

Can You Hear Your Body Talking?

Your body language will boost you to the top or keep you among the majority of people in the middle and bottom. You have less than 10 seconds and realistically closer to four seconds to make a good first impression on those you come into contact with. There is a world of research that clearly indicates that you will be judged professionally and personally in the first few seconds of your meeting someone for the first time. In fact your first impression is recorded and is used as a yard stick for all future communication by those whom you meet. Whatever that first impression is going to be on your part, you want it to be intentional and on purpose.

Let's take a look at how to talk your way to the top with your body. Most people are completely unaware of just how much their body says and how it often contradicts what the words are saying! There are numerous elements of what we might call body language. They include your physical features both changeable and unchangeable, your gestures and signals that you send to others at the conscious and unconscious level and the space that you use when communicating with others. In this chapter we will touch on all of these important areas of body language.

What You Look Like Really Talks!

Let's begin with our physical appearance. Here are some astounding facts that will give you pause for thought when you consider how important appearance is in getting to the top.

Your perceived level of attractiveness by other people will be a significant benefit or detriment in your life. It isn't fair but it is true. People who get to the top learn how to deal with less than perfect physical features and work with what they can. Before we consider just how to increase your face value look at the results of some fascinating studies about physical appearance.

The Power of Physical Appearance:

- Did you know that in university settings, professors who are considered physical attractive by students are considered better teachers on whole than unattractive professors? Attractive professors are also more likely to be asked for help on problems. These same attractive professors also tend to receive positive recommendations from other students to take their classes and also are less likely to receive the blame when a student receives a failing grade! (Romano and Bordieri 1989)
- Did you know that marriage and dating decisions are often made with great weight placed on physical attractiveness? A wide variety of research indicates that men will often reject women who are lacking (in their opinion) in positive physical features. Women on the other hand place less significance on a man's physical attractiveness in considering him for a date or marriage. (studies by R.E. Baber)
- Did you know that in studies done on college campuses, it has been proven that attractive females (attraction as perceived by the professors) receive significantly higher grades than male students or relatively unattractive females? (studies by J.E. Singer)

There is more evidence that shows you must make the most of what you have physically.

Among strangers, individuals perceived as unattractive in physical appearance are generally undesirable for any interpersonal relationship! (studies by D. Byrne, O. London, K. Reeves)

In one significant study of 58 unacquainted men and women in a social setting we learned that after a first date, 89% of the people who wanted a second date decided to do so because of attractiveness of the partner! (Brislin and Lewis)

In the persuasion process, attractive females are far more convincing than females perceived as unattractive. (Mills and Aronson)

Among American women, the size of a woman's bust is significant to how both American men and women perceive the woman. Women with a "medium" sized bust are considered to be more likable and have greater personal appeal than women with a large or small bust. Women with a small bust are perceived as more intelligent, competent, and moral. Women with a large bust are generally perceived as less intelligent and less competent. (Kleinke, Staneski, 1980)

In yet another study, we find that young men who are obese are generally considered to be slothful and lazy. Both men and women who are obese are generally perceived to have personality characteristics that place them at a disadvantage in social and business settings. (Worsley, 1981)

Can You Change Your Appearance?

Study after study reveals that how you look is critical to someone's first impression of you. So what can you do to change how you look? You can't change everything about your physical appearance but you can definitely make changes that will give you a booster shot at going to the top in your business and your personal life.

Research studies tell us that the "exposure principle" increases our "face value." Specifically, the exposure principle says that the more often you are seen by someone the more attractive and intelligent you appear to them. If you weren't gifted with a Cindy Crawford or Tom Cruise face then it's time for you to take advantage of the exposure principle.

If you don't have the advantage of being "seen" time after time by a person or a group, then you must make the most of what you have. In other words you want to look as good as you possibly can on every given day. Because of the significance of body image and weight you must do what you can to keep your body weight down and your body in shape for your overall image to be as good as it can be.

Your teeth will tell a tale as well. If your teeth are yellow and look like you just ate, your face value is obviously greatly reduced. Do everything you can to keep your teeth pearly white and you will be perceived as more attractive. (You've already seen the benefits of the perception of attractiveness.) When you watch the news tonight on TV, look at the teeth of every news anchor, weather person and sports announcer. They all have beautiful white teeth. There's a reason for that and that is positive impression management. You do the same and you will have a boost on the way to the top.

Hair is significant to how you assess other people isn't it? Hairstyles can say a great deal about a person. Women with short and stylish hair tend to be perceived as more professional. Older women with longer hair tend to be perceived as women who really wish they were much younger. Men who are balding and try any of several ways to "cover up" look as though (and probably do) suffer from self esteem challenges. Men who have long hair tend to be indifferent toward what others think of them. Men whose hair is trimmed, styled and short tend to be perceived as professional. What is your hairstyle saying about you?

You've now heard some of the important facts about enhancing your personal appearance. Remember to keep aware of the awesome power of body language in every communication and use it to enhance your face value. For additional information on this subject visit www.kevinhogan.com