

Interpreting Body Language Worksheet

Name:

Date:

Objective

To increase your understanding of body language to improve your communication with others.

You Should Know

Communication is not only verbal; it also includes non-verbal signals like body language, which can often be more telling than words. Understanding body language can help you interpret what people are really saying and can also help you become more aware of the signals you are sending.

What to Do

Below are some questions and prompts to help you think more deeply about body language and how it impacts your interactions.

Common Physical Cues and Emotions

Eye contact or gazing into the eyes:

Attention, caring, affection

Smiling, talkative, clapping hands, singing, jumping up and down, dancing, laughing:

Joy, excitement, happiness

Red flushed face and neck, clenched hands, pursed lips, crossed arms, hands on hips, looking down or away, clenched teeth, frowning, staring:

Anger, dislike, annoyance, aggression

Frowning, looking down or away, slumped posture; low, quiet, or monotone voice:

Sadness, hurt

Talking quickly and nervously, inability to sit still, shaking, pacing, speechlessness, crossed arms, frozen in place, sweating:

Anxiety, nervousness, fear

Covering face, hiding, slumping, looking down or away:

Shame, embarrassment, guilt

Can you think of others? Describe.

Observing Others

Think of a time when you realized someone was angry, sad, happy, or anxious, based on their facial expressions, posture, or gestures. Describe the physical signals you noticed.

Think of a time when you realized someone was not paying attention as you spoke to them, based on their facial expressions, posture, or gestures. Describe the physical signals you noticed.

Clarifying Questions:

- "You look upset. Is everything alright?"
- "I notice you seem nervous. Am I correct?"
- "How are you feeling?"
- "Are things okay between us?"

List other clarifying questions here.

Self-Reflection

Have you ever been told your words did not match your body language? Explain.

Has a person ever understood you were mad, sad, anxious, etc., in spite of what you said or did not say? Explain.

Next, think of a recent challenging interaction you had with someone. Describe the interaction.

Describe your emotions.

Describe the physical sensations you experienced.

Describe facial expressions, posture, and movements you remember expressing.

Role Play Exercise

Try this exercise again with someone you trust, using a recent or imaginary scenario of a difficult conversation.

Describe the interaction.

Describe how you interpreted the other person's emotions.

Did the person's body language impact the way you responded? Explain.

Reflections

Upcoming situations where body language matters:

Body language elements to improve:

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

Reference: DBT Assignment Workbook

by Elyse Pipitone, LCSW, and Angela M. Doel, MS