

10 Tips on Nonverbal Communication

1. Pay Attention to Nonverbal Signals

Pay attention to things like eye contact, gestures, posture, body movements, and tone of voice. All of these signals can convey important information that isn't put into words.

2. Look for Incongruent Behaviors

Research has shown that when words fail to match up with nonverbal signals, people tend to ignore what has been said and focus instead on nonverbal expressions of moods, thoughts, and emotions.

3. Concentrate on Your Tone of Voice When Speaking

Your tone of voice can convey a wealth of information, ranging from enthusiasm to disinterest to anger. Start noticing how your tone of voice affects how others respond to you and try using tone of voice to emphasize ideas that you want to communicate.

4. Use Good Eye Contact

While eye contact is an important part of communication, it's important to remember that good eye contact does not mean staring fixedly into someone's eyes. How can you tell how much eye contact is correct? Some communication experts recommend intervals of eye contact lasting four to five seconds.

5. Ask Questions about Nonverbal Signals

If you are confused about another person's nonverbal signals, don't be afraid to ask questions. A good idea is to repeat back your interpretation of what has been said and ask for clarification.

6. Use Signals to Make Communication More Effective and Meaningful

You can improve your spoken communication by using nonverbal signals and gestures that reinforce and support what you are saying. This can be especially useful when making presentations or when speaking to a large group of people.

7. Look at Signals as a Group

A single gesture can mean any number of things, or maybe even nothing at all. The key to accurately reading nonverbal behavior is to look for groups of signals that reinforce a common point.

8. Consider Context

When you are communicating with others, always consider the situation and the context in which the communication occurs. If you are trying to improve your own nonverbal communication, concentrate on ways to make your signals match the level of formality necessitated by the situation.

9. Be Aware That Signals Can be Misread

Always remember to look for groups of behavior. A person's overall demeanor is far more telling than a single gesture viewed in isolation.

10. Practice, Practice, Practice

Build your ability to "read people" by paying careful attention to nonverbal behavior and practicing different types of nonverbal communication with others. By noticing nonverbal behavior and practicing your own skills, you can dramatically improve your communication abilities.