Body language is an outward reflection of a person’s emotional condition which humans send almost entirely subconsciously. They include body posture, hand and arm gestures, leg position, facial expressions, and eye movements. Understanding this nonverbal communication is a key to perceiving how a person feels about you, an issue, a product or an idea.

### Rules on reading body signals:
1. Read gestures in clusters
2. Read gestures in context
3. Look for congruence and consistency with words

### Some Common Gestures And What They Mean
- **Hand on side of head** – Interested Evaluation.
- **Hand used to support head** – Negative thoughts.
- **Hands behind head** – Control; Dominance.
- **Picking lint** – Doesn’t like what is being said.
- **Elbows up** – Ready to dominate; Ready for action.
- **Straddling a chair** – Dominance and protection.
- **Legs apart with hands on legs** – Ready for action.
- **Hands in steeple position** – Confidence; dominance.

### When To Try A Different Approach
If a person’s body is pointed toward the nearest exit or they are getting ready to stand up.

### SOFTEN
To help improve your communication as a receiver, use the SOFTEN approach:
- **Smile**; **Open posture**; **Forward lean**;
- **Touch**; **Eye contact**; **Nod**;

### Gestures that Indicate Deception
1. **The mouth cover** – Wants to suppress words.
2. **The nose touch** – Increased blood pressure causes a tingling sensation in nose.
3. **The eye rub** – An attempt to block out distasteful things it is seeing.
4. **The ear grab** – An adult version of a child covering his ears to avoid hearing something.
5. **The neck scratch** – Doubt what is being said.
6. **The collar pull** – Relieves a tingling in the neck.
7. **Leg movements** – Research has shown that people increase leg movements when they lie.

### Physiological Reactions That Indicate Deception
Sweating; Facial muscular twitching; Flush cheeks; Excessive blinking; Pupil dilation or contraction.

### The Hands
- **Hands behind back** – Superiority and confidence.
- **Thumb display** – Dominance and assertiveness.
- **Folded hands** – Holding something back; Negative attitude.
- **Clenched hands** – Frustration and hostility.
- **Palms up** – Submissiveness; I am not a threat.
- **Palms down** – Controlling; Wants to exert authority.
- **Hiding hands** – A sign of dishonesty.
- **Finger pointing** – Aggressiveness; Dominance.

### The Mouth
A hand near mouth is connected to lying. But fingers in mouth is an indication of a need for reassurance. If faced with this sign, providing support and encouragement is a good idea.

### Smiles
The eye muscles act independently and subconsciously – the “crow’s feet” they create indicate a genuine smile. A fake smile comes more quickly, is held much longer and does not show around the eyes.

**Three types of smiles:**
1. **The tight lipped smile** – Not sharing an attitude.
2. **The twisted smile** – Reflects sarcasm.
3. **The drop jawed smile** – Feigning enjoyment.

### The Arms
- Crossed arms are a barrier that provides protection. The person does not want to hear or is not open to what you have to say.
- As a communicator, know that when you fold your arms your credibility is reduced dramatically.
- If the receiver of your communication does not unfold their arms, do not proceed with your message until the reason for this is uncovered.

### The Legs
Legs point in the direction that people want to go.
- **Open leg pointed in your direction** – Open for ideas.
- **Crossed legs** – Indicate a defensive attitude.
- **The leg clamp** – A defensive position. Not open to your idea.
- **Legs locked behind chair** – Negative emotion. Something is wrong with the communication.