children born in this way were more likely to be aggressive. He proposed a comfortable, softly-lit environment which would relax both mother and baby. Studies conducted by Dr. Danielle Rapoport indicate that his assumptions were correct; nearly all the children born by Leboyer’s methods are ambidextrous, suggesting a balance between the two hemispheres of the brain, and are unusually healthy and well-adjusted.

Posture and personality

- **top/bottom split**

Taking the waist as a natural dividing line, the body can be viewed in two sections. The upper section can be seen as extrovert, as its functions involve reaching out with the arms to express love, anger, to direct others and to perform all the intricate and symbolic gestures associated with our hands.

The lower half of the body is more introverted. It spends much more time in contact with the earth than the upper portion, our legs propelling us from A to B. Because this part of us is also associated with our sexuality and fertility, and the assimilation and digestion of food, it is connected to earthy feelings of privacy, home and stability.

Take a look at the proportions of your body - where is the weight distributed? Where do the muscles seem to be best developed? If your body is noticeably split between the two halves, does this relate to your personality? An extreme example of this type of split are the women with wide 'childbearing' hips, and a primarily emotional personality, placing home and family concerns above all, and the man with massive chest and shoulders which seem to be supported by narrow hips and spindly legs. He would be an active, self-expressive type who prefers action to contemplation but may have difficulty with his emotions. While the split is not always as obvious as this, it can also be observed through posture and movement. Which half of the body seems the most graceful and co-ordinated? Which half of his body seems healthier?

- **Front/back split**

It is your front that you identify as your self, the part of your body which faces the world and actively communicates with other people.

Because your back is largely hidden from sight, it may be linked to the unconscious part of your mind. And just as the unconscious contains all kinds of obscure and sometimes primitive urges, so the back tends to get used as a storehouse for tension in the form of suppressed fears and anger.

When we are on guard we stiffen the back from neck to ankle, using it as an added support for our more vulnerable front. But this reaction can easily become a permanent way of holding the body, and ultimately result in back pains and muscle spasms. If you have habitually "put your back" into life without doing anything to release negative feelings, your back is likely to be a lot more tense than your front. Everybody, but particularly people in sedentary occupations, should make a point of stretching at frequent intervals to help release some of the accumulated tension.

You can experiment with posture by observing the reactions of people to different ways of holding yourself. If you try to sit up straight, with a relaxed, upright posture, you should find that this elicits a more positive response in most situations than if you deliberately collapse into your chair.

- **Torso/limbs split**

People who use their arms and hands a lot while speaking find it difficult to talk if these parts are restricted.

Generally speaking, extrovert personalities use their limbs proportionately more during conversations than shyer people. And highly active "doers" are always on the move, often fidgeting or tapping their feet when their desire to move forward has been temporarily thwarted. Such people find it very difficult just to be still and quiet inside.

Introverted characters, on the other hand, are full of ideas and feelings but have problems with self expression. They tend to bottle up their emotions, and cannot always say what they would like to say. As a result of constricted self-expression, this type of personality may have weak, underdeveloped arms and legs extending from a full torso - as if the roots and branches of their personal tree are frightened to venture far from the supporting trunk. Such individuals employ a minimal range of restricted gestures, and until they feel safe their postures are likely to be closed ones.

More open postures can be cultivated to good affect.

- **Head**

A lowered head is a sign of submission, the most obvious example being the formal bow, but if it is an habitual posture then you can assume that the person is hanging his or her head for other reasons. Shame and sorrow typically result in a temporarily lowered head, but it is very easy for such postures to remain long after their original cause has gone.

Change the body, change the mind

If little children are naturally graceful, by the age of 10 they would have developed unnatural ways of holding themselves, which worsens with age. Interestingly, these defects are less noticeable in primitive peoples, who seem to retain balanced bodies well into old age.

One outcome of research into posture, and the emotional meanings behind it, has been the development of various methods for consciously changing ourselves for the better. Bioenergetics, Rolfing and the Alexander Technique are all ways of working with your body to free it from bad postural habits and accumulated tensions.

Each of these major techniques for unlearning negative adult postures is based on the premise that you and your body are indivisible. Rolfing requires a therapist, for it is a system of deep massage-like movements which seek to break down the muscular armour that prevents a free flow of energy through the body. It was developed by Dr. Ida Rolf, a biochemist and physiologist. She noticed that both physical accidents and emotional upsets tightened the muscle tissue – and that if the muscles continued to hold the postures of fear, grief or anger for any length of time these patterns would become set. Inflexibility, imbalance and lowered vitality resulted – and so Dr. Rolf devised a series of ten therapeutic sessions aimed at restructuring the body to enable it to assume a healthier posture.

The Alexander Technique

But the pioneer of posture was an Australian named Frederick Matthias Alexander, born in 1869. While pursuing a career as an actor he was frequently troubled by hoarseness and breathing difficulties, which greatly interfered with his work. Mysteriously, he did not suffer these interruptions during normal conversation. Doctors and voice specialists were unable to help him, and he became determined to pin down and eradicate the problem. By watching himself in a mirror both while speaking normally, and while declaiming in a theatrical fashion, he observed that his whole posture became exaggerated when he was acting.

Years of careful study followed Alexander's initial discovery, resulting in the formulation of the Alexander Principle: the way we use our bodies positively or negatively affects our mental and physical state.

→ Free the neck

One of the most crucial elements of Alexander's teachings concerns freeing the neck so that it is used correctly. As he discovered, this is the most important area to concentrate on to improve stature, breathing, and the posture of the chest and back. Try imaging your head as light and floating – like a balloon whose string is your spine. Feel it lifting up and away from your neck and body, as if an imaginary hook was attached to the top of the skull. Now gently drop your chin a little – this will have the effect of lengthening the back of the neck.

The way you walk

Those lost in deep thought walk with their heads lowered, often staring with unfocused eyes at the ground. Such people are not depressed, but moving slowly in order to think more clearly. Since their minds are already preoccupied with the thought process, they do not want any additional data to distract them. They will often walk up and down, like a sentry on duty, for the purpose of walking in this case is not to reach a destination but to reach a conclusion. In addition, this kind of activity helps to burn up adrenalin – and is a useful way to release any stress generated by analysing the problem.

Hands on hips, with the hands resting on the hipbones, and the hands curved towards the back, in a masculine pose, has the effect of tilting the upper torso slightly forward as the person walks. According to research conducted by Gerard Nierenberg and Henry Calero, people habitually walk like this are characterised by short, intense bursts of energy followed by periods of deceptive inertia – during which they are thinking and planning. Winston Churchill frequently walked in this fashion, and certainly had variable energy levels.

By consciously walking in a more confident way – that is, with a relaxed, upright posture – you should notice a difference in yourself and in the response of other people. When you walk into a room in this way, even if you are nervous inside, people will respond to you in a positive way. Because you are more erect when walking with a relaxed, upright posture, you will notice more about your surroundings – which will help you form more accurate opinions about what you see. Your voice may improve too, because correct posture aids breathing and voice projection, so you should find it easier to communicate. Breathing more deeply will also help overcome tension and anxiety – and clarify your thinking.

Vertical // horizontal position

Studies have revealed that whether your body is horizontal or vertical influence the way you think. Standing up has been shown to facilitate the kind of thinking which results in action. Quick, definite decisions are much more likely to occur when you are standing up. Some management consultants recommend that short planning sessions are conducted in this way. Many people instinctively walk about when they need to reach a decision, rather than sitting and brooding.

But when you need to use your imagination or job your memory, lie down instead. Experts researching into human thought processes have found that the horizontal position can encourage reflection. Lying down helps you to deal with new ideas, enabling you to look at all the possibilities and respond positively and constructively.

Stress

Stress has become the demon of modern society. Numerous illnesses, difficult states of mind and the breakdown of marriages are blamed on the curse of our modern times. Yet, without the inspiration often provided by stress, nothing would ever be achieved; a complete lack of stress can make us depressed and unmotivated.

An awareness of how our body reacts to stress, what it means, and the signals we use to try to protect ourselves from further bombardment can help our own sense of well-being and our understanding of other people. If you're trying to communicate with someone and their body language is telling you that they simply cannot cope, you would achieve a great deal more by helping them to unwind than by trying to press your point.

Inner stress

Our body responds to stress wholeheartedly. Our breathing changes, we secrete various substances into our bloodstream, heartbeat quickens, and normal eating habits change. Scientist Hans Selye pioneered research into stress in the 1930's, revealing that our reactions may be divided into 3 stages: alarm, which has been christened "the fight or flight syndrome", resistance and adaptation, and finally, exhaustion, when our overloaded survival mechanisms can no longer cope.

Here is what actually happens when we react to the stress in our lives. Whether we're facing a deadline at work or a life-threatening situation, we are still physiological cavemen.

The body's response

Cortisone is released from the adrenal glands. This protected our cavemen ancestors from allergic reactions to dust, flying fur, etc when fighting off an attacker.

Adrenalin increases in the bloodstream. The body's metabolism is speeded up so that it can burn available fuel faster. Extra energy results and the body is ready to run for its life.

The hypothalamus releases endorphins. The hypothalamus is a part of the brain and endorphins are the body's natural painkillers (similar to morphine). The euphoric "runner's high", states of bliss reported by mediators, relatively pain-free natural childbirth and obliviousness to injury while under extreme stress – such as fighting for your life – are all examples of the effect of endorphins.

Sex hormones (male testosterone and female progesterone) are reduced. The effect of this is to limit our fertility. A precarious prehistoric life included times of hardship. At such times the addition of baby cavemen would have been impractical, so libido became temporarily dormant.

The digestive tract closes down. The mouth dries up so that no excess fluid reaches the stomach, and the rectum and bladder empty so that the body is free to concentrate all its efforts of the fight ahead. Blood is diverted to the muscles, heart and lungs.

Sugar is released into the bloodstream, metabolized by increased insulin levels. This provides immediate short-term energy.

Cholesterol increases in the blood. This acts as further fuel for the muscles, since the stomach is no longer active.

The heart beats faster. Extra blood, carrying oxygen and fuel, races to muscles and lungs, strengthening the ability to fight or flee.

The breathing rate increases. This provides an increased oxygen supply to feed the extra blood in the lungs.

The blood thickens. Oxygen-carrying capacity is increased, as is speedy blood-clotting at the site of a wound.

Body hair stands on end. When we were covered with thick body hair, this might have had a similar effect to a cat's fur standing on end – we would have looked larger and more threatening.

Perspiration increases. This helps to cool an overheated system which is working much harder than usual.

Blood drains from the face and is diverted to the heart, lungs and muscles. Diverting blood internally lessens bleeding from any cuts.

The five physical senses are sharpened. This brings with it the sensation of being fully alive, as hearing, sight, smell, touch and taste function with supernormal acuity.

Symptoms

Lowered resistance to germs and viruses. Lowered immune response if the increase in cortisone levels is prolonged. An acid stomach and brittle bones may also result.

Jumpy nerves, insomnia, weight loss and exhaustion.

Reduced resistance to pain caused by depleted endorphin supplies because of prolonged or intense stress. Increased incidence of migraines and backaches may result.

Anxiety-ridden sex life, premature ejaculation; loss of interest in sex; infertility.

Dry mouth, nausea, bloating, cramps and diarrhoea. A dry mouth is such a common phenomenon when under stress that a glass of water is almost mandatory on public platforms and many television chat shows. Feeling "sick with fear" is the result of eating, or attempting to eat, when the stomach is shut down.

Existing diabetic conditions are aggravated. Low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia) may be triggered off.

Increased risk of heart disease. Excessive cholesterol harms the heart and circulatory system. so it is unwise to eat a diet overloaded with red meat, fried foods, cream, and so on.

High blood pressure.

Increased likelihood of strokes and heart attacks caused by blood thickening to a permanent sludge.

Rapid breathing. Most people react to shock with an involuntary gasp, and the rapid rising and falling of the chest – almost impossible to conceal – betrays even the best actor's nervousness. Deep breathing also exacerbates the effects of smoking and air pollution.

Hair stands on end, producing an unpleasant crawling sensation as, for example, when the hair stand up on the back of the neck when watching an horror movie.

Sweaty palms, increased perspiration generally. Sweating is one of the most noticeable signs of discomfort and heightened nervous tension, and is unacceptable in most social situations.

White face. Someone who is "white with rage" is much more dangerous than one who is "scarlet with anger". The white-faced person is physically primed for action, while the red-faced individual has already slightly relaxed because the circulation has begun to return to normal.

Exhaustion, loss of concentration, making mistakes. Everything eventually becomes too much to cope with as our system is overloaded with stimuli. Comedian Woody Allen is particularly adept at depicting this kind of behaviour.

Stress signals

While some of the body's responses to stress are outwardly visible – paling and sweating for instance – there are other signals which can reveal just how much stress a person is experiencing. These fall into two broad categories: cut-off signals, which we perform when we need time to think or aren't entirely sure about what we are hearing (e.g. shifty or evasive eyes), and displacement activities, which are habits which we perform to relieve tension.

Displacement activities were first observed by biologists studying birds. British biologist Julian Huxley noted the odd behaviour of a pair which, while courting, would suddenly stop and begin to preen themselves.

Another scientist, Nobel prize winner Niko Tinbergen, watched two birds fighting; in the middle of the disagreement, one of them simply began to build a nest. Other birds would alter aggressive behaviour and begin to feed – reversing the expected sequence of behaviour.

It seems that at moments of conflict between fear and aggression another type of behaviour takes over. These displacement activities can be used to terminate or even prevent conflict between two people, deflecting energy as they do into an area where it cannot assume threatening, an-social forms of behaviour.

Examples of displacement activities: checking train tickets over and over again, smoking, eating, chewing gum, shopping, yawning, grooming (e.g. one's desk).

High levels of boredom, frustration and general stress are damaging influences in our lives; lack of excitement is just as stressful as too much.

Coping with stress

- Sitting

If someone sits down and promptly folds their arms and legs they are not at peace with themselves; they are erecting a barrier. Behind this self-created shield they feel safe, but you're bound to feel that they're holding back or even feeling actively hostile towards you. If their lower body is pointing away from you towards the nearest exit you may be sure that the person would definitely prefer to be somewhere else.

However, unless you are dealing with someone very aware of posture, such as a dancer or a person who has studied the Alexander Technique, it is unwise to try and read too much into crossed legs.

A negative attitude is far more reliably revealed by crossed arms, and even then it is important to remember that the person could be very shy and wanting to protect him or herself until he or she feels safe to come out of their shell.

At the other extreme, a person who slumps or sprawls across a chair may be appearing relaxed to the point of rudeness. Unless you know someone very well, you expect a certain amount of attention.

Probably the most appealing posture to adopt when talking to people is one which shows an open personality; legs side by side, not tightly clamped together, with hands resting loosely in the lap or perhaps being used from time to time to underline what is being said. But this posture is remarkably difficult to maintain for any length of time when you feel you are on uncertain territory.

Next time you are in an important meeting, spending time in an unfamiliar home or even on the train, try to sit calmly without crossing any of your limbs. Sooner or later your natural vulnerability and desire to protect yourself will assert itself and you will experience an irresistible urge to cross or fold something. . Don't!

It is worthwhile committing not to fold, for research conducted in the US indicated that students who were asked to sit through an entire lecture, maintaining an open posture throughout, absorbed 38% more information than those who were instructed to sit with their arms and legs firmly crossed. It seems that a defensive body posture may actually inhibit us from receiving beneficial knowledge – both factual and emotional – while an open posture facilitates absorption of such knowledge.

- **Lying down**

The most relaxed posture of all. A sign of dominance while at a social event.

- **Relaxation**

Relaxation is essential in our lives if we are to be happy, healthy individuals. Reducing muscle tension anxiety and stress-related disorders improves our mental alertness, energy levels and sleep. A relaxed person is likely to live a longer and fuller life, have fewer accidents, feel more self-confident, cope better with pain and deal more effectively with those individuals encountered who are not relaxed.

Free the body from unnecessary tension and you can free your mind too. Indeed mind and body are so closely allied that they cannot help but affect each other. Prove it to yourself by closing your eyes and imagining you are holding a lemon in your hand, Smell the fruit, feel its texture beneath your fingers – then bite firmly into it, sinking your teeth into the sharp, juicy flesh. If you have done this exercise correctly your mouth will now be full of saliva.

Pavlov's classic experiment with dogs is another good example of how it is possible to learn to respond to certain stimuli. Ivan Petrovich Pavlov was a Russian behavioural scientist who used the inbred response of salivating at the prospect of food. Over and over again he fed the dogs, synchronizing the feeding with the ringing of a bell until eventually the dogs salivated when the bell rang, even in absence of food in evidence. This proved that automatic behaviour can be conditioned and controlled, and a great deal of subsequent research has been conducted in this field.

Many techniques exist for relaxing the body which will in their turn relax an over-active mind, and some disciplines use both physical relaxation and mental imagery to promote a state of peace.

If you are going through your daily life with a tense body, clenched jaw and a permanent frown (first of all you are not giving the best impression!), you are actually expending an enormous amount of energy keeping yourself in this state – energy which could undoubtedly be put to better use and enhance your enjoyment of being alive.

A relaxed face looks younger and more appealing, and is less likely to produce unattractive wrinkles.

a) Simple muscular exercises

If you are very tense, and especially if you can feel the tension in any part of your body, it's a good idea to take some physical exercise before attempting any passive method. Something as straightforward as a brisk walk can reduce anxiety levels and help use up excess adrenalin. An increase in noradrenaline – a neurotransmitter which makes you feel cheerful and optimistic – has also been found to coincide with regular exercise. The same applies to beta-endorphins, which calm and uplift the mind and reduce depression.

b) Mental magic

Although there are many excellent meditation techniques – many of which originating from the East, such as Yoga, or the continuous flowing movements of Chinese T'ai Ch'i – normal, familiar activities such as painting, gardening or cooking can work pretty well, as they give you something outside yourself to focus on.

Use your imagination to find out what works out for you. For example if you are a visual person, you will find little difficulty in thinking of a place you like, or imagining a pleasant landscape which you can wander through at will, making it a special place you can visit in your mind when you want to relax.

c) Sleep

Sleep is the most natural, universally available remedy against stress and distress that we possess. Sufficient quantities of refreshing rest promote better health and vitality, and improve our ability to function well in an increasingly confusing world.

Deprive people of sleep for three days and they will begin to hallucinate as if they had taken a mind-bending drug such as LSD. Research into serious sleep deprivation has shown that if the experiment is prolonged, people will become victims of paranoid delusions after about 100 hours of wakefulness. Terrified volunteers become disorientated and eventually unable to resist the urge to sleep and dream. Without sleep, the brain is unable to function efficiently and seems to be affected long before the body shows much deterioration.

Sleep is a state in which breathing and heartbeat slow down, digestive processes diminish and our brainwaves become progressively longer and slower as they descend from the alpha waves of full consciousness to the delta waves characterizing deep sleep.

Our internal clock

Every living creature responds instinctively to the regular alternating pattern of day and night, which naturally regulates our body. In 1960 Franz Halberg coined the term "circadian" to refer to these rhythms, which exist in close partnership with part of the brain stem called the reticular formation (lying at the base of the brain and activating the central nervous system) and with the cortex or "thinking" part of the brain.

Messages sent from the brain stem via the cortex to the spinal cord and nervous system keep us awake. When those signals cease, the cortex slows down, and mind and body become drowsy and ready for sleep. Any kind of over-stimulation, from a late-night cup of coffee to an over-worried mind, can make sleep seem elusive. Following the traditional recommendation of thinking of monotonous sheep might help insomniacs simply because repetitive actions appear to promote drowsiness.

How much sleep?

By the time we reach old age, about 6 hours seem sufficient. As adults, 7 or 8 hours is usual, although individual quotas vary. 4% of people require less than 5.5 hours per night. 4% regularly need more than 10 hours. Research has indicated that short sleepers spend more time in deep "orthodox" sleep, which may demonstrate that it is the deep, inert sleep which is needed for health maintenance.

There may be a link between sleeping and waking personalities: short sleepers tend to have high physical energy levels, are hard-working, practical extroverted and ambitious. Those of us who need to sleep more than 9 hours per night are likely to be unconventional, introverted and more creatively inclined.

Types of sleep

Sleep researchers have used electroencephalographs (equipment measuring electrical activity within the brain) to discover what happens to us while we sleep. It revealed 2 quite distinct forms of sleep which have been named orthodox and paradoxical sleep. Orthodox sleep normally lasts for about 2 hours when we first fall asleep, after which we move into the first of 4 or 5 periods of paradoxical sleep.

Orthodox sleep has been divided into 4 separate stages of brainwave activity. The first phase is a light semi-sleep during which the brainwaves begin to slow down, along with the pulse and breathing – which become more regular. It is very easy to wake someone during this stage as they are just drifting off and may still be partly conscious of their thoughts and outside noises or light. The second and third stages see a progressive deep relaxation taking place as the muscles relax, and heart and breathing rates continue to decrease. By phase four we are deeply unconscious and have entered the deepest level of sleep. The long, slow delta waves seem to denote the reduction of all mental activity.

Paradoxical sleep is the most fascinating and puzzling state of all, during which – whether we remember it or not – we are dreaming. Experiments have established that dreams are essential to mental and physical well-being; when people are denied dream-sleep they soon become quite disturbed.

Our brainwave patterns begin to move rapidly and irregularly, as they do when we are awake. Heartbeat and blood pressure become agitated and irregular and our eyes move rapidly behind their lids as if watching something, which has given rise to the term “rapid eye movement (REM) sleep”. However it’s unlikely that we are watching anything in the sighted sense of the word, for people who have been blind since birth also produce these darting movements. But despite all this activity, there is a dramatic loss of muscle tone which almost amounts to paralysis. When you are having a particularly horrible nightmare and feel unable to run away, you may be sensing this complete muscular relaxation. People who have used up a lot of energy during the day – either mental or physical – seem to need more paradoxical sleep than others.

Theories abound about the purpose of dreams: one of their functions seems to be a sorting process whereby all the information we have accumulated during the day is assessed and filed away. Repressed emotions, inner changes and all kinds of inspiration are also connected with our dream lives. And “sleeping on it” can sometimes resolve problems which seem insoluble by day.

Benefits of sleeping

Soon after falling asleep our body cells begin to divide at a much faster rate than before, providing almost every part of the body with an opportunity to repair and renew itself. High levels of what is known as “growth hormone” are released into the bloodstream during the deepest stage of orthodox sleep. Failure to achieve the deepest level of sleep prevents its release; sleeping lightly doesn’t appear to trigger its entry into the bloodstream. Poor sleepers have also been found to be much more physically active during sleep.

We need deep sleep to restore and regenerate our body, while dream sleep seems to restore mental harmony.

The body language of sleeping

The dominant sleeping posture is linked to our waking lives but can be changed temporarily by feelings of anxiety.

Some psychiatrists believe that the real cause of sleeplessness is not so much mental as physical. When we are deeply worried, our fears penetrate the subconscious mind, which will do its best to sort them out while we are asleep; our body will assume a new, self-protective sleeping position and this sets up a conflict, as we then restlessly toss and turn to try to return to our habitual position and to resist the new one.

- **foetal position** (whole body curled into a ball with the knees drawn up towards the chest and the arms hugging the body): very self-protective; sleeper feels very insecure, seeking the comfort and safety we experienced in the mother's womb before birth
- **semi-foetal** (knees and arms loosely bent): comfortable, healthy and balanced; sleeper not experiencing any major conflict, and is content with him or herself
- **Jekyll and Hyde** (resembling a stork, with one leg extended and the other bent): dual personality; sleeper has an inner conflict between active and passive roles; such individuals may appear to be self-confident extroverts but are secretly shy, or on the contrary may present a non-aggressive face to the world to conceal a far more ambitious character.
- **face down** (lying flat out, face down with arms and legs stretched out): by dominating the sleeping space in this way, the sleeper is seeking to control his or her life; it is usually quite hard to move such people – awake or asleep – as they will fight hard to defend their views. Most people who prefer this position are trying to counteract feelings of insecurity by regulating their lives so that few surprises disrupt their measured existence. Control is a word which has a special meaning to them.
- **flat out** (lying on one's back, extending arms and legs freely and fearlessly): secure, happy and supremely confident; secure personality who is not afraid to be completely open whether awake or asleep. There is something endearingly childlike about their trusting attitude which adds to their popularity.

d) Smiling

Smilers are thought of as warm, outgoing people – while those who restrict this expression are perceived as cold and withdrawn. Research has shown that facial expressions and moods are catching, for we are not simply registering that someone is cheerful or cross – we are experiencing the same emotion. So if you are always surrounded by miserable people with long faces, you are likely to suffer depressive feelings yourself eventually.

What is more surprising is that the expression on your face can actually dramatically alter your feelings and perceptions and it has been proved many times that deliberately smiling or frowning can create corresponding emotional responses. A notable experiment was conducted, involving volunteers who were asked to fake facial expressions associated with 6 emotions (fear, disgust, anger, surprise, sadness and happiness) consecutively, holding each expression for 10 seconds in turn. Ekman wired up his volunteers to equipment which could register any changes in temperature, heart rate, skin resistance and muscle tension. Negative facial expressions produced very definite stress reactions in the automatic nervous system. Anger resulted in the most dramatic changes of all, as heart rates increased and temperatures rose. Happy faces exerted a calming effect upon the body, which seemed to continue after the exercise. Even though neither negative nor positive effects are permanent, it looks as though people whose expressions are habitually miserable may be needlessly damaging their health.

Another experiment which adds further credence to this theory was conducted with a group of people who were asked to smile or frown, while being shown some films. Those who had been asked to frown were shown quite cheerful films, while the smilers were shown sad or upsetting ones. Yet the participants who had been asked to frown felt sad or angry even though they were watching uplifting material. And sad images failed to affect the

smilers, who said they felt positive about what they had seen. The implication if these results is that it is in our power to influence our moods beneficially.

Many experts believe that smiling and laughing are powerful adjuncts to conventional medicine. When we laugh, every organ in the body is affected in such a positive way that it has been called “stationary jogging”. Our breathing quickens as we inhale deeply and exhale through our vocal chords; this exercises the face, neck and shoulders, stomach and diaphragm. In addition blood pressure is reduced, while blood vessels expand close to the skin’s surface and improve circulation (that’s why some people blush when laughing). Laughter also increases the amount of oxygen in the blood which helps the body to heal itself, and resist further infection. Furthermore, laughter can lower the heart rate, stimulate the appetite and burn out calories. A good laugh will also stimulate the body’s natural pain-killing tranquillisers, beta-endorphins, leading some experts to suggest that laughing can prevent ulcers and digestive disorders.

Neurologist Henri Rubinstein came to the conclusion that 1 minute of laughter provided up to 45 minutes of subsequent relaxation. Because our muscles are relaxed, and our whole system benefits from this inborn response, many doctors now believe that laughter plays a major part in successful convalescence.

The story of journalist Norman Cousins goes in this way. He cured himself of what was thought to be an incurable disease, by discharging himself from the hospital, booking a hotel room, watching numerous comedy films, and having a nurse read to him from humorous books. He discovered that 10 minutes of helpless laughter could create pain-free intervals of 2 hours or more. Medical tests taken before and after these sessions showed that they were having a measurable healing effect upon his illness. He eventually cured his disease, and was able to return to full-time work. 20 years later, he was still delivering lectures about his experience.

How to detect a false smile? From the eyes. They narrow and crinkle up when the smile comes from the heart – and remain unaffected when someone is faking his or her smile.

e) Tears

Research into tears has shown that they contain a natural painkiller called enkaphalin. This chemical helps you to feel better by fighting sorrow and pain – and weeping can increase the quantities of enkaphalin you produce. Tears of emotion also help the body rid itself of toxic chemical wastes, for they have been found to contain more protein than tears which result from cold winds or other irritants. If no tears are shed because they are being repressed, these wastes remain in the body. Crying comforts, calms, and can even be enjoyable – witness the popularity of the highly emotional films dubbed “weepies”.

* * *

Social interactions

First impressions

The importance of body language during the first 4 to 5 minutes of an encounter cannot be over-emphasized, for while we are engaged in small talk we are forming a lasting impression of each other. And although this impression is formed quickly, it is a lingering one, which can radically affect the outcome of an encounter.

Firstly, we assess physical appearance, which will provide information about age, sex, perceived status and attractiveness. Depending upon what we see, we will react accordingly. For example, most people will behave more politely if they think someone holds a position in life superior to their own. In time gone by, elderly people were automatically accorded higher status and respected for their wisdom. But status today depends very much on power and material belongings, on “status symbols” promoted by brands.

While we are looking, we are also listening and recording information about the volume, pitch and quality of voice, which gives hints to a person’s level of confidence.

Posture, gesture and the ever-changing world of facial expression complete this rapid portrait of a stranger. A fuller, factual picture will be built up during later conversation, and your initial reaction may be altered for better or worse in the future; however, it is filed away in your memory bank and may be difficult to change consciously.

Eye contact

During a friendly conversation, people look at one another frequently, but for short periods of time. Lovers, or would-be lovers, extend eye contact. A less pleasant form of lengthy staring occurs when one person seeks to dominate or threaten another. Minimal eye contact however is to be avoided, as it suggests submission, bad manners and dishonesty. Many painfully shy people suffer from an inability to look others in the eye, and are often wrongly assumed to be unpleasant characters as a result. Sorrow and depression are also states of mind which affect our eye language considerably.

Face

Generally speaking, a mobile, expressive face is perceived as belonging to a more interesting, warm personality than an inscrutably static face.

Head

Every nod, shake, tilt and toss synchronises both what is being said and felt. Without these conversational aids, discussions tend to become stilted and short-lived, for it is as if the speaker is talking into a void. Should you wish to use body language to bring an encounter to an abrupt close, just reduce eye contact to a minimum and keep your head still; your companion will soon fall into an uncomfortable silence.

Voice

The importance of one's voice is highlighted by the origin of the word *person*, which comes from the Latin *persona*, derived from the association of words "*per sona*" which means *by sound*.

Sound confident and positive. Thin, weak voices seem to lack vital energy and do not inspire confidence in others. Quiet voices project a submissive image, and were often admired in women for this reason. But avoid the extreme opposite; turning up the volume suggests dominance and aggression, neither of which are qualities generally sought in a relationship.

Also enliven your speech by stressing positive words and sentences, and subtly alter the pitch and volume when you wish to emphasize a dramatic point.

Postural and gestural echoing

It confirms that the individuals interacting are thinking and feeling the same. Sometimes people will even cross their legs in unison, or lean forward at the same moment as if they were literally of one mind.

The synchrony of body language is all the more established when dealing with a lasting friendship. Their tiniest, most fleeting physical expressions mirror each other.

A guide to hand signals

- clenched hands: when speaking, clenched hands indicate that what is being talked about is frustrating, or was a painful experience. When listening it tells you that the listener is responding negatively.
- steepling (fingertips and thumbs pressed together, forming a triangular shape, which is then held up near the face, at waist level, or in the lap): this signals confidence or certainty of opinion. If the head is tilted back at the same time, it suggests arrogance.
- hands clasped lightly behind the back: a supremely confident gesture, laying the whole, vulnerable front of the body theoretically open to attack. Frequently used by royalty.
- both hands behind the head: sign of superiority, confidence, and possibly arrogance
- arms folded with thumbs pointing upwards: a message combining defensiveness with superiority. You will find it nearly impossible to convince the other person of anything, for the mind is resolutely closed. You could try handing him or her a cup of coffee. .
- hand stroking or rubbing the chin: your ideas are being given careful consideration
- hand resting lightly on the cheek: your audience is analysing and evaluating what you are saying before making a decision
- head resting on or being supported by the hand: at best your listener is very tired; at worst you are boring him or her
- hand clasping the back of the neck: danger signal; this person is trying to control angry feelings which cannot be expressed openly
- lightly scratching or rubbing the side of the neck with one or two fingers: your audience may think you are lying, your ideas may be unfamiliar or controversial, or the situation creates insecurity
- scratching the head: perplexity, doubt and uncertainty
- hiding the thumbs inside the fist: difficulty in analysing a problem
- using the index finger to point at another person, or group: dominance, authoritarianism, aggression

- clenched fist: not to be confused with passively clenched hands: undoubtedly aggressive and threatening
- rubbing the hands together: quick rubbing indicates a pleasurable sense of satisfaction or expectation, while slow rubbing or wringing of the hands reveal that a con is about to be perpetrated
- separating the little finger from the rest of the fingers: shows possible eccentricity and strong sense of individuality
- hands pressed together, as if in prayer: demonstrates a desire to persuade, or underline a point gently but firmly

Touch

We are all profoundly influenced by it, as the following experiment clearly demonstrates.

A university library assistant was asked to touch the hands of some students when returning their library cards, while other students were not touched. The students were then asked to say what they thought of the library, and of the library assistant. All the people who had been touched felt more positive about the library and the assistant than those who had not. Significantly, even the students who didn't recall the assistant's brief physical contact with them were affected.

Other research concluded that tactile people tend to be more attractive than non-touchers.

Saying hello

The most widespread form of social salutation is the handshake, whose purpose is to create a momentary physical bond, which says "hello" or "good bye" or "we agree on this".

Extending a hand to encourage and reassure another is something we all have in common with chimpanzees. Dominant chimps hold out their hands to lower-ranking members of their tribe, who will often beg for such contact, for it gives them courage and strength.

A firm handshake produces the best results as it inspires confidence.

A dominant hand will face palm down when clasping the other person's hand, while open, outward facing palms denote submission and are non-threatening.

Another greeting phenomenon is the eyebrow flash. This friendly signal occurs spontaneously as we make visual contact with someone we know, and seems to be body shorthand for pleased surprise. The eyebrows are raised for a fraction of a second, usually accompanied by a welcoming smile.

Lie detection

Studies show that body language is most likely to reveal deception when the need to lie is very strong, and the liar's belief in the falsehood and confidence that it will be accepted is low. The inevitable conflict and tension that this produces will, like truth itself, get out one way or another. The reactions result from the heightened sense of fear and stress which lying produces.

Caution: there is hardly any signal clearly establishing that a person is lying. Firstly, it is essential to consider the whole picture, not just an isolated signal. Secondly, an honest person feeling uncomfortable or uncertain could emit all sorts of ambiguous signals. Still, the signals which follow tend to denote concealment.

Lying signals can be broken down into categories ranging from those transmitted by the nervous system, which are the hardest to control and therefore the most truthful, to facial expressions which can be manipulated by the mind more easily.

Autonomic signals

Not likely to be visible to the naked eye, are measured by lie detectors – or polygraphs – that monitor changes in heart rate, skin resistance and breathing. The reliability of the polygraph is questionable though, as it actually measures fear and/or stress, and not necessarily lying; a liar could handle stress very well, while someone telling the truth could find the questioning so stressful that he or she would react like a liar anyway.

A dry mouth will cause the liar to lick his or her lips more often, and perhaps swallow nervously. There may be more throat-clearing than usual, too. Breathing may become more uneven. However, these signals can be misleading, as the accused person may find him or herself into such frenzy while trying to convince the other of the truth, that all the classic symptoms of someone who is telling a dramatic lie will be exhibited.

Feet and legs

They are the most difficult parts of the body to control consciously. In one study two groups of people were asked to decide whether someone was lying. One group could see the whole body, while the other was restricted to sight of the head and face. The latter group was much more easily deceived, unable to see truthful non-verbal clues. Some organizations make a potential employee sit where the whole body is visible to the interviewer.

When someone lies during a conversation, he or she will often suddenly cross arms or legs simultaneously – suggesting advance self-defence against challenge. Tell-tale foot signals can also include feet pointing towards the exit, revealing a desire to escape the situation, or foot tapping or jabbing movements in the air, meaning that the person wants to get out.

However, fidgety gestures can equally denote an effort to increase energy and arousal. An impulsive, extroverted person may require high levels of excitement in life, and constant movement of some part of the body denotes slight boredom, and a desire to be somewhere more stimulating.

Trunk

Posture tends to be more sincere than gesture as it is more instinctual. The posture of someone who is lying becomes unnatural and forced. A liar's posture is often stiff and controlled, for as he or she holds back the truth, honest physical expression is being held back as well.

Research shows that when people are trying to deceive, they are less likely to touch or sit very close to you. They may actually turn their whole body away, in an attempt to conceal both their face and the truth. People also give you "the cold shoulder" when they are rejecting what you are saying. When someone does this, and pretends to agree with you, you may be certain that he/she remains unconvinced underneath.

Giveaway gestures

Someone who is lying will have a tendency to reduce hand gestures, or to conceal them, in order to suppress any sign of tension or risk of giving oneself up.

The "hand shrug" can be a sign of lying; in this gesture, the hands are rotated to expose the palms, denoting helplessness – when the truth cannot be told.

While simple conversational gestures decrease, the deceptive individual will touch elements of his or her face or head more often (e.g. rub or scratch his/her nose); one of the reasons is that lying increases tension, which could result in an actual physical itch. Now, tugging or rubbing the ear lobe or the eye area is a sign of uncertainty which, if performed while someone is talking, signals a lack of faith in what is being said. But contrary to scratching, rubbing can also be likely performed by someone honest who struggles to explain himself.

Face

The face is the most inscrutable part of the body when it comes to lying, because we are so aware of what our faces are doing, and therefore we find it easiest to control facial expression.

Still, modern research has discovered that we do not have complete mastery of our visual messages, as fleeting micro-expressions can betray an inner conflict – they are hard to spot though. Bear in mind that conflict does not necessarily imply lying, but mere pressure and worries. But in any case, the person has some inner thoughts which he/she hasn't shared with you yet.

Eyes

Most people find it quite difficult to tell a lie while looking someone straight in the eye. They will look down, look away, or glance at you briefly. Shifty eyes are traditionally untrustworthy, and a sign of deception and/or confusion.

The pupils of our eyes transmit subtle signals upon which we have no control: in addition to responding to light stimuli, they expand with pleasure and contract with dislike. You can then tell whether someone is genuinely enjoying something, or merely pretending to.

Awareness of pupil signals led Chinese jade dealers to conceal them from the watchful gaze of the jade salesman by wearing dark glasses; they realised that the salesmen were closely observing their pupils for signs of excitement when looking at pieces of jade, weakening their bargaining power.

Voice

According to some experts, voices become less resonant when lying. When the impulse to speak the truth is being blocked, the normal voice flattens, loses its depth and becomes more monotonous because we are holding back from freely expressing ourselves. Some studies show that people talk less when lying, and make more mistakes in their speech: they are more likely to stutter, slur or hesitate as they speak – unless they are practised “fast talkers”, such as con men, who can baffle you with streams of falsehoods.

* * *

Orientation

Orientation here will refer to the angles which are formed between people, whether they are sitting, standing, or lying down. Those angles reflect personality and can affect the reactions of others.

Face to face

Sitting directly opposite another person is conveying an opposition; no matter if it's during a meal or an interview, sitting face-to-face encourages competitive feelings. We are often used to sitting like this for practical reasons (e.g. at a restaurant table for 2), but try to avoid this when you want to establish rapport, or when you need to negotiate. A loving couple will look in the same direction, instead of merely at each other.

When someone insists to have this seating arrangement for a meeting, you will have advance warning that he/she may be feeling uncooperative or aggressive.

It is a useful position though when you need to dominate a situation, or want to have a discussion which is short and to the point. For added effect, seat your opponent with his/her back to an open space or to a window, while you seat your back to the wall; the primitive caveman in us reacts quite badly to the idea that something or someone could creep up from behind. Subconsciously, as research has shown, we become stressed by such ancient threats, leading to faster beat and breathing rates, increased blood pressure and brain waves – reliably indicating that part of us is preparing to fight or flee.

Side by side

The most co-operative and helpful position you can choose is to sit next to someone. It signifies trust, as you are unable to watch their every move or look at them intently. Side by side, you are equally supportive and able to work well together on a joint project or a balanced exchange of views – as long as you are not seated too closely together. There must be enough room for each person to move their body freely, or defensive postures will take over and spoil everything.

Diagonal

Another positive position to use is the diagonal one. Sit at right angles to your companion at a square, or rectangular table, so that the corner of the table is between the two of you, providing enough a barrier for the two of you to feel protected.

Sit diagonally whenever you want to help someone relax, put your ideas across successfully, or conduct a friendly interview.

Tables

- **round tables** are the most democratic choice, for each person has an equal amount of territory, and no-one can dominate from the orientation. They have the effect of encouraging conversation, relaxation and sharing. When you need to make everyone feel important, and create a welcoming atmosphere, circular

seating can make all the difference between a stuffy formal event and an enjoyable relaxed occasion. Curves are appealing, and help people lower their territorial barriers. King Arthur's legendary round table is an excellent symbolic reminder of the democratic power inherent in the circle.

- **square tables** are the opposite: formal conveying a sense of competition ; they do not promote the desire to share information.
- **rectangular / oval tables**: can be used to reinforce authority, for the one sitting at the head wields the most power – it is the traditional position allocated to the head of the family, or to the chairman of the board. Whoever comes next in order of authority will invariably sit to the right of the leader – hence the expression “right-hand man”. The person to the left of the leader is third in the pecking order, and those with least influence sit furthest away from the most dominant group member.

* * *

Love & attraction

We don't truly know what love is – there are myriad definitions, many of them contradictory. Yet people usually give a close, loving relationship as their reason for living or goal in life. And most people have been willing victims of what Oscar Wilde termed a “temporary insanity” at least once by the time they are 20. Indeed most poets and writers grappling with love's mysteries have reached astonishing conclusions: love is blind, mischievous, capricious; love is a sickness, a frailty of the mind, the wisdom of fools...

The expression “to fall in love” suggests the loss of control we experience when falling over physically. The French have long referred to orgasm as “the little death” because of the total release and temporary disappearance of the ego which accompanies the heights of ecstasy.

The types of love

First of all, there are several kinds of love which combine different elements and produce different relationships (the most loving relationships contain elements of each). In 1976, John Lee came up with the following 6 types (still widely used to the present day):

- ❖ **EROS** is the name given to physical, romantic and erotic love. Erotic lovers believe in love at first sight for they are strongly influenced by physical attraction. Those tentative first kisses and caresses hold special meaning for them too, as they are very sensual and place great emphasis on love-making.
- ❖ **LUDUS** refers to the flirtatious, game-playing type of love full of teasing and light-hearted affection. Ludic lovers do not take themselves or their partners seriously and will break up a relationship if they feel it is becoming too intense. The character Casanova is a good example of a ludic type, for whom the game and the chase are everything. Once the final surrender has been achieved and the possibility of exploring further arises, you will not see your ludic lover for dust.
- ❖ **STORGE** is the kind of love which blossoms from a close relationship, and is a caring, respectful emotion fuelled by shared interests and activities. These people will not seek passion and excitement, but concentrate on building an equal partnership.
- ❖ **MANIA** is self-explanatory, for manic lovers experience violent mood swings and high anxiety levels. At their most extreme they are obsessive, jealous and dependent. Othello's destructive love for Desdemona epitomises the kind of love which leads to crimes of passion or to suicide.
- ❖ **PRAGMA** is realistic and practical. Decidedly unromantic, pragmatic lovers coolly assess a potential partner's attitudes, background and beliefs before taking the relationship any further. The arranged marriage is firmly founded on a belief in this kind of love which, while lacking in drama, is certainly a sensible basis for a long-term relationship.
- ❖ **AGAPE** is the final category and refers to the kind of love which transcends the ego and the body to reach selfless heights. The woman who devotedly nurses an elderly parent or handicapped child exemplifies agape, which is altruistic and spiritual in its highest manifestation.

Men tend to be more ludic, whereas women tend to be storgic and pragmatic. Mania is often the first love style teenager's display. People often look for people with the same love style as themselves for a relationship, and relationships based on similar love styles were found to last longer.

The look of love

When trying to determine whether or not someone is attracted to you, their eyes can provide the answer every time, for they speak a subtle, sensitive and highly revealing language. The decisions we reach when observing an interesting person or a beautiful scene are processed by the brain almost instantaneously.

→ gazing: the holding of the gaze just a little longer than necessary is one of the first signs of attraction.

The effectiveness of the gaze when signalling interest in another was graphically described in an old witchcraft manuscript, where knowledge of body language seems quite important in the art of fascination:

“For when your eyes be reciprocally bent upon the other and are joined beams to beams and lights to lights, then the spirit of one is joined to the spirit of the other and strong ligations made and most violent love is stirred up with a sudden looking on, as it were, with a Darting Look, or piercing into the very inmost of the heart. . .”

→ dilated pupils: although pupils respond to light and dark by dilating and contracting, they also respond to emotion in this way, expanding with pleasure and contracting with distaste or repulsion. This is one piece of body language we can do nothing about because it is unconscious. Centuries ago Italian courtesans would use belladonna, obtained from deadly nightshade, as an artificial pupil dilator to make themselves more attractive – so a knowledge of pupil signals is nothing new.

When a mother looks at her baby her eyes become moister, softer, and the pupils enlarge. Even women who are childless will normally respond this way to the sight of a baby, as will men who are fathers. Men who genuinely dislike children, and who have never had any, show the opposite reaction when faced with a baby – their pupils contract with distaste.

A classic experiment involved two pictures of the same attractive girl, but in one of the photographs her pupils had been retouched to appear dilated. These pictures were shown to an audience, and the men were asked to indicate which picture appealed to them most. Without knowing why, nearly all the men chose the girl with enlarged pupils; these men were acting on attraction signals which they were able to discern unconsciously.

Experiments with “Casanova” type males revealed that such men do not react normally to pupil dilation, preferring instead pictures of girls with small pupils – a sign of unavailability. Their delight in the chase and fear of involvement were so deeply-entrenched in their characters that they preferred women who seemed to be unattainable and unloving.

→ direction of the gaze after eye contact: does the person look to their left or to their right? Research which ties in the different roles performed by the two hemispheres of the brain suggests that those who break their gaze to the left seem to be more creative, imaginative and intuitively inclined; people breaking to the right are much more structured in their approach, logical and numerate.

Body language and flirtation

An understanding and knowledge of the usually unconscious body language of courtship and flirtation can substantially increase our chances with the opposite sex and improve long-term loving relationships by increasing the level of communication.

- the first sign of attraction readiness is a state of high muscle tone; sagging disappears, jowling and bagginess around the eyes decrease, the torso becomes more erect and pot-bellied slumping disappears or decreases. It is logical to assume that if your body is already slim and well-toned, you will automatically seem more desirable.

- someone attracted to a potential partner will preen him/herself at his/her approach, smoothing and straightening his/her cloths, adjusting his tie, pat his hair into place, and often thrust his/her chin forward. He/she is doing everything possible to make a good first impression.

- body pointing: someone sitting near a person who has captured his/her interest will employ body pointing often unconsciously, revealing the direction of his/her thoughts. This is not always sexual, especially in single-sex groups, but denotes an interest in what one person is saying, or sympathy towards them. When a couple are getting to know each other, they will point their bodies towards one another, forming a barrier against intrusion by a third party. In a group situation, or when sitting, the lower body or one foot can act as a reliable indicator of interest in one particular person, while the upper half remains socially available to other people present. Conversely, should you be interested in someone whose body remains resolutely pointed away from you, especially if it is towards the nearest exit, you are unlikely to get much further.

- female courtship gestures: some follow the same pattern as male gestures (pat one's hair, rearrange clothing, direct one's feet and body towards the subject of interest).

Resting one hand on the hip is more feminine, and centuries ago was the characteristic gesture of the sacred prostitute. The Indians believed that passion resided in the woman's sides; sculptures of Indian dancing girls often depict them with one hand on the hip in the traditional pose of the sex initiate inviting intimacy.

Pushing back long sleeves to expose the delicate skin on the wrist and turning the palms outward towards the desired man are typically feminine gestures indicating interest. This movement is often seen in smokers and in women who play with their earrings while flirting. Fingering or stroking objects such as pens, glasses and parts of their own body are quite obvious symbolic signals – they are often blatantly exaggerated by erotic dancers and strippers.

Women adopt specific ways of sitting when drawn to a man. Firstly, they can press the legs firmly against each other while crossing them at the knee, emphasizing their shape by tensing the muscles – this was a much used pose in pin-up pictures. A much more relaxed position is when one leg is folded underneath the other, the knee of the folded leg pointing in the direction of the male. Women would also cross and re-cross their legs much more slowly than usual, drawing attention to them. If they are really aroused, they will find themselves stroking their thighs, or allowing one shoe to partly fall off the foot.

Eventually, a woman standing may well place her legs a little farther apart than usual if she finds herself very attracted to someone nearby. You can often see this somewhat defiant stance in fashion photographs, where it is used to make clothes look sexier than they really are, in pop videos or any other medium that aims to portray the woman as an aggressively sexy being, rather than a passive object of desire.

The rhythm of love

Our sensitivity to sound can play a considerable role in sexual stimulus. Then the speed increases and overtakes our heartbeat (72 beats per minute), tension mounts in the body and excitement is felt – which explained the popularity of new kinds of music as they appeared, like Rock 'n' Roll or disco.

Love changes the body and mind

→ when you fall in love

The extraordinary emotion produces physiological changes in the body. In a scientific study it was found that by injecting people with adrenalin – causing the heart to beat faster – and *then* exposing the person to an attractive member of the opposite sex, some of the sensations of falling in love were mimicked. Certain subjects of the experiment actually thought they had fallen in love because of the (chemically induced) excitement they felt.

→ addicted to love

People in love produce increased amounts of a neurotransmitter called phenylethylamine, a brain chemical which creates the feeling of euphoria commonly associated with falling in love. This stimulant also makes the heart beat faster and increases arousal. By increasing the permeability of the blood vessels, it also helps to create the flushed, rosy glow often seen on the faces of lovers. Large amounts of phenylethylamine can enhance our response to the world around us, enabling to see colours more clearly, to hear sound more sensitively and generally feel that we've been reborn. Understandably, these delightful sensations are addictive – and according to research carried out by Dr. Michael Lebowitz, lovers do, in fact, become addicted; when levels of phenylethylamine drop, people suffer withdrawal symptoms remarkably similar to those caused by amphetamines.

However, here is some comfort for the broken-hearted: chocolate has been found to contain chemical stimulants similar to this natural euphoric which act as mood elevators. This partly explains chocolate addiction, and chocolate binges as an antidote to depression.

→ love is blind

Despite the increased amount of mutual gazing which takes place when we are in love, what is actually seen by the eyes is edited and embellished by the brain.

→ time flies

Love creates a memory distortion, which is proportional to the power of the emotion.

“When a man sits with a pretty girl for an hour, it seems like a minute... That's relativity.”

Albert Einstein

Kissing

The kiss is a universal expression of affection and love, and a deeply-rooted acknowledgement of the power and meaning of kissing still lingers in our behaviour, as shown by the fact that few prostitutes will kiss their clients.

Kissing is undoubtedly a very important part of a loving relationship. More kissing will strengthen and improve the relationship, enhancing the emotional rapport between the 2 partners.

According to the British Marriage Guidance Council, kissing between unhappy couples ceases before lovemaking does: it seems that people find it easier to copulate than to kiss.

powerful chemicals

kissing is addictive. Lovers and poets have always known this, and scientists endorsed the romantics' beliefs and proved the involvement of chemicals. When we reach puberty, special sebaceous glands develop at the edges of the lips and inside the mouth; they produce semiochemicals which are transmitted by kissing, enhancing and

stimulating sexual desire. And the more you kiss, the more sensual semiochemicals are released, thus heightening both the desire to kiss and the attractiveness of our kissing partner.

feeding memory

Anthropologists explain that deep erotic kissing involving both lips and tongue is actually a modification of mouth-to-mouth feeding. Originally, mothers would chew up their baby's food and then pass it directly into the infant's mouth. This kind of feeding is still performed by Papuan women, although it disappeared long ago in the West. And even now babies instinctively put their lips forward from the age of about 3 months indicating that they are biologically adapted to receive nourishment in this way.

kissing style

- eyes opened or close? Most women close their eyes while kissing, but only a third of men do so; it has been suggested that women feel the sensations more strongly and lose themselves in the moment, whereas men are more stimulated by the sight of their loved one.
- cuddle or crush? Those indulging in gentle cuddling while kissing reveal a sensual, affectionate nature. They are loving, uninhibited and sexually confident. Lovers who try to crush you very tightly to them are in fact basically insecure. Male clutched are often fearful of revealing their softer side and seek to give the impression that they are in charge.
- Selfish or sensual lips? Just as the eyes are said to be the windows of the soul, the mouth is a gateway. Puckered and closed lips are signposts indicating that the person is rejecting part of him/herself. This rejection of intimacy revealed by closed lips probably has its roots in childhood and signals a fear of abandonment and an inability to let go and give without counting the cost.
- However, the person who begins with a series of short closed-mouth kisses and then progresses to longer lingering ones is extremely passionate and sensual. Such lovers will make up their minds in their own time, but when they do they will wholeheartedly commit themselves to a relationship and enjoy exploring their partner mentally and physically.
- nibbles & bites? Use of the teeth when kissing – be it gentle nibbling or real biting – indicates yet another link between nourishment and love-making. This erotica equation finds its expression in the popular myth of the glamorous vampire of either sex whose victims swooningly succumb.
- “French kissing” (kissing with the tongue) is probably the best way to do it, as it favours the exchange of bonding chemicals, creating a powerful and intimate bond.

10 steps to heaven

1. **THE FIRST SIGHT**; the first 4 to 5 minutes of visual contact are crucial, as we assess sex, stature, body shape, age, colouring, mood and status – and sometimes this information is so seductive that we fall in love at first sight. During those brief moments we form long-lasting impressions about the person and make up our minds – a decision which is hard to change and can account for either feelings of love at first sight or instant dislike.
2. **EYE CONTACT** further increases the amount of excitement and amplifies the information we have already received. The kind of eye signals transmitted tell us whether the other person finds us attractive, and unconscious pupil dilation reliably indicates pleasure. Gazing into each other's eyes begins to break down barriers and reassures people in love that they are loved in return.
3. **SPEECH** is much more than language; we are affected by the sound and tone of the voice which conveys to us impressions about someone's character and mood. A voice lacking in resonance, for instance, sounds flat and suggests a boring person. Likewise, someone speaking in a mono tone will sound monotonous. On the contrary, a lovely range of tonal expression will lead us to attribute

vitality and positive qualities to the person. Just as we are affected by music which creates certain moods, so what we are hearing in the voice influences our perceptions.

4. THE FIRST TOUCH is usually dictated by social convention. It may be a formal handshake or the equally formal but warmer social peck on the cheek. When two people know they are attracted to each other this first touch is fraught with nervous anticipation. Will it be rejected? Will it be misunderstood? But because the urge to touch and be touched is so strong, this hurdle must be overcome. Frequently, this touching is disguised in some way, so that should it be rejected, no one loses face – after all, a helping hand across the street or an invitation to a dance may be innocent.
5. AN ENCIRCLING ARM is placed by one person around the other (normally, this stage is reserved for men).
6. HUGGING, MUTUAL EMBRACING follows very quickly. This is when trust begins to become very important, for we are allowing our body to touch another's and this makes us vulnerable. However, it could be no different than the kind of interaction one can have with close friends.
7. KISSING each other on the lips crosses the boundary between platonic affection and sexual love. If kissing is prolonged and erotic, it can lead to an advanced state of sexual and emotional arousal. Once this has happened, both partners know they have passed the point of no return.
8. CARESSING; our partner's skin can be so sensitive that it can constitute an erogenous zone covering his/her entire body. This effleurance encourages trust, relaxes and gives sensual pleasure.
9. KISSING BODY AREAS other than the lips raises the temperature both literally and figuratively. Such loving behaviour serves to increase the giving and receiving of affection, and usually leads to specific kissing as the male partner kisses his lover's breast. Kissing and sucking are inextricably linked, and help to strengthen the bonding between the two partners.
10. STIMULATION of each other's genitals usually precedes SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, except in circumstances where inhibition prevents this, or when time is lacking. Mutual pleasure plays an important part in joining a couple together, and sexual love creates a powerful motivation to stay together.

What is attractive?

Beauty, they say, is in the eye of the beholder, and throughout history there have been startling variations in what we consider attractive.

Although for men, women's physical attractiveness is on top of the list, our primitive ancestor's roles explain why women are attracted to men who are assertive, independent and powerful – qualities which indicate a potentially reliable provider and father of their children.

breast, bottom or leg men?

It has been said that men divide into breast, bottom, and leg men and that these preferences give some indication as to character. For instance, men who are aroused by the sight of large breasts are sporty extroverts, while those who like smaller bosoms are intellectual introverts. Men who like women's bottoms are also supposed to be more mature than those who respond to a pair of shapely legs. Indeed, the female bottom transmits the most primitive erotic message of all. A female ape on heat will display swollen buttocks to indicate that she is fertile and ready for mating, but human females do not show any cyclical change in their buttocks – and are consequently signalling readiness at all times.

As for women's general preferences, the big muscular macho-man symbolizes a successful hunter and provider. Visually, the majority of women do prefer a man 5 to 6 inches taller than themselves, with small muscular buttocks, a flat stomach and slim build. This may be explained partly by the fact that sexual interest causes an involuntary tensing of the stomach muscles, and a taut stomach therefore denotes attraction and excitement – appealing qualities in themselves.

Although physical characteristics might improve a man's chances of bringing home the bacon, they do not indicate by themselves the character traits that women prefer. Looks are far less important to women than to men; qualities such as faithfulness and personality won much higher scores, as did assertiveness and competence. In one study in which blindfolded women were guided through a maze by a male partner, it was found that the women were more attracted to the man who successfully helped them through, especially if he touched them instead of just verbally assisting them.

Overall, women's approach to sex and sexual arousal is more discriminating: they are much more choosy than men when it comes to selecting a mate, as they unconsciously assess their potential partner in light of the commitment that a pregnancy would result in (even for women who do not want or cannot have children) – this comes from thousands of years of evolution. For many women, power and money are greater aphrodisiacs than broad shoulders or a sexy smile; they would go for the protective ones, the kind of men guiding them round the maze.

→ How to be more attractive?

Without charm, even a handsome man or a pretty woman is unlikely to achieve any lasting success in relationships. This magical ingredient can last a lifetime and oils the wheels of social progress in every sphere of life.

Charismatic film stars are able to relate to the camera as if it were a dear friend instead of an unwanted intruder, and the audience then reacts to the message and perceives that special something which is often labelled "star quality".

Although charm is an elusive, hard-to-define quality, it seems to be directly connected to 3 things: confidence, interest in other people and ability to demonstrate it with body language.

1. Since research has shown that we tend to look at the body before making eye contact, body shape and clothing have a considerable impact. First of all make sure that your body suits you. Physical exercise is the perfect way to avoid overweight issues, achieve good muscle tone, and increase confidence. Choosing classy, suitable clothing is also essential; fashion historian James Laver described clothes as "the furniture of the mind made visible". Whether you like it or not, your clothes make a strong visual statement about how you see yourself. Go for clear glowing colours – whether pastel or primary – as they convey powerful subliminal messages.
2. People who radiate an extraordinary amount of charm cause people who have met them only briefly to feel as if they really matter – to feel *special*. People who like people are automatically likeable and attractive, as they invoke this feeling in their friends and lovers – all of whom feel more special as a result.
3. Positive body language will grow your confidence in a positive feedback loop, and what may have begun as an exercise becomes something you no longer need to be consciously aware of:
 - eye contact: you shouldn't be afraid to look people in the eye (but neither should you stare so long that they feel threatened!). Using eye contact during conversation will encourage intimacy and make the other person feel that they have your individual attention. Lookers are generally perceived

as more attractive than non-lookers. Avoid staring fixedly in the direction of your head (it can be very unappealing), but look sideways as well.

- head: holding your head in an erect yet relaxed position will help you to appear more confident and encourage trust. Also nodding the head in an affirmative gesture, either to demonstrate that you are paying attention to the conversation and to encourage the talker to continue (research has shown that people talk up to 4 times more when listeners nod their heads at regular intervals, so use it to encourage others to speak freely), or to underline what you are saying (to appear more assertive).
- talking: the ability to join a conversation at the right moment, to say the right things, to be interested and interesting are all traits which make a favourable impression – particularly on women. The tone and pitch of the voice are also important; a nasal, high-pitched voice does not inspire trust, whatever the verbal content of the speech. And talking too quickly, perhaps from nervousness, is also detrimental.
- smiling: a smile will ease most situations, reducing tension and opening the doors of friendship and acceptance. If you smile more often at people, you will find they will enjoy your company more.
- posture: maintain a relaxed, upright posture – a balanced mind in a balanced body. When you are sitting, lean slightly forward to show interest and attention, and the other person will respond by becoming more expansive. Do not fidget, as it's perceived as impatience or boredom. Be as open as you can with your posture; avoid folded arms and legs because these barriers shut the door of communication and suggest defensiveness rather than warmth, but rather use expressive gestures to amplify the spoken word. Once you are relaxed, such gestures will come naturally, and nothing is more attractive than spontaneity.
- touch: handle with care! But if feedback signs are positive from the other person, the final touch would make him/her deem you sympathetic. Neutral areas of the body are shoulders, arms and hands.