

Effective Non-Verbal Communication Without Vision

**A Workshop with Jay Stiteley
Associate Manager, Field Operations
The Seeing Eye, Inc.**

I. Introduction:

Getting where you are going is only the first step. The Seeing Eye believes that it is just as important how one presents themselves once they arrive at their destination. This workshop has been developed to highlight facts about common Non-Verbal Communication, and to provide strategies for including Non-Verbal techniques into a communication style.

II. Some facts about human communication

1. 80% of all social interaction begins with non-verbal communication
2. 55% of the message communicated is one's eye contact, body posture, and head position
3. 38% is how well one modulates their voice
4. 7% are the words that are actually spoken

III. Eye contact, Body Positioning and Space:

1. Eye contact is really face to face.
2. Face the voice, track the moving voice with your face.
3. Body space is generally elliptical or egg shaped. (Acceptable space is an extended arm and hand length when facing another individual, about half that when standing behind an individual, and brushing elbows when side by side.)
4. The low vision individual might consider 90 degree positioning, instead of face to face. (The person with partial vision may find that moving in close enough to recognize someone, might make the sighted person nervous. This positioning brings them about a half step closer, but not in the person's face.)

IV. Handshaking:

1. Take the initiative, be sure to get your hand out first, grasp firmly and briefly.
2. Bend the elbow, center, and extend the hand slightly. (The further you extend the hand the higher it rises, consequently, you might get a handful of something you may or may not want.)
3. Verbalize your greeting to localize; "How are you?"
4. Humor can help to break the non-verbal stalemate: "OK, I know your around here somewhere, just speak up and I'll find you."

V. Gestures

1. Adding a gesture to a verbal statement increases the potential for a verbal response.
2. Gestures can incorporate the entire body, or as simple as a smile

Effective Non-Verbal Communication Without Vision Part 2: Match Games

This handout includes 3 "Match Games" which are made up of lists of "non-verbal gestures" and "implied messages" that can be used to further your group's discussion of Non-verbal Communication. We believe that this information can be integrated into a supplemental training program for teaching people who are blind and visually impaired to make use of non-verbal gestures for more effective communication.

Match Game 1

This first Match Game focuses on issues that are generally concerned with the idea of soliciting assistance in one form or another. Here you are asked match a specific non-verbal gesture with the implied message that best corresponds with the gesture.

Non-Verbal Gesture

1. An over your shoulder glance while walking.
2. Arm fully extended above the head with wrist and hand movement.
3. Drawing a finger across the throat.
4. Drawing a hand across the front of the body with the palm up, flexing fingers.
5. Extending a hand for shaking.
6. Writing with a finger in the palm of your hand while in a restaurant.
7. Raising a hand slightly above the head with palm open.
8. Holding your index finger in front of your body or mouth.
9. Raising an empty glass.

Implied Message

- A. Nice to meet you.
- B. Hailing a taxi or bus.
- C. Seeking recognition.
- D. "Please wait", or "Lower your voice."
- E. Seeking a drink refill.
- F. I wonder if I'm heading in the right direction.
- G. "You can go ahead of me."
- H. Cut. Quit. You're out of time.
- I. Please bring me the check.

Match Game 2

This second Match Game brings focus to the issues that are best described as areas of self-expression. Match the numbered non-verbal gesture with its corresponding implied gesture.

Non-Verbal Gestures

8. Reaching for your wallet.
9. Turning the head, looking out the window.
10. Subtle raising of eyebrows, thumb up, and slight smile.
11. A deep, audible sigh.
12. A clenched fist.
13. Sitting back, legs crossed, hands behind the head.
14. Waving a raised hand with your palm facing across the street.
15. A hand to the back of the ear.
16. Shoulder shrug.
17. Arms folded across chest.
18. Standing and waiting with purposeful posture and location.

Implied Message

- H. Greeting a friend at a distance.
- I. Controlled frustration, or "I'm angry."
- J. "I can't quite hear you."
- K. "I would like to help with the check."
- L. "I don't care to hear what you have to say."
- M. "I am just waiting for a friend."
- N. "You're so wrong!"
- O. Daydreaming, or "having your mind elsewhere."
- P. "Right on target!"
- Q. Cavalier attitude.
- R. "I don't know; got me!"

Match Game 3

The focus of our third Match Game is facial inflection which represent a degree of subtlety and are subject to interpretation. Match the non-verbal gesture to the implied message that might best fit the situation at hand.

Non-Verbal Gestures

19. A focused look with a blank face.
20. A blank stare.
21. Yawning and tension in face and jaw.
22. Rolling of the eyes.
23. Attentive look with knitted eyebrows.
24. Wrinkling of the nose.
25. Smile and nod.

Implied Message

- S. "I don't like what you're serving."
- T. Approval, or "I agree."
- U. "I don't understand," or "I'm confused."
- V. False attentiveness.
- W. "It's been a long day."
- X. "I'm disgusted, you're annoying me."
- Y. "I find this conversation rather boring."