

How to Identify and Practice Successful Nonverbal Communication

Watch and listen to actors on television and in the movies and try to identify the details of human behavior. What do successful people do? What do the details convey to the average person? Try discussing your communication with friends and family and use the feedback to practice in front of a mirror. Here are some things to pay attention to:

- The expression on your face, do you...
 - Smile with whole face or just the mouth
 - Have a smooth or furrowed brow
 - Have a face that is expressive (moving) or blank
 - Look positive: happy, confident or negative: frowning, squinting
 - Look the person in the face and maintain eye contact, if appropriate
 - Match the other person's expression
- Sitting posture, do you...
 - Lean slightly forward or totally erect or slouched backward
 - Turn towards or away from the other person
 - Sit mostly still or shift in the chair continually
 - Match the other person's sitting posture
- Standing posture, do you...
 - Lean slightly forward or totally erect or slouched
 - Turn towards or away from the other person
 - Stand mostly still or shift your weight
 - Match the other person's standing posture.
- Hand gestures, do you...
 - Use some hand gestures or never gesture or always gesture wildly
 - Match the other person's speed and rhythm of gesturing

How to Identify and Practice Successful Communication

- Tone of voice

It is very difficult to only read instructions and know how to listen to your voice and change how you sound. Practice out loud where you can be alone, like in the car or the shower. Try asking a friend for feedback. Below is a list of things you can control about your tone of voice.

- Try smiling, it affects the voice positively
- Moving your head up or down changes the pitch – high or low
- The speed and rhythm at which you speak
- The number of times you pause or take a breath
- The variety of pitches, speed and sounds you make
 - ♣ No vocal variety can sound flat and cold
 - ♣ Too much variety can distract from your message
 - ♣ Balance and variety sounds warm and interesting
- You convey emotions through your tone of voice. Recognize that you know what these emotions sound like. You could even play with vocal variety by trying to convey each of these emotions while having a conversation with a partner. Are you warm or cold?
 - ♣ Friendly
 - ♣ Superior
 - ♣ Contemptuous
 - ♣ Sympathetic
 - ♣ Indifferent
 - ♣ Frustrated
 - ♣ Too busy to help
 - ♣ Eager to help
 - ♣ Comfortable
 - ♣ Nervous