

Mirror, Mirror!
By Christopher Huston

Have you ever considered your body language, posture, and mannerisms, as a non-verbal form of communication? Did you know that we are actually wired to sense others non-verbal communications to identify what they are feeling? You most likely have seen or have felt this, but maybe not consciously. Your boss, spouse, and even feedback from your students have triggered a sense of joy, boredom, and agitation.

Our body language or non-verbal communication tells a story just as much-if not more- than the words we are using. As an instructor your demeanor can overshadow a dull topic. You most likely have had a student say “the topic was boring but *so-n-so* made it not so bad.” Well, at least I hope that has happened to you!

IT'S WHAT YOU DON'T SAY THAT COUNTS!



LEARN TO READ AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE THROUGH
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION.

This graphic depicts some non-verbal signals that you may be giving off and your students pick up on.

MOOD CONTAGION – *the automatic transfer of mood between persons.*

Researchers have found that simply the tone of someone's voice can greatly affect the interpretation of the listener, or their mood. For the Fire Service Instructor-who must provide instruction on many subjects to various types of adult learners-losing the interest of the class simply from the tone of voice can have devastating effects. Couple this with crossed arms, sitting hunched over a desk, or simply appearing not interested, is detrimental to any training regimen.

A smile on your face is not enough to convey a positive message either. In one study showing that body language is much more than a facial expression, “the participants could easily tell apart the losers from winners when they rated the full picture or the body alone, but they were at chance level when rating the face alone.” Posture, hand gestures, and moving throughout the class will improve the chances your students feel engaged.

Practice, practice, practice! During the prep phase before a course, get up and teach the course to the audience of none. Know what gestures to use to make your point. Find the tone, pace, and intonation (voice pitch fluctuation) for the bullet points you cover. Not only will you improve your presentation, but you will ensure you know the subject and flow! We will all have a bad day here and there. Do your best to keep a positive attitude while in front of a group so that your positivity will spread! Create an image you want your students to “mirror!”

References

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/79/2/211>

<http://psychcentral.com/news/2012/11/30/body-language-not-facial-expressions-conveys-good-or-bad-experience/48393.html>