

## NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

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Effective communicators have many tools at their disposal when they want to get across a message. Whether writing or speaking, they know how to put together the words that will convey their meaning. They reinforce their words with gestures and actions. They look you in the eye, listen to what you have to say, and think about your feelings and needs. At the same time, they study your reactions, picking up the nuances of your response by watching your face and body, listening to your tone of voice, and evaluating your words. They absorb information just as efficiently as they transmit it, relying on both non-verbal and verbal cues.

Non-verbal communication differs from verbal communication in fundamental ways. For one thing, it is less structured, which makes it more difficult to study. A person cannot pick up a book on non-verbal language and master the vocabulary of gestures, expressions, and inflections that are common in our culture.

Although non-verbal communication is often unplanned, it has more impact than verbal communication. Non-verbal cues are especially important in conveying feelings; accounting for 93 percent of the emotional meaning that is exchanged in any interaction.

### **The functions of non-verbal communication**

Experts in non-verbal communication suggest that it have six specific functions:

- To provide information, either consciously or unconsciously
- To regulate the flow of conversation
- To express emotion
- To qualify, complement, contradict, or expand verbal messages
- To control or influence others
- To facilitate specific tasks, such as teaching a person to swing a golf club.

**Cultures differences** arise because of our unconscious assumptions and non-verbal communication patterns. We ignore the fact that people from other cultures differ from us in many ways: in their religion and values, their ideas of status, their decision-making habits, their attitude toward time.

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