

# Body Language and What it Says About You



Classic superhero stance



## A Bit on Body Language

You're probably familiar with what I'll call the "superhero stance": the physical pose in which the superhero stands with legs spread apart, arms on hips, elbows bent. The superhero stance projects "power." **The superhero stance is an example of what psychologists refer to as *open* postures, in which limbs are spread out in a way to take up more space—such as legs apart. Open postures contrast with closed postures, in which the body takes up relatively little space.** Numerous psychological studies have demonstrated that **open postures convey a sense of the individual having power and closed postures convey a sense of the individual having little power** (Carney, Hall, & Smith LeBeau, 2005; de Waal, 1998; Hall, Coats, & Smith LeBeau, 2005). People who assume superhero-type stances for two minutes feel more powerful and act that way. Wow. **Stand like a superhero, feel like a superhero, act like superhero. Also "High**

power" positions like sitting in a chair, arms behind the head, elbows out, and feet up on a desk (like a boss, "relaxing"), and standing in front of a table, legs about a foot apart, leaning forward and hands on the table bearing weight. Both these poses take up a lot of space for sitting and standing, respectively.



In contrast, the two low-power poses had those participants taking up little space; in the sitting version, the participants sat straight up, feet on the floor, legs at a 90-degree angle and hands on the lap while elbows were in, touching the sides. The low-power standing pose had participants put their legs close together and their arms were placed as if they were giving themselves a hug. Participants in all groups held each pose for one minute.

Power posing is the nonverbal expression of power that activate, what psychologists call, the behavioral approach system, which increases our feelings of strength and decreases feelings of fear. These poses help micro-shift our mindsets to help us feel and perform better. They may even be more effective than simply telling ourselves how great we are to boost our confidence. Power posing correlates with a positive boost in children's self-esteem and confidence. They also can have a more positive feeling and better student-teacher relationships and generated an overall better mood.

While there is still debate on whether these power poses affect hormonal levels, one undeniable effect of power posing is carried over to an individual's body language.

A power pose is about making yourself big and strong. Think Wonder Woman or Super Man. Stand solid during the presentation or game to feel more confident and less stressed during what feels like a high stress situation! It also affects our body language—how others see us—and it may also change how we see ourselves. Body language and facial expressions are ways of communication and accounts for about 90% of all non-verbal communications; both account for about 60% of our way to communicate. Non-verbal communication leads people to make non-verbal assessments. Those assessments can predict meaningful life outcomes like who we hire or promote, who to

shy away in a game and who to pick on. When we feel powerless or unconfident, we wrap ourselves up. We make ourselves small to remain unseen or insignificant. Thoughts and feelings and the physiological things that make up our thoughts and feelings are what create our mindset. Power poses can help us shift our mindset one way or the other. The body's positioning and role changes can shape the mind. Our nonverbals do govern how we think and feel about ourselves. So, power posing for only a few minutes can really change your life in meaningful ways.

Nonverbal communication accounts for roughly 93 percent of our interpersonal conversation. When you're talking to someone, your body language has an impact on how they interpret your information. It's also likely that the individual's tone of voice has an impact on how the message is received by the other person. Although people are rarely conscious of their body language and facial expressions, there are a couple of behaviors a person can tweak to improve their communication skills also besides power posing. For instance, research has shown that it takes conscious effort for a person to frown when looking at someone smiling—a smile is literally infectious. Research also shows that both men and women are more attracted to people who make eye contact and smile more often. A smile and just the right amount of eye contact can help you effectively convey information during first impressions and long after.

Hand gestures can not only express your thoughts but also convey your enthusiasm and passion for a topic. According to body language expert Dr. Carol Kinsey Goman, "Gesturing can help people form clearer thoughts, speak in tighter sentences and use more declarative language." As with tone, try to ensure that your hand gestures match what you're saying, otherwise people will notice the mismatch and may be less likely to trust you.

## **Interpreting basic Body Language**

There are numerous methods to use nonverbal communication, also known as body language, just like verbal and written communication. They all fit into one of the five categories given below:

## The Head

Your hairstyle, no matter what it is, sends signals to others around you. A smooth, precisely wound bun demonstrates your control and attention to detail. Or maybe your unruly locks signal you're an iconoclast who doesn't care about appearances, like Einstein, or you're stressed out and too preoccupied to care about your hair, like a new parent who hasn't had enough sleep.

## Facial Expressions

Human faces are incredibly expressive. Humans can say a lot with their mouths and eyes, from harsh frown lines to broad, dazzling smiles. Indicating that this is an innate genetic manner of expression and not a habit learned by modeling after visual examples, even those born blind exhibit facial expressions that correspond to emotions.

The slightest movements near the mouth and eyes can convey many of your thoughts and emotions. The muscles around your lips might cause the corners of your mouth to turn up as you grin. Those who can effectively interpret the feelings of others tend to focus primarily on the mouth, which may communicate our moods more clearly than the eyes. Your eyes will also crinkle and respond if you are smiling genuinely. The eyes don't smile with the mouth when you're just being courteous or trying to hide your emotions. According to studies, this is because entirely distinct areas of the brain are in charge of these many expressions.

## Eye Contact

People make eye contact to convey their interest in your talk and you. They are paying attention based on this activity. Too much eye contact can appear intimidating. You feel "stared down." Therefore, the majority of human communication that is lively and cordial comprises a combination of eye contact and a shift in attention to other facial features, such as the mouth. One of two things can be inferred from a complete lack of eye contact: dishonesty or a definite lack of interest. Additionally, when people are

anxious or excited, they tend to blink more. A stressful circumstance, such as public speaking or committing a lie, might make someone nervous. Given this knowledge, some people can consciously resist blinking temptation, like a card player attempting to keep a poker face when dealt excellent hands. When people remember facts or makeup stories, they frequently look things up. Recalling facts and experiences causes most people, but not all, to look to the left. Conversely, making stuff up causes the gaze to go to the right and upward.

### The Upper Body

Messages are positioned by holding your head up and your neck. You can exude pride and confidence by "holding your head high." You can slant your head to the side to convey confusion. Regarding body language, your arms and hands are some of the most significant indicators. Crossing your arms over your body indicates that you are suppressing your feelings because you feel defensive or want the conversation to finish. Alternatively, if you are avoiding eye contact and turning your head, you come across as unreliable. Hand and arm movements, in contrast to our most primitive facial expressions, can signify completely various things in various cultures. It's a brave gesture to put your hands on your hips because it shows that you are in charge and prepared to act. Finger fumbling is an indication of impatience and sometimes even frustration. The thumbs-up sign, which has one meaning in one society, has an entirely other connotation in another—research what your hands might be expressing without recognizing it before visiting or doing business in different cultures. The hands are only one component of your upper body, of course. Additionally, the torso itself communicates. Confidence is demonstrated by maintaining an erect torso posture with your shoulders back and your body straight. Slumping and slumping are signs of weakness; they suggest that you require assistance or may not be feeling very confident.

### The Lower Body

Sitting with your legs crossed denotes a degree of emotional self-control or closure. Anxiety manifests as a jiggling of the legs. Spreading your legs widely conveys a laid-

back, possibly too laid-back, attitude. The rest of the body can also report messages, even if the face and hands reveal much about a person's personality and attitude. You come out as nervous because of this tendency. The same thing happens when you tap your toes; it indicates you are bored, impatient, or overflowing with anxiety. Even while seated, keeping your feet moving—for example, under the table—is a symptom of either anxiousness or deceit.

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([passivesecrets.com](#))

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[Why You May Want to Stand Like a Superhero | Psychology Today](#)

[How Much of Communication Is Nonverbal? | UT Permian Basin Online \(utpb.edu\)](#)

[What Percentage of Communication is Nonverbal? \(helptostudy.com\)](#)

[Body Language Facts: How We Communicate Without Words \(learnsic.com\)](#)

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