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The importance of body language in an interview

Most people do not consider their body language when preparing for an interview, but it is a powerful form of communication that can leave a lasting and damaging impression. Here are some of the signals that you could be sending and suggestions for improving your overall impression.

The greeting

Studies show that the impression you give in the first few minutes of meeting someone is the most important, so it is crucial that your greeting exudes confidence and friendliness. Your handshake should be firm and friendly. The interviewer should initiate the handshake and you should reciprocate, smiling warmly and maintaining good eye contact. You should extend your hand vertically, shaking hands with your palm up signals submissiveness; extending your hand palm down says that you wish to dominate the situation.

Listening

Most people look forward to doing the listening. However, not talking does not mean NOT saying the wrong thing, in-fact this is when you can send some of the most negative messages. While the interviewer is talking, she is watching you, particularly your face, for telltale signs. Do you appear tense? Uninterested? Untrustworthy? Impatient?

How to send a bad vibe

- Chewing on lip, touching your mouth – suggests indecisiveness, weakness
- Downturned or tensely held mouth – uninterested, irritated, or deals poorly with stress
- Mindlessly grinning throughout the interview – insincere, unintelligent, and perhaps unstable
- Shifty or wandering eyes – untrustworthy, uninterested, disrespectful
- Staring – aggressive, combative
- Furrowed brows/frowning – tense, easily stressed
- Rapidly nodding head – conveys impatience
- Fidgety hands/wringing of hands – indecision, nervousness
- Drumming fingers or pens – impatient, uninterested
- Slouching in chair – unprofessional, overconfident
- Clenched jaw/tense facial muscles – stressed, irritable

Moves that get the job

- Upturned mouth, that naturally breaks into a smile when appropriate – suggests confidence, friendliness, sincerity
- Relaxed, natural facial muscles – shows that you are at ease and confident
- Nodding slowly at the appropriate moments notes interest in what the interviewer is saying
- Raising eyebrows upon greeting and when appropriate throughout interview – shows you are interested and at ease
- Good eye contact – suggests that you are confident and honest, it does not mean staring the interviewer down. You don't want to look away while they are talking, but you do want to break direct eye contact by drawing a triangle with your eyes, down to the interviewer's mouth and back to their eyes. Focusing on the bridge of someone's nose is also a good way to maintain good eye contact without giving the impression that you are staring.
- Hands open, palms up, and relaxed in your lap – exudes openness, honesty, and dependability
- Sitting comfortably with your lower back resting in the back of the chair, but leaning slightly forward, shows interest and friendliness.

The best way to look at your body language is to practice in the mirror. Once you know what your tendencies are, you will be aware of what you need to be aware of during the interview. Being at ease is important in conveying your best self, so try to relax, remember just how well you have prepared yourself, and go for it!