

Former FBI Agent Explains How to Read Body Language Tradec...

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nonverbals are anything that communicates but is not a word. The public knows them as body language, how we dress, how we walk, have meaning, and we use that to interpret what's in the mind of the person.



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My name is Joe Navarro, and for 25 years I was a special agent with the FBI. My job was to catch spies. Most of my career I spent within the National Security Division, a lot of it had to do with looking at specific targets. And then it was about well, how do we get in their heads and how do we neutralize them? Our security is based on nonverbals. We look at the person through the peephole, we look at who's behind us at the ATM machine. We know from the research that most of us select our mates based on nonverbal



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So we may think we're very sophisticated. But in fact, we are never, in a state where we're not transmitting information. There's a lot of myths out there. The ones that stand out is if you cross your arms, that it's a blocking behavior, that's just nonsense. Even when you don't like the person that is in front of you, this isn't to block them out. It's actually to self soothe because in essence, it's a self hug. When you're sitting at a movie and you're watching, you're going to cross your arms, you're waiting for somebody, you tend to do this. What's interesting is we do this behavior more in public than in private. The other one

that really stands out is as we think about something we may look in a certain way. As we process the information, we may look in another way, it's certainly not indicative of deception and it really shouldn't be used that way. All we can say is the person is processing the information. The other misconceptions are that it



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The person clears her throat touches their nose or covers their mouth. They're lying. We do these behaviors as self soothers. They're they're pacifying behaviors scientifically. And empirically. There's just no Pinocchio effect. And people who prattle that and say, well, we can detect deception because the person touches their nose or covers their mouth. That's just sheer nonsense. We humans are lousy at detecting deception.



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espionage work is often nowhere near what we see in movies. And in one of the cases, we had information from another country saying you have an American, we think is actually a mole who somehow entered the United States is able to pass as an American buddies here working for hostile intelligence service, and just fortuitously he was videographic coming out of a flower shop, we're looking



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Add the video and everybody in the in our small unit, we were saying, well, there's not much there, you know, he's coming out of the shop getting in his car. And I said stop the film right there. Just as he came out of the shop, he took the flowers and most Americans tend to hold the flowers by the stock. So the flowers are up, this individual took them and grabbed the stock and then held the flowers so that they were facing down. And I said that's how they carry flowers in Eastern Europe, rather than confront him about Are you a spy, I decided to do what's called a presumptive. So as I sat there with him, and I said, Would you like to know how we know? And he had this look on his face and and I said it was the flowers, and then he confessed.



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When I came into law enforcement, I thought it was all about the confession. It's really about FaceTime in my 25 years in the FBI



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It was a rarity that a person didn't eventually reveal what I needed to know. Because we would sit down and have these very lengthy conversations.



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I look at behaviors to do an assessment. What is this person transmitting in relations to any stimuli? My further questioning comes from my observing these behaviors.



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The first thing I look at is I look at the hair. Does it look healthy? Does it look well groomed? That forehead is very interesting because a lot of times we reveal stress. A lot of the things that we have gone through life are often etched in the forehead. I look at the eyes to see if they're read or not enough sleep. This small area here between the eyes called the glove Bella. It's one of the first areas that reveals information to us most often when we don't like it.



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Something we do that bunny knows of I don't like we don't really know what our lips look like, and we tend to compress them. When something bothers us when something really bothers us, we tend to suck them in the mandibula. And look at the cheeks, we may do something like this will, will rub our tongue against the inside of the cheek. But when we try to hide it, then it tells me that this person is trying to do some perception management and that they are I want to know why. At the neck. I want to see if there's any head tilt, because head tilt, the person is more relaxed. The minute the head tilt goes away. There's usually some issue. I'm looking at the shoulders. You ask somebody a question. They don't know both shoulders shoot up very quickly. And then I look at the hands when something's troubling us. We tend to stiffen our fingers, interlace them and almost like a teepee. We move our hands back and forth. Very



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Slowly This is to be differentiated from when we do the steeple, which we do in this position. When something's that issue, we tend to put our hands on our hips, and we become very territorial. This is called arms akimbo. But look how it changes when we put our thumbs forward. And then it becomes one of more of I'm inquisitive. But I also look for

any behaviors of ventilating because men tend to ventilate at the neck, and we do at the very instant something bothers us. And then I look at the legs to see if there's any brushing of the legs with the hands, which is again to pacify and then the feet. Do I see any behaviors such as wiggling of the feet kicking of the feet? If I ask a question and all of a sudden the feet withdraw in our cross, perhaps the person feels a little threatened by that question. So when we study non verbal



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It's not about making judgments. It's about assessing, what is this person transmitting in that moment.



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It really is looking at an individual and saying, what are they transmitting? We're all transmitting at all times. We choose the clothes that we wear, how we groom ourselves how we dress, but also how do we carry ourselves? are we coming to the office on this particular day with a lot of energy? Or are we coming in with a different sort of pace? And what we look for are differences in behavior down to the minutiae of what is this individual's posture as they're walking down the street? Are they on the inside of the sidewalk on the outside? Can we see his blink rate? Can we see how often he's looking at his watch? I know your blink rate is around eight, eight times a minute, but you don't know that you're not sitting there. Counting



08:00

All these things factor in because they're transmitting information. Now it's up to us to then use that information to say, okay, we need to marshal resources to be on that individual right now.



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So in most Western cultures, the first time people touch is when they shake hands. Touching becomes that important because we can always remember a time when we shook hands with someone and we didn't like that. It's also the first time when our bodies release these bonding chemicals that say, I like this person or I don't like this person. So handshaking is both necessary and essential in most cultures.



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Like dirty birds. Nobody actually ever



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Ladies, Hi, I'm Joe Navarro. I'm Laura. Laura, how are you? And you are cotesia. How are you?



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Let me ask you this. Let's back up a little bit.



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Is this comfortable for you? Yes. Yeah. It's a little bit more comfortable, but it's not for you, is it? Alright. Thank you. Alright, so keep talking.



09:26

What we've done here is we've talked about the importance of space and comfort, they don't realize is how much further apart they are now standing. And it's because we have brought this subject up to make them comfortable about saying, hey, it's okay to be comfortable at your perfect distance. And so now we see when they rock, they rock away from each other, and they create this space. If you notice their feet tend to move



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Have around more. There's a dynamic going on here, where they're kind of trying to find Well, what what is the perfect space? What is the perfect distance, and we know that they're unsettled because of the high degree of movement that's, that's going on.



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Poker is an interesting game, the similitudes of sitting across from a spy or sitting across from players, it's their reactions to a stimulus, we have behaviors indicative of psychological discomfort that we use at home, at work, or at the poker table.



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So we're going to take a look at poker players and some of the body language that you'll find at a typical poker game.



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So we'll pause it right there. So well



11:00

One of the things that you first notice is that when a table is called This is the first time many of them see each other. This is a great opportunity to be looking for behaviors indicative of discomfort, we're going to see the individual shifting in his chair, we're going to see one individual reaching over and grabbing his shoulder. The woman in this case her shoulders are rather high. This is a great opportunity even before the game starts to collect poker intelligence. Alright guys. Good.



11:35

So we'll stop right there. Look where their hands are at. Here we're looking at player number two and number three, and we notice right away that their hands are on top of the cards. Some players will cage their cards, some players will put their hands directly on top and press them down. And they may do that because the cards have now increased in value. Player number one tends to keep his hands very close to his



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Body, player number four, she's actually withdrawn her hands from the table. Because when we like things, we tend to move our hands forward. When we don't like things, we tend to move the hands away.



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So as we look at player number three, I'm often asked about players who shuffle their chips. What you're really doing is self soothing, and this just helps you to make it through the game. And that's really all we're looking for. Oh, come on. Okay, so we'll stop right there. Player number five is sitting there arms cross, you don't see a lot of activity. That

doesn't mean he's not transmitting a lot of information on down the line. I want to see where those thumbs of his are because he holds them very close when Nothing's going on. But does that change as the game evolves? If you're looking at non verbals, it's often useful to look at them at double the speed



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Because all the nonverbals that are critical jumped out at you as though it were a caricature.



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Alright, so stop right there. The woman in position number four, you see her head moving around quite a bit. Player number three, you see have a lot of activity with his hands when we look at player number five. Now his hands are fully out. This is as far as we've seen them before. At this point, we know that he's engaged and that he's interested. Now the game is out in the open 75 to 80% of the information we need is sitting out there. What you often see is everybody's looking at their own cards or looking at the community cards rather than looking around. You should be looking around to see what what was the reaction because you're going to see that reaction again. You know, in poker we used to say that you can have a poker face but I encountered you can't have



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Have a poker body somewhere, it's going to be revealed.



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When I was in college in the early 70s, there were really no courses on nonverbal communications you quickly realize that to a great extent, it's really about what you can interpret from behavior. And so we talk about non verbals because it matters because it has gravitas because it affects how we communicate with each other when it comes to non verbals. This is no small matter, we primarily communicate non verbally and we always will