

How to be Assertive by Speaking Fluent Body Language

How to be Assertive by Speaking Fluent Body Language You've probably heard the expressions before... "Chin up, shoulders back," "Keep your distance," "Feet on the ground," "Pain in the neck." But have you ever wondered how they came about? It all has to do with body language. Simply put, body language is the unspoken communication we all use in every face-to-face encounter with other human beings. You could say it's more powerful than anything said aloud. Ninety-three per cent of our everyday communications is non-verbal. Only 7% has to do with words at all. You could be telling that other person much more with your body language than you would ever say in words. Determining and regulating your own body language could well mean the difference when it comes to job interviews, networking meetings, banquets and business dinners, or even a social occasion, such as a date. Even trickier is learning to read and understand the other person's body language.

Being Assertive using Body Language The right attitude to be able to win friends is to be more assertive. Being assertive is actually just your ability to stand up for yourself, tackle issues face to face, state your own personal views, and defend others when they are being taken advantage of. Contrary to what you may think, being assertive is very much different from being bossy and overbearing. Assertiveness is actually a good thing. Without it, you inevitably hold back in your career and your personal life. If you are usually compared to another one of your co-workers because the two of you have similar levels of experience and skills, then it is more likely that the more assertive one is rewarded with the promotion. It is natural that some people are more assertive than others; whether you are part of the former or the latter, it does not matter. What matters is that you get to learn assertive behavior, which ensures you are in the path for new opportunities. For you to be assertive, you have to keep in mind the effects of positive body language. It is not difficult, actually. You just need to show the person you are talking to that you are attentive and that you truly care about whatever topic it is that you are discussing. So, you're probably asking yourself, "How do I regulate my body language to be more assertive and give a true representation of how I feel when I interact with others?"

Distance and Angles Start with the distance between you and the person with whom you're speaking. If you get too close, people feel you're in their face, or too pushy. Too far away, and you could be seen as standoffish. The angle of your body is a dead giveaway to others. We tend to angle our body towards those people we find friendly or interesting, and angle away from those we feel are cold or unfriendly. Crossing your arms over your chest shows defensiveness. This posture says, "I'm closed off and keeping you out." **Eye Contact** When in a conversation, you have to do everything you can to maintain eye-to-eye contact. It is believed that your eyes are the windows to your soul. Therefore, for you to be able to achieve a heartfelt and productive conversation, you have to show the other party your undivided attention. You must not, under any circumstances, look around while the other person is talking. You have to always make sure that the person you're talking to sees that you are truly participating in your conversation by listening intently, while maintaining eye-to-eye contact. Eye contact is one of the most important ways to communicate with others. Looking them in the eye shows respect and interest. We've all experienced the person who looks constantly at their watch, or seems to be far away and not listening to us. Their body language says, "I have other places to be and other more interesting people to talk to than you." Or the person that you know is not listening to what you're saying, but instead is busy deciding what he/she will say next. Someone whose eyes are downcast, not looking you in the eye could be exhibiting signs of shyness, or it could be deceit. Someone who is lying to you will not look you in the eye. **Head Position** The head position also says a lot. To show confidence or authority, simply keep your head level. This says, "Take me seriously, my words are important." To show friendliness and interest in what the other person is saying, tilt your head slightly to one side or the other. For you to be able to further express that you are, in fact, approaching your conversation with respect and attention, you may lean forward. Leaning forward is a gesture that shows that you want to hear more and would want the other party to expound on what he or she has just said. Of course, leaning backward is the opposite. It proves that you are only engaging yourself in the conversation because you have to, and not because you truly care about what is bothering the other party. You have to prevent yourself from being pushy in your newfound relationship. You must not force your opinions and beliefs on the other party if he or she radically believes otherwise. Just let things be, accept them as how they are. **Mouth Movements** Mouth movements are easy clues to what the other person may be feeling. If they purse their lips or twist them, they could be thinking carefully about what you just said, or disagreeing with you, but holding back comment. You can certainly tell when someone is not pleased. **The Handshake** The handshake is extremely important in the communication with others. No one wants to shake a hand like a wet noodle; at the same time, a handshake needn't be a contest of strength. It's a handshake, not arm wrestling. Many people also don't quite know what to do with their hands after the handshake, especially when meeting someone new. They tend to clasp their hands together, nervously, or fiddle with their jewelry. **Just Be Assertive** Taking the initiative of beginning a conversation, or in stating your views without pushing them to the other party, is the right way for a productive and effective conversation. Do not worry about giving the other party an image that you are overly confident; for being assertive is not only about being confident, it is also about understanding other people and the empathy that you give them. Indeed, it has been observed and proven that body language has a huge part when it comes to being assertive. Body language shows the other party that you are attentive to what he or she is saying. It is not all about looking good and speaking for yourself. It is also about making other people more comfortable when they talk and express their personal thoughts with you. Since we're constantly sending out these powerful messages, it's clear we should make an effort to learn more about what our bodies say to others. And learning what others are really saying to us is of paramount importance in our day-to-day communications. So, chin up, shoulders back, keep your distance, head up, eyes sharp, don't be pushy or standoffish, smile and shake that hand. You too can learn to become more assertive by speaking fluent body language.

About the Author

Michael Lee

