

# What are some nonverbal gestures?

## **Openness, confidence:**

- open hands, palms up
- unbuttoning or removing jacket (men)
- eye contact
- smile, leaning forward, relaxed
- hands away from face, possibly behind back
- standing straight, feet slightly apart, shoulders squared
- hand in belt thumb hooked in waist
- clucking
- snapping fingers
- smacking palm

## **Cooperation, readiness:**

- standing with hands on hips, feet apart, head tilted
- uncrossed legs
- a person moves closer to another
- unbuttoned coat (men)
- head cocked, finger to face, blinking or squinting
- welcoming handshake
- open arms or hands (palms out)
- smile
- eye contact
- rubbing palms together indicating expectation of something pleasant
- hand to chest in a man indicates loyalty (but in a woman it is defensiveness)
- touching, patting, holding hands to give reassurance

## **Professional:**

- taking notes
- evaluation gestures especially hand to face
- leaning forward

use of space in seating so as to avoid barriers

eye contact

Lincolnesque position

absence of gestures indicative of dominance, indifference, defensiveness, etc. (See section M.) Take notice of gestures signifying a desire to interrupt: ``school" gesture of raising hand displaced to tugging ear or just raising hand from table and then dropping back

index finger to lip to restrain from interrupting

hand on arm of speaker

### **Indifference, boredom:**

leg over arm of chair

rhythmic drumming, tapping

legs crossed

shaking one foot (women)

straighten up then slouch

``cold shoulder," turning away especially toward exit

glancing at exit

rigid, unmoving posture with fixed stare

yawning

hand holding up face, drooping eyelids

fidget or rock

turning up nose and/or ``tsk" sound (signifying disgust)

### **Evaluation, interest:**

hand to cheek gesture in style of Rodin's *The Thinker* statue

slight blinking or squinting

chin stroking

hands touching face especially upper lip

leaning forward (positive) and leaning back (negative)

head tilted, ear cocked

peering over top of glasses

sucking on tip of pencil or earpiece of glasses indicates wish for nourishment in form of more information

arched eyebrows

licking lips

wrinkling nose

scratching head

ruffling hair

**Doubt:**

pacing

hand over nose

eyes closed

brow furrowed

arched eyebrows

frown

scratching in front of ear

rubbing eyes

hand to face gestures (evaluative)

pacing with head down and hands behind back or just standing     unwise to interrupt a person thus engaged

scratching head

pinching bridge of nose, especially with head lowered

**Suspicion, secretiveness:**

folded arms, moving away from another

crossed legs

head tilted forward

rubbing nose

lack of eye contact

hand covering mouth

scratching in front of ear

frown

scrunching in with head down  
stolen look, sideways glance  
sideways positioning  
``poker face"  
deception indicated by lack of eye contact  
anxiety gestures  
looking at floor  
frequent swallowing  
wetting lips  
throat clearing  
scratching head

**Need for reassurance:**

clenched hands with thumbs rubbing  
stroking arms  
cuticle picking  
hand pinching sucking on pen, glasses, etc.  
touching chair before sitting  
hand to throat (women) often displaced to seemingly checking to see if necklace is still there

**Anxiety:**

nail biting  
finger movement  
sighing  
hand wringing  
rapid, twitchy movements  
clearing throat  
tremors, especially knees  
heavy breathing  
voice strained

lips quivering  
rapid eye movement  
rigidity  
crossed fingers  
chewing on things

**Frustration, anger:**

making fists  
hands on hips  
stomping  
if sitting on edge of chair (ready for action)  
chin out  
kicking the ground  
lips pressed together, jaw muscles tight  
running fingers through hair  
rubbing back of neck  
hand in pocket  
snorting  
clenched hands with white knuckles  
pointing or jabbing  
hot under collar  
putting out cigarette especially if with grinding motion  
change in skin color  
hostile stare

**Defensiveness:**

hands in pocket  
hands behind back  
clenched hands  
men with jackets button up  
folded arms (can be reinforced by making fists)

crossed legs  
body twisted away, moving away, sitting back  
looking at door  
head tilted forward, possibly squinting  
stalling for time by cleaning glasses, rearranging, etc.  
hand rubbing back of neck.

**Self control, inner conflict:**

hand holding wrist or arm  
arm locked behind back  
locked ankles  
gripping arms of chair as in dentist's chair  
suppressed gestures or displacement activities such as fist clenched hidden in pocket  
hand to mouth in astonishment or fear (suppressed scream)  
hand rubbing back of neck, running fingers through hair (displaced hitting out), ``stiff upper lip" or reacting as little as possible  
blowing nose and coughing (disguised tears)

**Dominating:**

elevating self, like standing when others are sitting  
taking a different posture than others in a group, especially hands behind head  
sitting straddling the chair  
standing with arms spread and hands gripping desk or table  
loud voice or low voice carefully enunciated  
standing or walking with hands behind back and chin up  
thumbs in lapels

**Superior and subordinate:**

the superior usually has hand on top in a handshake while the person who is subordinate offers his hand with palm up  
the superior makes the motion to terminate the encounter  
the superior can violate the subordinate's space, and can express doubt, evaluation, domineering gestures

the subordinate is more likely to signify self control, anxiety, defensiveness gesture clusters

when putting feet on desk the superior should recognize that subordinates dislike this gesture, superiors pretend to ignore it, and equals take little note of it