Chapter 1 – The Body of Evidence

Are you Sitting Comfortably?

Are you aware of the expression on your face right now? Are you aware of how you’re sitting or standing, or who and what is around you?

Probably not - until I asked the question and your brain went to do a little check, or you had a look round.

Most people are oblivious, most of the time, to what their body is doing.

If you are one of these people, you’ll be unaware just how much your body tells others about you. About your moods, emotions and attitudes.

These body movements, signals and gestures, are forms of Non Verbal communication or what we commonly refer to as “Body Language”.

In business, being aware of and understanding this subject, can dramatically change people’s perceptions of you – and consequently the results you achieve.

This book takes you through everyday business situations, pointing out what to observe, what to do with what you see, and how to turn it to your advantage.

I start right at the beginning with what body language is, and then take you through greetings, meetings, presenting, selling, negotiating, managing, leading and all the other key areas you
need to understand in your business to make the best decisions, and be successful.

Over the course of this book, I’ll cover all of the situations and common behaviours, just as you would encounter them in your business and your personal life. By the end, you’ll be an expert at interpreting what body language means in different situations, and you’ll have a range of techniques and approaches to deal with the people depending on the signals you see them exhibiting.

**Body Language and the Unconscious**

Body language is everywhere. We are all affected by it through our interactions with family, friends, colleagues, shop and restaurant staff, Government officials like police and traffic wardens. They all send us silent messages that tell us things about them, their job and how they feel.

We can all remember certain characteristics about people we’ve come into contact with throughout our lives: a particular teacher who had a funny walk when you were knee high to a grasshopper; a friend who always had their hands tucked up their sleeves when you were a teenager; or that bloody woman who kept clicking her pen at a meeting and annoying the hell out of you as you were trying to speak.

And, whether we like it or not we all react to these Non Verbal messages. Sometimes we think about them consciously, other times we don’t.

Just because we don’t *consciously* think about them doesn’t mean they don’t have an effect on us!

Think for a moment about power and status. You walk in to just about any Foreign Embassy anywhere in the World (if you’ve not been in one then I’m sure you’ve seen them in films or on TV). What are you immediately greeted with? Usually the first things you see are the flags. At least one, if not several, huge flags right smack bang in front of you as you enter the building, and then dozens of others of varying sizes dotted around the place. Often you’ll see the
country’s emblem on pictures of beautiful places. You’ll see people in smart military uniforms or other security staff.

Then there’s other things like security gates, car parking spaces marked for ‘Visitors’, others marked out especially for the important people who work in the building who may have their own names, initials or titles painted on their space, or, if they’re really going for it, their own little etched plastic sign.

Why is all this there?

Simple, it’s there to send everyone Non Verbal messages. It's telling you, without it actually needing to be said or written down:

“You are entering officialdom. Enter at your own risk because once you are inside, we can do anything we like and you know it. We can choose to grant you a Visa, or throw you in jail, or we could just be really nice and give you cups of tea and posh biscuits. We are all-powerful and strong. We are part of the Government.”

OK so I’m exaggerating, but you get the point.

We’ve grown up with Non Verbal messages all throughout our lives.

We learn them from the people we’ve met, especially from people we view as important to us, or have an influence on our lives; Parents, grandparents, siblings, extended family, friends, teachers, sports coaches, Cubs, Brownie, Guides leaders, etc.

We learn as we grow up from all the different people we meet, the situations and circumstances we’ve been in, and the results of those interactions. Sometimes we take it in at a conscious level, sometimes it’s totally unconscious.
Well guess what?

Your own Non Verbal communication is both conscious and unconscious too.

Sometimes you know exactly what you’re doing and have free choice. Other times you haven’t got a clue, you’re not even aware of the signals you’re sending out. But just because you’re unaware of them, doesn’t mean others haven’t picked them up.

In fact most of what you do with your body is completely unconscious most of the time. Micro expressions flash across your face in less than half a second, but that’s enough for someone to realise things are not what they seem.

Hopefully as you read through each chapter you’ll start to notice the world around you more. You’ll start to pick up on the Non Verbal messages you get sent day-in, day-out by people and places. You’ll understand that Non Verbal communication is not just about physical body movements, signals and gestures. It’s all that and much more.

Body language has taken over!

Unfortunately, the term ‘body language’ has become the sweeping name for all Non Verbal communication. The problem with that is that most people interpret it as applying only physical body movements.

You don’t hear people say, “Did you see his/her Non Verbal communication?” No, instead they say, “Did you see his/her body language?” It basically means the same thing, although it’s a more limited expression.
Pick up just about any national newspaper when there’s a big story on, and somewhere in the column inches you’ll find a reference to the person’s body language. If not directly, then indirectly:

“They left the Magistrates Court with their head down to avoid eye contact with the waiting press”.

“She was all smiles as she walked confidently waving to the waiting crowd at the premier of her new film”.

Non Verbal communication is just as it sounds: unspoken messages that have meanings behind them. By systematically breaking down these messages you will learn to read people and situations better, improve the results you achieve and benefit from the ability to decode what is really going on around you.

So from here on in I’m going to be talking about Body Language but I’ll actually be taking its wider definition, and going through all the different elements this covers. There are two main components:

**Kinesics** - The term anthropologist Ray Birdwhistle first used in 1952 for his studies on how people interact through their body signals, movements and gestures.

**Proxemics** – A term coined by anthropologist Edward T Hall back in 1966 referring to the study of distances between people interacting with each other.

By the time you get to the end of this book you’ll realise just how much actually comes under the heading Body Language.