

Assessing Your Non-Verbal Communication

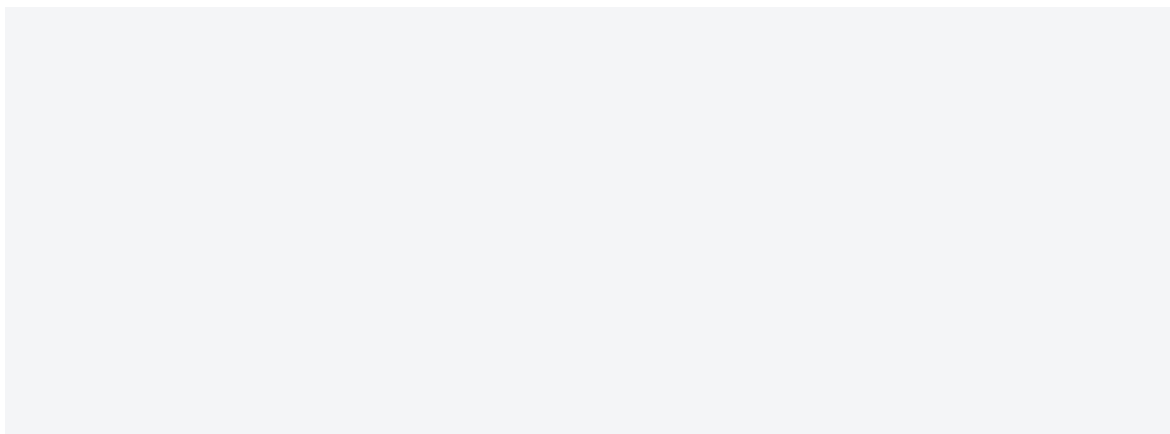
Self-assessment and obtaining feedback can be a helpful and insightful way to identify how to improve your non-verbal communication.

Consider each of the following non-verbal cues and how you are performing (modified from Nelson-Jones, 2005). Then ask a trusted friend or colleague to do the same.

Step one – complete the following yourself:

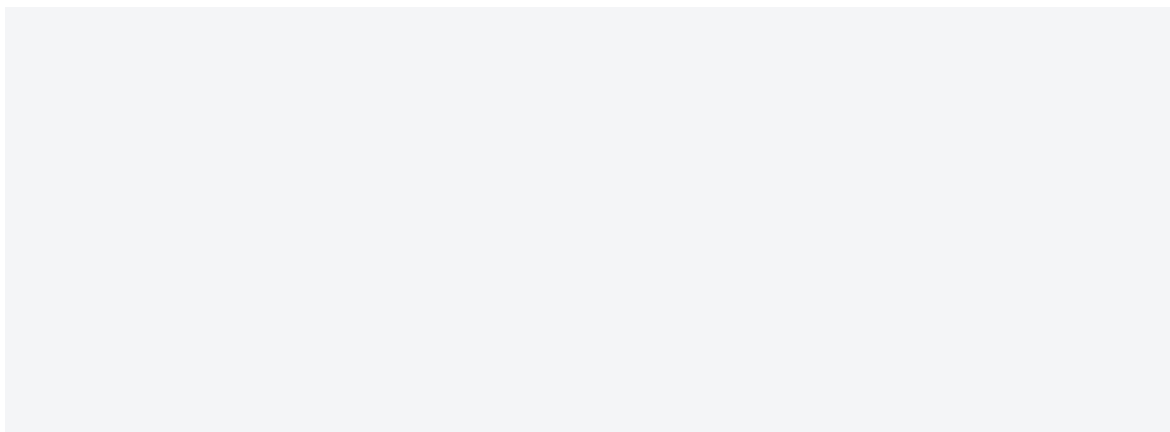
- **Facial expression** – possibly the most important non-verbal communication. We can share a message of anger, surprise, disappointment, fear, and sadness, simply through facial expressions, such as raised eyebrows or the shape of the mouth.

How successful am I? Is there room for improvement?



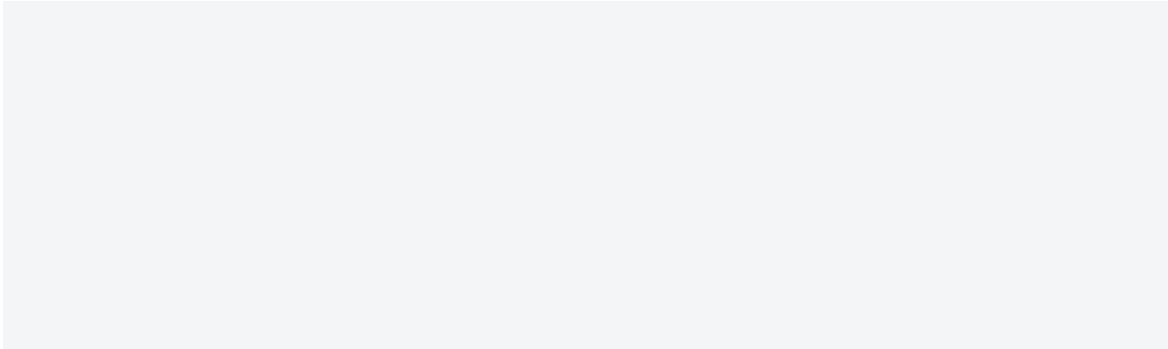
- **Gaze** – how much and when we look at a speaker conveys a level of interest and helps us gain facial information. As we talk, it can provide us with details of our listener's reactions to what we have said.

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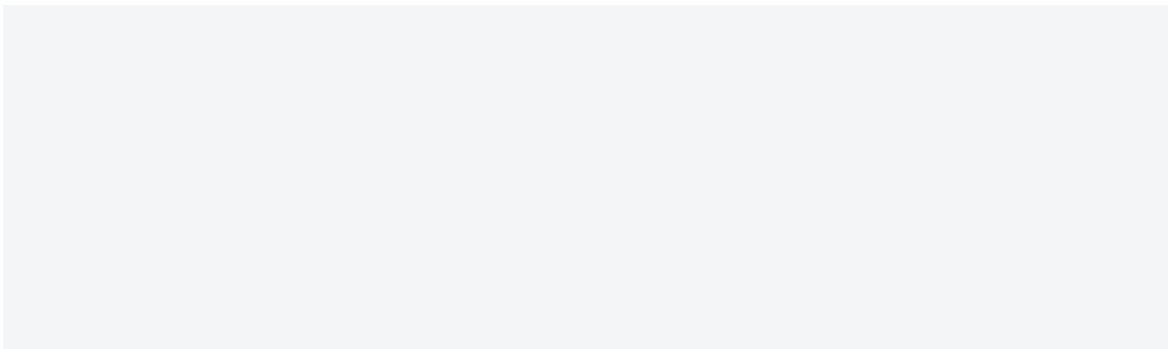
- **Eye contact** – more direct than gaze, eye contact can convey a great deal, including anger, interest, and even attraction.

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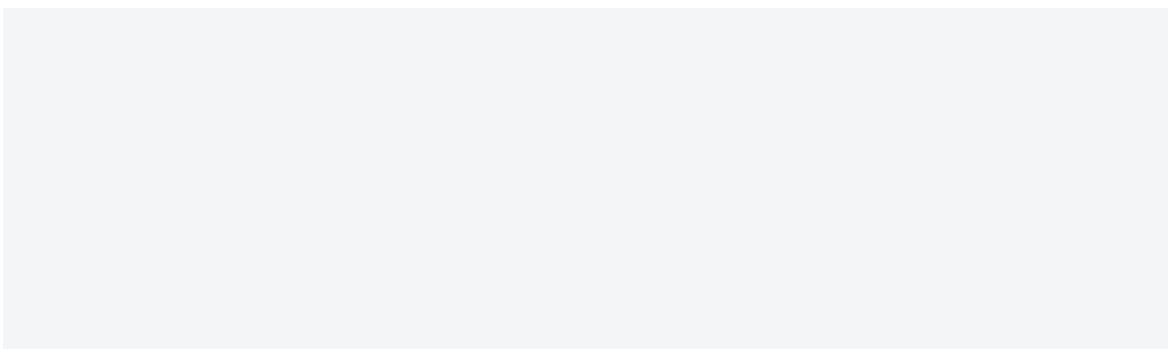
- **Gestures** – we can frame what we are saying or illustrate our points using physical movement. They may indicate emotion (a pointed finger or a clenched fist) or add information to our words by indicating a shape, size, or movement.

How successful am I? Is there room for improvement?



- **Posture** – when we physically turn toward someone as they speak, or lean forward, we convey interest; facing away or leaning backward may show a lack of interest or even boredom. Posture, such as sitting with legs and arms crossed tightly, may suggest being anxious or uptight.

How successful am I? Is there room for improvement?



- **Physical closeness** – our degree of comfortableness with physical closeness can vary with culture and connection with the other person. For example, the *intimate zone* (six to eighteen inches or 15 to 45 centimeters) is typically reserved for close friends, relatives, or someone we are in a relationship with. The *social zone* (four to 12 feet or 1.2 to 3.65 meters) includes those not well known, and the *public zone* (over 12 feet or 3.65 meters) is for public gatherings.

How successful am I? Is there room for improvement?

- **Clothes** – what you wear can communicate a great deal, including social and occupational standing, ethnicity, conformity, and sex-role identity. Different age groups and social groups may respond differently depending on the clothes we wear.

How successful am I? Is there room for improvement?

- **Grooming** – important information is conveyed by how well we care for ourselves, such as being clean and tidy, styling hair, and clean-shaven.

How successful am I? Is there room for improvement?

Step two – ask a trusted friend or colleague to complete the same questions on your behalf being as honest as possible:

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Step three – assess your own and others' feedback and see what changes you could make to ensure your non-verbal behavior remains relaxed and focused on the speaker.

References

- Nelson-Jones, R. (2005). *Practical counselling and helping skills*. London: Sage.

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