Social psychologists tell us that over 93% of human communication is nonverbal. Most of our communication with others is through body language. If we don't have good body language then life can be more difficult in general. We will not be able to understand and respond well and accurately with those with whom we communicate or have one form of relation or the other. We struggle more than we have to by just not being aware of our own body language and not taking advantage of some fine-tuning to make us more likeable in general.

Body language refers to various forms of nonverbal communication, wherein a person may reveal clues as to some unspoken intention or feeling through their physical behaviour. These behaviours can include body posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements. Body language is the conscious and unconscious movements and postures by which attitudes and feelings are communicated.

Body language is typically subconscious behaviour, and is therefore considered distinct from sign language, which is a fully conscious and intentional act of communication.

Body language may provide clues as to the attitude or state of mind of a person. For example, it may indicate aggression, attentiveness, boredom, a relaxed state, pleasure, amusement, intoxication, contempt, contentment, embarrassment, excitement, anger, frustration, interest in a person, lust, guilt, pride in achievement, relief, satisfaction, sensory pleasure and shame.

Body language is significant to communication and relationships. It is relevant to management and leadership in business and also in places where it can be observed by many people. It can also be relevant to some outside of the workplace. It is commonly helpful in dating, mating, in family settings, and parenting. Although body language is nonverbal or non-spoken, it can reveal much about your feelings and thoughts to others and how others reveal their feelings toward you. Body language signals happen on both a conscious and unconscious level.

It's well known that good communication is the foundation of any successful relationship, be it personal or professional. It's important to recognize, though, that it's our nonverbal communication—our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, dressing, and tone of voice—that speak the loudest. The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication, or body language, is a powerful tool that can help you connect with others, express what you really mean, and build better relationships.

When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive wordless signals. All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages. These messages don't stop when you stop speaking either. Even when you're silent, you're still communicating nonverbally.

Oftentimes, what comes out of our mouths and what we communicate through our body language are two totally different things. When faced with these mixed signals, the listener has to choose whether to believe your verbal or nonverbal message, and, in most cases, they're going to choose the nonverbal because it's a natural, unconscious language that broadcasts our true feelings and intentions in any given moment.
Why nonverbal communication matters
The way you listen, look, move, and react tells the other person whether or not you care, if you’re being truthful, and how well you’re listening. When your nonverbal signals match up with the words you’re saying, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don’t, they generate tension, mistrust, and confusion.

If you want to become a better communicator, it’s important to become more sensitive not only to the body language and nonverbal cues of others, but also to your own. You can tune up your body language and communication skills using the following ten tips:

1. When greeting someone for the first time make sure you have a smile on your face – even if it is a forced smile.
2. Keep the physical distance between you and the person you are wanting to converse with approximately an arm’s length away.
3. Don’t invade someone else’s space. Keep the arms length rule at play.
4. Don’t fiddle with objects or be distracted while someone is talking to you.
5. Don’t take over the conversation. Take turns talking and listening.
6. Show interest by keeping good eye contact without starring.
7. If someone likes you they may occasionally touch your arm or shoulder; therefore, if you like someone you can occasionally do the same.
8. Don’t get too friendly too fast. Too much information too early will turn people away. Don’t tell your life story on the first date.
9. While listening to someone be very conscious of your own facial expressions. Allow your face to show interest by mirroring the other person’s facial expressions.
10. Don’t steal the other person’s story. If someone starts sharing their vacations experience allow them to finish their story and show interest the whole time. Then and only then can you share a similar story if appropriate.

Nonverbal communication signals can play five roles:
1. Repetition: They can repeat the message the person is making verbally.
2. Contradiction: They can contradict a message the individual is trying to convey.
3. Substitution: They can substitute for a verbal message. For example, a person's eyes can often convey a far more vivid message than words do.
4. Complementing: They may add to or complement a verbal message. A boss who pats a person on the back in addition to giving praise can increase the impact of the message.
5. Accenting: They may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline a message.

There are many different types of nonverbal communication. Together, the following nonverbal signals and cues communicate your interest and investment in others.

Facial expressions
The human face is extremely expressive, able to express countless emotions without saying a word. And unlike some forms of nonverbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for tiredness, suspicion, interest, happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.

Body movements and posture
Consider how your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand up, or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a wealth of information to
the world. This type of nonverbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and subtle movements.

**Gestures**
Gestures are woven into the fabric of our daily lives. We wave, point, beckon, and use our hands when we're arguing or speaking animatedly—expressing ourselves with gestures often without thinking. Sometimes we do it intentionally. However, the meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so it's important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation.

**Eye contact**
Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of nonverbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for evaluating the other person's response.

**Touch**
We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following: a weak handshake, a scratching of your palm while shaking your hand, a timid tap on the shoulder, a warm bear hug, a reassuring slap on the back, a patronizing pat on the head, a gentle touch on the chin while talking with you, the gentle stroking of your hair, or a controlling grip on your arm.

**Space**
Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, the circumstance, environment, and the closeness of the relationship. You can use physical space to communicate many different nonverbal messages, including signals of intimacy and affection, aggression or dominance.

**Voice**
It's not just what you say, it's how you say it. When we speak, other people "read" our voices in addition to listening to our words. Things they pay attention to include your timing and pace, how loud you speak, your tone of voice, use of words and change in pitch, and sounds that convey understanding, such as "ahh" and "uh-huh." Think about how someone's tone of voice, for example, can indicate sarcasm, anger, affection, or confidence.

**Communicating with Clothes**
Throughout the world, clothing has multiple functions. It is used to provide protection from the forces of weather. It also is worn for modesty, usually to prevent others from seeing specific parts of one's body. People in all cultures use clothing and other forms of bodily adornment to communicate status, intentions, and other messages. We dress differently for business and various recreational activities. Likewise there are styles of clothes that are worn to sexually attract others. There can be great subtlety, especially in women's clothing. It can communicate that a woman wants to be considered sexually neutral. On the other hand, it may be meant to be seductive, innocent but alluring, etc.

Long before we are physically near enough to talk to people, their appearance announces their gender, age, economic class, and often, even intentions. We begin to recognize the important cultural clues for this at an early age. The vocabulary of dress that we learn includes not only items of clothing but also hairstyles, jewelry, makeup, and other body decoration such as tattoos.
and tribal marks. In most cultures, however, the same style of dress communicates different messages depending on the age, gender, and physical appearance of the individual wearing it.

Putting on certain types of clothing can change your behaviour and the behaviour of others towards you. This can be the case with a police or military uniform, doctor's white lab coat, near nude type of dresses, or a clown's costume.

There are many forms of body decoration other than clothes that are used around the world to send messages. These include body and hair paint, tattoos, decorative scaring and branding, perfumes, and even body deformation.

**Nonverbal communication can’t be faked**
You may be familiar with advice on how to sit a certain way, steeple your fingers, or shake hands just so in order to appear confident or assert dominance. But the truth is that such tricks aren’t likely to work (unless you truly feel confident and in charge). That’s because you can’t control all of the signals you’re constantly sending off about what you’re really thinking and feeling. And the harder you try, the more unnatural your signals are likely to come across.

**How nonverbal communication can go wrong**
What you communicate through your body language and nonverbal signals affects how others see you, how well they like and respect you, and whether or not they trust you. Unfortunately, many people send confusing or negative nonverbal signals without even knowing it. When this happens, both connection and trust are damaged.

**Nonverbal communication and body language in relationships**
Useni, Ngozi, and Jide are all articulate speakers who say one thing while communicating something else nonverbally, with disastrous results in their relationships:

**Jide** believes he gets along great with his colleagues at work, but if you were to ask any of them, they would say that Jide is "intimidating" and "very intense." Rather than just look at you, he seems to devour you with his eyes. And if he takes your hand, he lunges to get it and then squeezes so hard it hurts. Jide is a caring guy who secretly wishes he had more friends, but his nonverbal awkwardness keeps people at a distance and limits his ability to advance at work.

**Ngozi** is attractive and has no problem meeting eligible men, but she has a difficult time maintaining a relationship longer than a few months. Ngozi is funny and interesting, but even though she constantly laughs and smiles, she radiates tension. Her shoulders and eyebrows are noticeably raised, her voice is high-pitched and harsh, and her body is stiff. Being around Ngozi makes many people feel uncomfortable. Ngozi has a lot going for her that is undercut by the discomfort she evokes in others.

**Useni** thought he had found the perfect match when he met Mary, but Mary wasn’t so sure. Useni is good looking, hardworking, and a smooth talker, but Useni seemed to care more about his thoughts than Mary’s. When Mary had something to say, Useni was always ready with wild eyes and a rebuttal before she could finish her thought. This made Mary feel ignored, and soon she started dating other men. Useni loses out at work for the same reason. His inability to listen to others makes him unpopular with many of the people he most admires.

**Jeremiah** loves his wife very much but does not give attention to her nonverbal messages. He seems to be only concerned about what she says and not her countenance and emotions. If she does not say she is sick, he will not show concern though he can see that she looks sick. If she
does not raise her voice in anger, he never considers his harsh words and actions offensive. If she never says she is tired, Jeremiah will never believe she is tired. When he observes his wife seems troubled or sad and he asks what the problem is, and she replies “nothing”, he will just walk away without probing further. This attitude has put their marriage for many years under pressure. Jeremiah has failed to say sorry when he ought to. Jeremiah failed to encourage and give a hug to the wife when she needed it the most. Jeremiah failed to be there for the wife when she needed him to share her sadness and pain. This made Jeremiah’s wife to sometimes think that the husband does not love and care about her, and this troubles her, and she is beginning to consider leaving him.

These smart, well-intentioned people struggle in their attempt to connect with others. The sad thing is that they are unaware of the nonverbal messages they communicate.

If you want to communicate effectively, avoid misunderstandings, and enjoy solid, trusting relationships both socially and professionally, it’s important to understand how to use and interpret nonverbal signals.

**Setting the stage for effective nonverbal communication**

Nonverbal communication is a rapidly flowing back-and-forth process requiring your full concentration and attention. If you are planning what you’re going to say next, daydreaming, or thinking about something else, you are almost certain to miss nonverbal cues and other subtleties in the conversation. You need to stay focused on the moment-to-moment experience in order to fully understand what’s going on.

**To improve nonverbal communication, learn to manage stress**

Learning how to manage stress in the heat of the moment is one of the most important things you can do to improve your nonverbal communication. Stress compromises your ability to communicate. When you’re stressed out, you’re more likely to misread other people, send confusing or off-putting nonverbal signals, and lapse into unhealthy knee-jerk patterns of behavior. Furthermore, emotions are contagious. You being upset is very likely to trigger others to be upset, making a bad situation worse.

If you’re feeling overwhelmed by stress, it’s best to take a time out. Take a moment to calm down before you jump back into the conversation. Once you’ve regained your emotional equilibrium, you’ll be better equipped to deal with the situation in a positive way.

**How emotional awareness strengthens nonverbal communication**

In order to send accurate nonverbal signals, you need to be aware of your emotions and how they influence you. You also need to be able to recognize the emotions of others and the true feelings behind the signals they are sending. This is where emotional awareness comes in.

**Emotional awareness enables you to:**

1. Accurately read other people, including the emotions they’re feeling and the unspoken messages they’re sending.
2. Create trust in relationships by sending nonverbal signals that match up with your words.
3. Respond in ways that show others that you understand, notice, and care.
4. Know if the relationship is meeting your emotional needs, giving you the option to either repair the relationship or move on.

**Tips for reading body language and nonverbal communication**
Once you’ve developed your abilities to manage stress and recognize emotions, you’ll naturally become better at reading the nonverbal signals sent by others.

1. **Pay attention to inconsistencies.** Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said. Is the person saying one thing, and their body language something else? For example, are they telling you “yes” while shaking their head no?

2. **Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group.** Don’t read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal signal. Consider all of the nonverbal signals you are receiving, from eye contact to tone of voice and body language. Taken together, are their nonverbal signals consistent—or inconsistent—with what their words are saying?

3. **Trust your instincts.** Don’t dismiss your gut feelings. If you get the sense that someone isn’t being honest or that something isn’t adding up, you may be picking up on a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal signals.

**Evaluating nonverbal signals**

As you continue to pay attention to the nonverbal cues and signals you send and receive, your ability to communicate will improve.

These ten question quiz will give you some clues as to your own body language and how you read others body language. It can help you become more aware of what may be working or not working for you when it comes to creating relationships.

1. When you approach someone or they approach you are you aware of the space created between you and the other person?
   a. Yes, I am fully aware of my distance and others distance
   b. No, I do not notice such things.

2. Do you feel tense or uneasy if someone is staring at you?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. When someone you are talking to starts looking away or fidgeting do you
   a. Continue to talk.
   b. Stop talking and/or change the subject.

4. Do you keep comfortable eye contact while conversing without staring?
   a. Yes, I keep good eye contact while talking and occasionally look away.
   b. No, eye contact makes me uncomfortable.

5. Do you consciously smile when you greet another person?
   a. No, I am not aware of my facial expressions when greeting someone.
   b. Yes, I make sure I have a pleasant look on my face when I greet.

6. Are you aware of your tone of voice during a conversation?
   a. No, I just talk and don't think about it.
   b. Yes, my tone of voice is important and I am aware of it.

7. Are you aware of your facial expressions while someone is talking to you?
   a. Yes, I make sure my facial expression shows interest.
   b. No, I just listen without any awareness of my facial expression.

8. Do you nervously play with objects or fiddle with things during a conversation?
9. If someone is hesitating a lot during a conversation and not maintaining good eye contact do you
   a. Trust what the person is saying.
   b. Have doubts about what is being said.

10. I find it easy to tell someone's mood just by being with them for a short while.
   a. No
   b. Yes

**Reading the body language of your admirer**

When someone is interested in you, the body language of the person will reveal it. If the person is genuinely interested in a long time relationship that is God based, or sex you will know through the body language.

The unusual interest in your person and welfare, smiles, special eye contact, unhappy countenance when another person of the opposite sex is with you, always wanting to be around you, phone calls, text messages just to register his/her presence are all notice me body language. In the same vein, when someone you are interested in does not like you, the body language will show it. Non-smiling face, always eager to leave your presence, distracting him or herself from your conversation; giving the, “I am busy” sign by trying to engage in an activity each time you come around. Never wait to be told you are not wanted, understand the body language and withdraw. Trying to love someone who does not love you or have interest in you is a waste of time and emotions, and it will bring you a lot of pain. Always read the body language.

**Reading the body language of your spouse**

If couples will read the body language of their spouse, a lot of problems will be averted and peace and harmony will be achieved. Your spouse's body language could be saying, “I am angry with you” while declaring, “I am tired”. Our spouse’s body language may be silently saying, “I need some space right now, for I want to be left alone to think and rest”; and when you do not realize this, you will continue invading his/her space causing an outburst of angry words and a serious quarrel. Reading the body language of your spouse will enhance peace, love and harmony in the relationship. Nonverbal communication should be given attention in the family.

Reading the body language of your spouse in public can keep one from saying and doing wrong things, not overstaying their welcome when on a visit or in a social function and show you are a disciplined, united and understanding family.

Train your children to read, interpret and understand body language. Use it to communicate with them so it will be your silent code in public.

**Always bear this in mind:**

1. People read you and watch out for your body language.
2. Your words are not the only thing being considered and analyzed, your body language is being considered as well.
3. Be honest and sincere always in your communication.
4. Make sure your body language is not contradictory to your verbal language.