

Pondering Point

When we think about listening, we tend to think about using our ears. Fully understanding what people are saying also involves using our eyes, as body language can reveal clues to a person's emotional or mental state. Remember the old adage "**Actions speak louder than words**"? Think of communication as a choreographed dance; it is in the movements of both people. Interpreting body language can actually further and/or hinder your ability to completely understand the other person. It also varies greatly with people and especially with international cultures, so the way we perceive things may not be thought of the same way by the person we are communicating with.

When we employ every means necessary to actively listen, we are sending a message that we respect the other person and what they are trying to communicate. Displaying a true interest in their message is both flattering and likely to result in them returning the favor. Listening and fully understanding what the other person is saying can build and strengthen relationships and forward progress. **And progress is certainly something to celebrate!**

Listening is not just about WORDS.

What does your body say?



Imagine... actively engaging in a conversation without saying a word.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

At times, we may believe a person's body language over their actual words.

Try This → Quiet Conversations

Partner up with someone and attempt to engage in a conversation with them – without using any words (written or spoken). *Remember a conversation goes both ways, so be sure to allow both people to "speak."

After the exercise, discuss the results of the conversation out loud with your partner.

- *Were you able to understand what the other person was trying to tell you?*
- *Did you stick to one topic, or were you able to progress from one topic into another?*
- *Did you pay attention to your body during the conversation?*
- *How difficult was it?*
- *Were their moments of confusion or mixed messages?*

There is no greater gift to give to someone than your interest.

- Anonymous

Self Reflection Activity

"96 out of 100 people can be judged on the basis of their body language."

- Deepak Chandrasekaran

Though we know it's not polite to stop and stare, we can learn a lot from watching others.

Try This → People Watch

In a crowded spot (so you don't draw attention to yourself or cause discomfort) like a food court or airport, eavesdrop on a conversation between two people. *It is better if you cannot hear what is being said.

- *Can you ascertain the topic of discussion based on the speaker's body language?*
- *How does it look like the listener is responding to the message?*
- *Does it appear to be an aggressive conversation?*
- *Does the body language suggest any physical attraction?*
- *What other messages does their body language send about the conversation?*

Think about what subtle message your body might be telling others that your words are not.