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KEYNOTE

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Author and Former FBI Agent

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Nonverbal Communication

Presented by Joe Navarro, M.A.

Nonverbal Communications

Nonverbal behaviors comprise approximately 60–80% of all interpersonal communication. It can reveal a person's true thoughts, feelings, concerns, as well as intentions. And because people are not always aware they are communicating nonverbally, body language is often more honest than the spoken word.

Joe Navarro will explore the applied use of nonverbal communication in business to better understand, manage, or negotiate with others. Drawing on his decades of experience studying human behavior, Joe will highlight those key behaviors executives need to know, to decode the world around them.

This presentation is immediately practical, detailed and full of valuable pointers on how to decode the nonverbals that matter most; how to communicate more effectively and confidently, as well as persuasively.

Influence

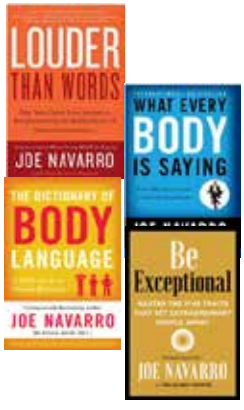
The second part of the presentation will focus on "influence" – what it is and how to achieve it. Everything from your "curbside appeal" to lasting impressions that inspire and attract will be examined. He will discuss how we use: time, colors, space, touch, distance, simplicity, manners, words and gestures to better connect with others and how we can better communicate empathy, trust, and care. This part of the presentation highlights what truly influences and motivates others. This is the perfect presentation for those interested in harnessing the power of influence through everything that is not verbal.

Whether you manage a large team or interact primarily one-on-one, there is a place for nonverbal communications in your skill set. If decoding what others are thinking appeals to you or you are involved in negotiations or sales, or you merely want to manage perceptions, Joe Navarro's presentation on *The Power of Nonverbal Communications* will provide you with the immediate tools and skills essential for today's business environment.

For 25 years, Joe Navarro served as an FBI agent specializing in behavioral assessment. Since retiring, he has authored 13 books dealing with human behavior and body language.

He lectures yearly at the Harvard Business School and has written for *Psychology Today, The Washington Post, Condé Nast, POLITICO,* as well as the *Wall Street Journal*.

His book, *Louder Than Words*, was lauded by *The Wall Street Journal* as "One of the six best business books to read for your career." Thirteen years on, *What Every BODY is Saying*, remains the #1 selling body-language book in the world.

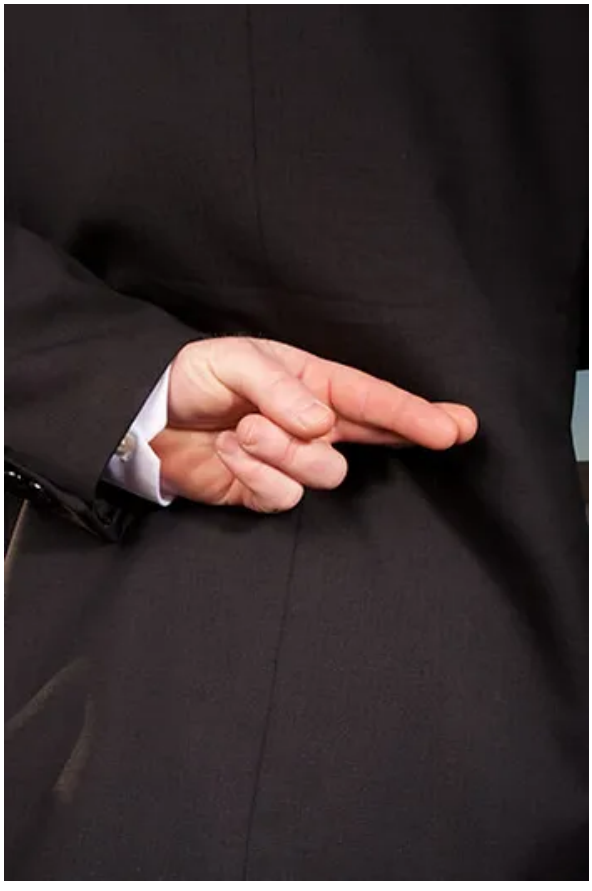


Joe Navarro Oct 19, 2018 11 min read

Some things you just can't hide - It's not always about detecting deception!

Unveiling The Truth

At the height of the Cold War, an ex-Army soldier came under investigation for espionage. During lengthy interviews by FBI agents, he willingly implicated himself but refused to name others involved. For days, investigators went round and round with him, and yet the soldier would not reveal his still-active accomplices.



At the next meeting, the soldier was presented with thirty-two 3 x 5 cards, each containing the name of a fellow soldier who had access to the compromised secrets, but were not thus far implicated. Each card was momentarily shown to the soldier for any comments he was willing to make regarding these individuals. As the soldier viewed each card and remarked, the investigating agent was able to observe the orbits of the eyes, as well as pupil changes at close proximity. At the conclusion, the FBI agent thanked the soldier and left. Two days later, the agent returned to the interview carrying the military records of two individuals.

When confronted with the files, the surprised soldier finally admitted their involvement with him in the espionage conspiracy.

What the soldier did not realize, as I noted in *Three Minutes To Doomsday,* was that when he had seen the names of his two accomplices on the flash cards, his eyebrows had arched slightly in recognition, and then his pupils constricted with some slight squinting, an indication of concern. By relying on the known tells of discomfort (in this case: pupil constriction, squinting), the FBI agent was able to positively identify the two conspirators who later confessed to both Army and FBI investigators of their complicity (Navarro 2008, 173).

Nonverbals and Deception – The Truth

By now most people know that body language can be helpful in detecting deception. But what most people, including law enforcement officers don't realize is that most of us are not very good at it. In fact, all the research points to the fact that most of us, including your author here, is no better than chance at detecting deception. Even the truly gifted barely rise to the sixty percentile in accuracy. So what are we to do?

I think it comes as a surprise to many people that when I was in the FBI I did not solely focus on deception (I assumed most people would lie to me), but rather, I concentrated on developing lead information and unveiling that which was being obfuscated.

I find, even today, too much time is wasted on trying to determine deception when other information which is being withheld may be of greater value. Parents, even business people doing "due diligence" can get sidelined trying to determine veracity when through nonverbal communications you can determine more accurately what is problematic, at issue, or is being concealed, minimized, or altered.

Putting Our Brains To Work

To use nonverbals for this task, requires an understanding of the workings of the brain and, in particular, the brain region known as the limbic system.

Over millions of years, our brains evolved a very elegant system for dealing with threats, danger, and emotions, called the limbic system, about which Gavin DeBecker, Daniel Goleman, and Joseph LeDoux have written extensively (see bibliography below). The limbic system serves as our early warning mechanism, in part to assure our survival as well as to deal with our sentiments. The limbic response to threats or to other things that trouble us consists of the freeze, flight, or fight mechanism often erroneously over-simplified as the fight or flight response. Additionally, some type of pacifying behavior typically follows a limbic response, which is why children cry and want to be held when they are suddenly frightened (Navarro 2007, 141-163).

The limbic region of the brain keeps us alive by reacting very effectively to threats or emotional events and then by channeling what we feel and sense into outward nonverbal messages (Panksepp, 1998, 33). For example, a baby who doesn't like a certain food will have a limbic reaction that manifests to the mother as distancing from the food, grimacing, and tightening or pursing of the lips. Similarly, a person who is confronted by a snarling dog will have limbic reactions such as holding still and not moving, running if chased, and then fighting the dog if required. In each case (freeze, flight, fight), the confronted individuals

reveal what they are sensing nonverbally through displays of inactivity, concern, fear, anger, despair, or resolve (Navarro 2008).

For millions of years before humans communicated through spoken language, a threat to one individual (such as rotten food, a snake, or a tiger) was a threat to all, and so our bodies evolved outward displays of emotions, discomfort, or danger to communicate what we perceive in conjunction with our brain's limbic responses (Navarro 2007, 141-163).

Limbic responses, which are in essence emotional responses, are in fact universal (Ekman 2003, 21). When we see furrowing of the brow, the wide eyes of fear or recognition, clenching of jaws, the tightening of face and neck muscles, lip compression, a hard swallow, or a heaving chest, we can have confidence that the person is displaying the nonverbals of distress and discomfort.

Limbic responses apply across a broad spectrum of encounters, from bad food, to someone confronting us in an alley, to arguments with our loved ones, even to specific words (Vrij, 2003, 22-23). In the criminal arena, for example, for the innocent and honest, certain words and objects do not have the same weight as they do for someone who is complicit or knowledgeable with regard to a crime (Navarro 2003). An investigator asking an innocent person if he owns a Smith & Wesson revolver will not have the same impact as asking the identical question of a person who has used a Smith & Wesson revolver to kill someone. When the brain hears the question, the nonverbals of these two individuals (the innocent and the guilty) will be different, even without answering the question. For the guilty these words have a different weight; they in fact represent "a threat" that to the innocent means nothing. This would be like telling someone at home watching TV that an airline flight somewhere has been canceled; it is of no consequence to the individual, but not so to the person awaiting the arrival of a loved one.

As an interviewee hears questions, verbal cues will arouse the limbic system and the signs of distress will begin to manifest immediately. These signs principally include avoidance by changing the subject, remaining very still, showing little hand or arm movement, or foot withdrawal, distancing or leaning away, closing of the eyes, or pointing the feet towards an escape route. Further discomfort may be shown by a quick rubbing of the forehead as the question is pondered, massaging of the front of the neck with the fingers, the disappearance of lips and tightening of jaw muscles, rubbing of hands with interlaced fingers, or the squinting of the eyes (Navarro 2010, 19-78).

As the distress passes, the person will then pacify in some way (think of a child sucking his thumb after he falls and cries) by exhaling through puffed cheeks, or doing more hand to body touching, such as neck touching, neck massaging, temple rubbing, rubbing hands together, lip licking, lip biting, brushing pants with the palm of the hands, etc. These behaviors are universal and highly reliable. Humans perform these pacifying behaviors multiple times per hour as they deal with situational stressors. A difficult situation, near accident, or emotional confrontation will generate a need to pacify (Panksepp, 1998, 26, 252, 272). A near slip on the stairwell a few minutes ago as I was preparing to write this blog, caused me to exhale profoundly and rub my face. Pacifiers are ubiquitous, they are the brain's way of dealing with stress in real time.

As I noted in, "*Louder Than Words*," once you are attuned (through study or training) to how the limbic system functions you can put limbic reactions to work for you at home and at work. By using nonverbal cues, you can have a window into the mind of the person you are talking to or interviewing, to determine what is being concealed, what is problematic, what is at issue - perhaps even detect (no promises here) deception.This technique can be effectively used to evince information that only the guilty know or to detect what is being concealed. By discussing a variety of subjects in a non-accusatory format (this is key), different topics can be brought up over time to assess for displays of discomfort. The interviewee does not even have to answer the questions; his or her nonverbals will reflect how he or she feels about the questions or subjects being broached. It is essential that delays be built into the tempo of the questions to allow for the person's brain to fully process the question at hand and its implications (this is the stress cue), and for the reactions to leak out nonverbally.

Interviewees, during due process or hiring inquiries, must not be "machine gunned" with significant questions, nor be made to feel uncomfortable by extrinsic factors such as the location of the interview, the number of people present, or the closeness of the interviewer, as these will affect observations by creating stress.

Practical Usage

The following case (also from "*What Every Body is Saying*,") illustrates how this technique was used to identify the whereabouts of a fugitive. Investigators went to the house of the mother of the fugitive and conducted an interview with her within the residence. During the interview, the mother said she had not seen her son in over nine months. When asked if she thought he might be hiding with his father in another state or might be with other family members, the mother answered, "No." When asked if there was a "possibility" that her son "might have sneaked into her house and was hiding there," she also answered, "No."

However, when the word "house" was mentioned, the investigators noted she covered the dimple on her neck just above the breastbone (supra-sternal notch) with her right hand.

Later in the conversation, she was asked twice more about the possibility that her son might be in the house, and as before, she said, "No," but again covered her neck dimple as she spoke. Having confirmed this behavior several times, the officers asked for permission to look around the residence, to which the mother hesitatingly agreed. Her son, wanted for unlawful flight to avoid prosecution, was found hiding in a closet. The nonverbal behavior observed (the covering of the supra-sternal notch), a universal sign of discomfort, insecurity, or concern (most often performed by women), had revealed his immediate presence and location.

Nonverbal clues like this were similarly used in solving a rape that occurred nearly thirty years ago in Parker, Arizona. Only the investigator knew the facts of the case, as related by the victim who was a 42-year-old migrant worker and mother of three. Based on the victim's accurate description, a suspect was soon apprehended, but during questioning, the suspect refused to admit involvement and was adamant that the victim was wrong in her identification. Taking a piece of information that the victim had provided to the interviewer that the rapist had said and that was unknown to the public, the officer asked the subject, "What were you thinking when you asked the victim about her children," as she was raped?" At that moment, the subject's countenance changed, his face ashened, and his shoulders rose to meet his ears (a sign of

insecurity and distress); a clear indication he was ashamed of what he knew. He immediately broke down, began sobbing, and admitted the rape. His limbic system caused him to react emotionally to the very words he had previously uttered to the victim.

In many ways, this technique mirrors what a polygraph attempts to do; that is, not detect deception, but rather, to detect physiological changes and in our case, nonverbal reactions to a specific question or cue. In the rape case above, the investigator surmised that the suspect had been concerned about the victim's children and recognized that mentioning this detail would evince a limbic response as a result of the rapist's guilty knowledge.

In another case, a murder had taken place using an ice pick. Only the investigator and the medical examiner knew this detail. One individual came into focus during the investigation as the most likely suspect, but he neither seemed nervous nor did he seem to mind questioning by the investigators. This subject answered all questions put to him, and as the investigator commented, did not show any "traditional signs of deception" during the interrogation. In the opinion of the investigator, the subject simply seemed too "cool" and calm, so a different interviewing tactic was employed.

Rather than ask the subject questions that had previously been covered, such as if he had committed the crime or his whereabouts at the time in question, the investigator asked the following series of questions with a time delay in between: "If you had killed him would you have used a gun?," "If you had killed him would you have used a knife?," "If you had killed him would you have used an ice pick?," and "If you had killed him would you have used a machete?".

To all of these questions, the subject answered, "No," however, the nonverbal responses to each question were clearly not all the same. When the ice pick was mentioned, the subject lowered his eyelids and left them low for several seconds before rubbing them with his fingers and answering, "No." This eye-blocking behavior was enough to convince the investigator that not only did he have the right individual; he also realized the topic to pursue. In the end, after continued questioning about the ice pick, the subject began to reveal what happened the night of the murder. He was betrayed by his own eyes because of his guilty knowledge.

Everyday Encounters

This technique can be useful in determining the truth of the matter, not necessarily whether or not there is deception. For example, a mother of teenagers I had trained years ago told me how she had asked her kids before going out, "will there be alcohol at this party?" Both of her boys looked at each other but in answering one of the boys said, "no, definitely not." But in doing so he raised his right shoulder, a sign of lack of confidence. After a few more questions, the other brother chimed in and stated the truth, there would be plenty of alcohol at the party; just as the mother feared.

Similarly, a friend who sought to purchase a building in Manhattan decided to do some "due diligence" before entering into negotiations with the seller and the broker. By asking very precise questions and just waiting to see the man's reactions he soon realized that the bargain was not what it seemed.

When the seller was asked general questions there were glowing responses about the building. However, when my friend asked about the "last time the duct work had been cleaned" the man ventilated his collar and coughed before he answered (pacifiers). Later he ran his hands through his hair multiple times to the question, "have there been any liens on this property?" My friend hired an investigator, not just a real estate agent, and found there were all sorts of issues with this property. His careful use of nonverbals detected issues which in the end made him wisely terminate further interest in the building. To this date, he still does not know the full truth about the building, he just knows that a lot was being concealed and the investigator confirmed there was enough there to avoid proceeding any further.

Conclusion

Lying, as I have often said, "is a tool of social survival;" everyone does it and in the end we may never know the full truth. Having said that, there are things we can look for to determine if there are issues or concerns or to evince if something is being hidden or masked. Toward this end, body language can be, as I have shown, of great assistance. Whether detecting espionage activities, keeping our children out of danger, or keeping us away from bad investments, this knowledge and skill is useful and powerful.

By focusing on the physical manifestations of discomfort and stress as well as the pacifying behaviors that accompany stress, you can bring clarity and transparency to everyday concerns and issues where the truth may be at play.

#BodyLanguage #JoeNavarro

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Joe Navarro May 3, 2019 8 min read

The End of Detecting Deception

Since biblical times, humans have sought to detect deception if not for personal reasons, certainly for business. Knowing if someone was lying mattered six thousand years ago every bit as much as it matters today. And for thousands of years, all sorts of efforts were invented to either detect deception or to entrap liars. Everything from closely gazing into the eyes for shiftiness, to hot blades drawn across the tongue (believing that the liar would have a dry mouth), to consulting oracles (who usually gave ambiguous answers), to the pulling of the tail of a camel in a darkened tent (the tails were dusted with charcoal, and thus it was expected liars would not touch the tail and their hands would come out clean), to the more modern use of the polygraph exam; mankind has devoted much effort to discovering lies.

Since 1974, I have been a student of the various techniques being taught to detect deception. After forty-four years of reading the scientific literature, following the work of David Givens, Desmond Morris, Mark Frank, David Matsumoto, Judee Burgoon, Aldert Vrij, Bella De Paulo, Paul Ekman, and others, all people I respect for their research and work, I can only come to one conclusion: there is no single behavior indicative of deception.

Dr. Mark Frank, professor and Department Chair at the University of Buffalo, who is so generous with his knowledge said it best in a conversation with me years ago, “Joe, there is no Pinocchio effect.” And there isn’t and there has never been. There is no single behavior indicative of deception, not one. Even to those who say, "well we look for clusters of behaviors," they would also be wrong. There are no clusters of behaviors indicative of deception. Not really, not if we are honest.

In 2016, I wrote an article for readers of *Psychology Today*, looking at over two hundred DNA exonerations. People on death row exonerated after definitive DNA tests confirmed they were not the culprits; it was not their saliva, blood, sweat, or semen found at the crime scene. What was startling when I burrowed deep into all these cases, in each and every instance, the law enforcement officers were sure the suspect was lying, but not one officer could detect the truth. Not one officer believed the suspect when they claimed they did not do it. In other words, and I repeat, they could not detect the truth, but they were certain they could detect deception. This wasn’t just embarrassing—lives were at stake—it was shameful. Shameful that anyone should be falsely accused, but also shameful that not one officer in those 261 cases could differentiate the truthful from the deceptive. Why? Because for decades into the present, law enforcement officers have been taught that they can detect deception through nonverbals, when in fact, we humans are no better than a coin toss at detecting deception—a mere fifty/fifty chance. And that is one way you wind up with the innocent on death row.

But it is not just law enforcement, after the popular TV show *Lie to Me* came out (premiered on the Fox network), all of a sudden there were hundreds of aficionados teaching others how to detect deception; ignoring or twisting what science actually supported and unfortunately further mucking-up the field with simplistic assertions. Too often a veneer of science was wrapped around one or two examples for general public consumption giving the misleading assumption that detecting deception is not just easy, but that it is assured. That is fallacious and wrong.

If detecting deception were just a parlor game, it would not be an issue, but claiming to detect deception and teaching as much has real life consequences. Those men on death row I spoke of earlier, they were going to executed, because of the false beliefs of law enforcement officers that they could detect deception. People have been fired from their jobs because when questioned they showed signs of nervousness or stress. Relationships have been strained or ruined for similar false assumptions. The public and law enforcement has been fed a lot of nonsense about detecting deception and it’s time to stop. I don’t say this lightly. I come at this from my researching and authoring more than a dozen books on human behavior plus my twenty-five years as an FBI Special Agent — thirteen of which I spent in the Bureau’s elite Behavioral Analysis Program.

For many years, post-trial, I would ask jurors in federal cases, what made them think a particular witness was lying? They would reply that they knew the witness was lying because the witness touched their nose, looked away or up to the right, their skin flushed, touched their lips before answering, rubbed their thumbs together, licked their lips, scratched their ears, or shifted their jaw. Incredible, right? Imagine if that were your life on the line?

If you have been following my writings here in *Psychology Today* for the last nine years, you know that these behaviors described by jurors above are behaviors that both the honest and the dishonest utilize to pacify themselves when there is stress, when they are anxious, or when confronted with something they are not accustomed to—like a trial for instance or being in front of a group or being questioned in public. What the jurors were seeing were all signs of psychological discomfort, but unfortunately, at some point in their lives someone told them, they saw on television, or they read that these pacifying behaviors (for a complete list of pacifying behaviors see *The Dictionary of Body Language*, Harper Collins 2018) were indicative of deception. Both the public and law enforcement have been seriously misled.

I think it is time to be honest. I think it is time for those who do research and those who have experience conducting forensic interviews and who teach nonverbal communications to be forthright about this topic and speak the truth. And the truth is that we humans are no better than chance at detecting deception. We have known this since Paul Ekman's best-seller, "*Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage*" came out in 1985.

That we need to stop associating behaviors indicative of psychological discomfort with deception and acknowledge them purely for what they are: signs of stress, anxiety, apprehension, despair, suspicion, tension, concern, nervousness, etc., but not deception.

After conducting more than thirteen-thousand interviews in my law enforcement career, I can attest that both the innocent and guilty will, at various times, display all those behaviors researchers, law enforcement, and the public associates with deception depending on circumstances. Why? Because humans are sensitive to their environment, to the presence of others, to questioning by authorities, to environmental circumstances, to nuance in voice, body language, ethnicity, educational factors, social intelligence, among many other factors.

Everything that upsets a daily routine, from being called in by a manager about the missing money from the break room, to being confronted on the street by two police officers their weapons on display, is enough to cause most people to display psychological discomfort. And if the questioning is in any way intimidating, or if the person is shamed in public, you can anticipate pacifying behavior and displays of psychological discomfort from the most innocent. Remember: abnormal displays during abnormal circumstances are normal.

In scores of presentations from Europe to Asia, I have demonstrated that I can take the most honest person and within seconds make them do all those behaviors so often falsely associated with deception, just by sitting closer to them, intensifying my look, blinking less while staring at them, changing the tone of voice, asking personal questions, or merely asking simple questions with ardent suspicion. Confronted with any number of techniques too often found in the law enforcement interview literature, I can turn anyone into a self-pacifying, lip licking, ear and neck flushing, high blink rate mess, if I want to. And that is the problem. What we are witnessing is psychological discomfort and that is all and that is all we should say whether it is induced intentionally, by accident, or through circumstances. To claim that we are seeing indicators of deception when we see these behaviors is frankly dishonest and if the definition of ethics is "that which is befitting another human being" then we are also being unethical.

It is time to stop teaching and preaching that we can detect deception through nonverbals and teach what we can use nonverbals for. What is that? That we humans transmit through our body language, what we think, feel, desire, and fear; and that that we communicate this effectively in real time. That when we are stressed, bothered, disappointed, disturbed, anxious, worried, concerned, uncertain, exasperated, or mad, our bodies reveal that information nonverbally by any number of expressions throughout the body, including through the use of pacifiers or what Paul Ekman calls “adaptive behaviors.” In essence we, all of us, can be “issue detectors” as I often say in my lectures, but that is all. That’s all we can say, that something is wrong or not right—that there is an issue—but no more.

You may be asking, now what? We move forward, and we teach nonverbals but for what it really is: the study of everything that communicates but is not a word. That body language reflects our physiology, our mental state, our thoughts and emotions, which are fluid and reflexive, subject to both internal as well as external factors. But we also need to teach that we who ask questions can also adversely influence and cause stress on those we are questioning if we are not careful. Perhaps here is where schools should focus, how to ask questions without inducing additional stressors that mask honesty.

Where does that leave law enforcement or any other forensic setting? Where we should always have been—asking more and more questions as neutral collectors of facts. We ask questions and when we see a particular behavior as a result of that question, we come back to that topic and we ask more questions, or we try to determine why that question would cause the person to react that way. We use it to identify leads, or things that are troubling to the person being questioned, but not to accuse of deception.

In September of 1979, a young investigator asked the mother of a fugitive if she had seen her son recently. She answered “no.” When the investigator asked her if it was possible he was sneaking in to her house while she was at work, she covered her neck with her hand as she answered, “I don’t think so.” She was not asked if she was lying or being truthful, it didn’t matter. The fact that the words “son” and “house” made her cover her neck, was enough information to indicate psychological discomfort. The investigator asked other questions and circled back to that question again, the possibility that her son might be in the house and each time, she unwittingly covered her neck. Again, there was never an accusation that she might be lying, but because the investigator saw the same behavior (covering of the neck and in particular the supra sternal notch or neck dimple—something we tend to do when we are very worried or feel vulnerable) he asked if he could do a quick search of the premises. With her signed consent, the investigator found her son, the fugitive, hiding in the closet. That is how we use this information, to alert us to what bothers others so that we can explore why.

I’ve been at this for more than four decades, I’ve learned a lot about the study of nonverbal communications—both the positive and where it fails us. It is time for all of us who teach to pass on the knowledge that yes there are behaviors that get our attention that that are alerting, that we should pay attention to, but those should serve as a guide to what may be hidden or under suspicion, but nothing more. Psychological distress or discomfort in all its manifestations was never and is not indicative of deception.

#BodyLanguage #JoeNavarro

Joe Navarro Sep 3, 2019 6 min read

Body Language vs. Micro-Expressions: Debunking the myths of "micro-expressions"

Updated: Aug 25, 2023

Thoughtful questions often prompt thoughtful analysis and recently a series of questions from a reader regarding "micro-expressions" had such an effect on me. His questions made me stop and think about how the public perceives "micro expressions" and their significance in our overall understanding of body language, and more importantly, their relevance in detecting deception.

By now most people have heard of "*micro-expressions*" as a result of the show *Lie to Me,* or because the term has been popularized by the media. In fact, I routinely run into people who say they have taken courses on "micro-expressions" and have been "certified" or who want to become experts on "micro-expressions." (It reminds me of when students first wanted to be "criminal profilers" and then they wanted to be "CSI agents," just like on TV, now I guess it is "micro-expression experts") That's fine I say, but what about the rest of the body? And that is when I hear silence. After all, the rest of the body is transmitting information about thoughts, desires, fears, emotions, and intentions with far more regularity. If someone ventilates their shirt or hides their thumbs while being asked questions, you should know what that means beyond it's hot and they don't know what to do with their hands (it means: issues, discomfort, insecurities) because there may be no "micro-expressions" to help you at all.

In order to properly anchor us, let's start with what the term "micro-expressions" means or has come to mean. In 1966 two researchers by the name of Haggard and Isaacs discovered, while looking at films of couples in therapy, what they described as "micromomentary expressions." They noted behaviors that would flash by so quickly they were difficult to see except by slowing the film down. A few years later, building on this earlier work and observing these same behaviors, Paul Ekman coined the term "micro expressions" while he was studying deception. Ekman later incorporated this into his book, "*Telling Lies*," which you really should read if you care about nonverbals.

What Haggard and Isaacs, as well as others, found was that our faces often reveal hidden sentiments that are being intentionally concealed. This was obviously useful in detecting issues during couples' therapy. Unfortunately, over time the term "micro expressions" grew to include too many things; failing for instance to differentiate between the truly miniscule, the small, and the larger facial distortions. There was also a failure to differentiate between the behaviors that were fast and those which were super-fast, but which had little to do with being "micro" or small. Lastly there was a failure to differentiate behaviors that are asymmetrical or that oddly freeze in place such as when we hold a tense smile at a snarling dog.

Consequently, because so many things have been lumped under the appellation "micro-expression" it is often difficult to determine what someone means, especially when they substitute "micro-expressions" for plain old body language or nonverbals. So let's see if we can add some clarity here to help you better understand behaviors of the face, which are often lumped under the term "micro-expressions" or worse they are ignored completely.

First we should recognize, as David Matsumoto has pointed out, that there are behaviors, gestures, or expressions of the face that do occur without conscious prompting which leak or reveal our true feelings or sentiments. Some of these behaviors or expressions flash before us very quickly (1/15, 1/25 of a second) and others loiter there seemingly too long. Also there are behaviors that are difficult to

deception (Matsumoto, et. al. 2011, 1-4; Navarro 2008). There are indicators of stress, psychological discomfort, anxiety, dislike, issues, or tension, but not deception - I'm sorry to say. In fact, rather than focus on deception, in my experience, it is far more useful to become an "*Issue Detector*" because that is really what we are observing. When we see the physical displays of psychological discomfort, we are really seeing our bodies communicating there are "issues"; in other words something is bothering us, the questions is what?

Examining the Face:
One way to understand facial gestures or behaviors is to divide them up by what they do, not whether they are mini, micro, or macro which does not take into account speed or in some cases lengthy, asymmetrical, or rigid presentations. The following is not a comprehensive list but if you focus on these five areas you will find it easier, in my experience, to identify how others truly feel or what they think:

Facial Gestures of Nervousness and Tension:

- Furrowed forehead
- Squinting eyes
- Lip compression
- Lips that are sucked into the mouth
- Quivering lips
- Quivering chin
- Corners of mouth twitching or pulling oddly toward the ear very quickly

Facial Gestures of Dislike or Disagreement:

- Pursed lips usually mean I don't like or I disagree (seen in babies as young as four weeks)
- Nose crinkle (nose moves very quickly up as a shortened sign of disgust)
- Upper half of lip on one side rises as does nose
- Rolling of the eyes
- Eyelid flutter (usually seen when someone says something we strongly disagree with)
- Eyelids close fail to reopen for what seems a long time
- Squinting of the eyes (think of Clint Eastward in a shootout)

Facial Gestures to Relieve Stress:
There are any number of facial ticks which may suddenly develop or which become permanent to deal with tension. Examples are:

- Uncontrollable blinking
- Cheek twitching
- Uncontrollable twitching of the eye
- Jaw thrusts forward
- Jaw displacement to the sides
- Tongue biting
- Pulling of facial hair
- Repetitive touching of the nose or eyelid with a finger

These behaviors are not only repetitive, they may increase in severity under stress and at times become very fast. Incidentally, as I mentioned in ***Clues to Deceit***, repetitive behaviors are soothing behaviors, which is why we develop nervous ticks in the first place. The brain benefits from the repetitive muscular tick as a form of pacification; however, it can become pathological.

Asymmetrical Facial Gestures:
Gestures that involve only one half of the face fall into this category:

- Fake smiles
- Smile involving only half the face
- Person smiles but the eyes squint or show tension

Contempt, incidentally, is not a sign of deception, it is seen in both the innocent as well as the liar. Contempt is often seen among the innocent when interviewed by those they deem to be of lower social status or whom they perceive as incompetent. You also see looks of contempt on the part of an occupied population toward their oppressors.

Caution

While these gestures or behaviors are useful in discerning true thoughts and feelings, they are in no way indicative of deception. They may indicate psychological or physical discomfort, dislike, issues, or nervousness, but that is it. No inference of deception can be drawn from these for there is no single behavior indicative of deception. None.

Recommendation

After studying nonverbals for over 40 years, I think it is wiser to understand what all of the body communicates, not just the face, or just "micro-expressions." Especially knowing that the feet are more accurate than the face in revealing sentiments and intentions and that all of our body is constantly transmitting vital information (Navarro 2008). In fact, as I note in *Clues to Deceit* there are over 215 behaviors associated with psychological discomfort and most of those are not in the face.

If you truly want to learn about body language and nonverbal communications and go beyond the tripe usually served on television, give yourself a treat and read Desmond Morris' trilogy on nonverbals (*Manwatching, Bodywatching, Peoplewatching*). Morris looks at humans with the critical eye of a scientist discovering a new species and explains why we do the things we do. He is an authority without equal when it comes to nonverbal communications and as a zoologist and anthropologist, will open your eyes as no other author or expert can, with perhaps the exception of Charles Darwin, who started it all one day while watching orangutans in the London zoo.

#JoeNavarro #NonverbalCommunications #BodyLanguage

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Joe Navarro Oct 9, 2020 3 min read

"Cool" Body Language: What cooling behaviors say about our emotions

About forty years ago when I first got into law enforcement, I began to observe that suspects often ventilated themselves during interviews while the innocent did not. This served me well, not in detecting deception, but rather, in seeing which questions caused the suspects discomfort such as when I asked, "Where were you last night?" I used it to gauge psychological comfort and discomfort - invaluable in determining the thoughts and feelings of others.

At this point you may be saying, "*Ventilators*, don't we do that when we are hot?" Yes and then there was Rodney Dangerfield when he was getting "no respect." All true, but principally we do it when something is bothering us or there are issues. What is great about ventilating behaviors is that they occur in real time, there is no delay. A young man is worried that he will miss his flight and he will repeatedly lift up his baseball cap and run his fingers through his hair. Once he is on board, as happened the other day, the behavior stops.

So let's set temperature aside. What would cause us to self ventilate? The list is long: insecurity, doubt, fear, apprehension, a sense of weakness, vulnerability, or anxiety - all the things cause psychological discomfort. So it doesn't matter if we are taking a school test or being asked questions during an interview for a job, ventilators may show up, especially if we feel psychologically distressed.

So here are some to look for and whenever you see them ask yourself, "Is it the room temperature or is there some issue here?":

1 - Look for individuals to run their fingers through their hair multiple times in quick succession. Women incidentally are less like to do so.

repeated by both hands lifting up the shirt simultaneously just above the pectorals. The lifting of the shirt allows air to flow beneath the fabric cooling the skin.

5 - Pulling at the shirt collar is also often missed when it is done slowly and without much fanfare unlike our comedian friend Rodney Dangerfield who would tug at his neck collar dramatically.

6- I have seen individuals take their shirttail out, undo their pants, and put the shirt back in again, also in an effort to ventilate.

7- It may not look like ventilating, but look for men to lift up or tug on the shoulder pad of their jacket. This pulling action seeks to let in air - which may or may not work because of the amount of clothes.

8- One you may never have thought about, and that is that when we yawn, that sudden burst of air through our very vascular mouth, will also serve to ventilate us (cools our blood like a radiator) as well as pacifies us. Incidentally when you see a baby yawning repeatedly check to see if they are flushed or their face is hot, they may just be communicating it's hot - and yes they could be communicating their tired - either way check on them.

So there you are a few behaviors dealing with ventilation you never thought about and yet we have all done them to relieve us from the heat, but more importantly to relieve stress.

#JoeNavarro #Nonverbals #BodyLanguage

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Joe Navarro Feb 5, 2021 7 min read

Some Thoughts on the Eyes

From the time we are born we have a fascination with the eyes. They are our primary go-to facial feature, even in infancy, for information about others. From determining if others are paying attention to us, or whether they are happy to see us, the eyes have it hands down. In fact, our emotional state is often writ large in our eyes. We can unequivocally say that pain, suffering, exuberance, incredulity, doubt, disappointment, yearning, love, kindness, hatred, and indifference, as well as fear, can all be observed in the eyes even before a word is spoken

So much has been written about the eyes, perhaps because no other organ of the body communicates as much. While the eyes may be, as Shakespeare said, “windows to the soul,” and worthy of our attention, as with everything else about body language one has to be careful what we interpret through those windows.

Connected to our visual cortex through the optic nerve and the optic chiasm, the eyes receive nonverbal communication at the speed of light, unlike the much slower auditory channels. It is an exquisite organ — its main purpose is to collect information. That ability has given us an evolutionary/survival advantage wherein we can not only assess for threats as far away as the horizon, but also decode the behavior, intentions, and body language of those close to us.

The eyes see both what is in focus in front of us, but also what's coming from the sides, peripherally. That peripheral information gets absorbed by the brain subconsciously, which explains why when the mind drifts off in thought while driving, we may still get home safely. Somehow the eyes take it all in and that

information, even out of focus, makes its way to the various areas of the brain so that we can survive and thrive.

As we communicate with others, our eyes may look down as we ponder a thought or a sentiment or we may look in the distance or at the sky. It is a mere reflection of our brain as it processes information; in the same way, we may bring our thumb and index finger to our chin in a pensive manner as we ponder or reflect. For those of us who observe nonverbals, it is useful only in knowing that the person is contemplating or reflecting on a thought or emotion. We must not assume that a person lies because he looks in one direction and then another as he answers a question — there is no scientific evidence to support that.

It is true that our pupils will constrict when we see things that need to come into higher focus or when we see something threatening in the distance; while our pupils will dilate to let in more light when we see something beautiful, attractive, or desired. Similarly, we open our eyes wide when surprised and tend to squint when we are focused or troubled by something.

The orbits of the eyes delight in seeing others we like through an eyebrow flash (a quick or dramatic arching upward of the eyebrows — a gravity-defying behavior) that communicates excitement and positive emotions. Babies love when we flash our eyes at them, and so do adults when we are greeted by friends or even as customers at a store. Incidentally, it is also a powerful tool to use when making virtual calls; it makes others feel special.

When we are around people we like, we are relaxed enough to be able to look away as we speak, there being no requirement to hold a gaze. Not so when we are being interviewed for a job, when eye contact is obligatory. And of course, there is no science to support that liars tend to look away. Liars actually engage in *greater* eye contact, not less, as they seek to be believed, according to famed researcher Aldert Vrij.

We touch and rub our eyelids many times during the day as we deal with particulates in the air or changes in humidity, but also when we are suddenly stressed. The man who is asked to help someone move heavy furniture will cover his eyes with his fingers, rubbing them as he answers, “Yes I will help you,” when no doubt this will be an inconvenience. This eye touching, a form of eye blocking behavior, authentically reveals how he feels, even though he agrees to assist. Eye blocking behaviors such as shielding the eyes, lowering the eyelids for a prolonged period, and delaying opening the eyes are so hard-wired in us that children who are born blind, when they hear something they don’t like, will also cover their eyes, not their ears, despite the fact that they have never seen.

Somehow these behaviors help us to deal with negative thoughts or stress and so they remain with us. After all, the mere touching of the eyeballs through the eyelids sends signals through the Vagus nerve, to the *Oculocardiac Reflex* of the brain, which helps to calm us by slowing down the heart. This may explain why any time the stock market has a bad week, we see photographs of traders with their fingers pushed deeply into the eyes—arguably in disbelief but also, no doubt, to find relief.

Over the years much has been written about eyelid flutter and increased blink rate. The two are not the same. In people who stutter or struggle to find words, or are flummoxed, their eyelids will quiver momentarily enough to get noticed in those moments. That is a natural reaction to an unnatural circumstance.

An increase in blink rate can be caused by environmental factors (such as dust or pollen), maladies of the eyes including infections, new contact lenses, or by stress. Whatever the cause, all we can say is there is an increase when we notice it. Once more, increased blink rate has nothing to do with deception, but rather reveals only stress or anxiety — sometimes caused intrinsically (by thoughts, fears, or apprehension), and other times extrinsically, by such things as suspicious or aggressive questioning, refusal to be believed, violations of space, unnecessary touching, aggressive staring, or the mere presence of individuals we may not like.

As an ethologist, I principally look at the eyes to tell me when someone is comfortable and relaxed. I also look at the eyes to tell me when someone is suddenly troubled by a subject or an event. Immediately I will see the orbits narrow — what I call the Clint Eastwood effect. (In those Italian Westerns, right before he was going to shoot, he always squinted.) Squinting, or the narrowing of the eye orbits, indicates, very accurately, discomfort, stress, anger, or issues. I have capitalized on this behavior in negotiations as opposing counsel reads each paragraph out loud; we could see which articles in the document were going to be problematic by the squinting of the eyes.

But perhaps there is one more important thing to be said about the eyes, and that is how we look upon others. In my latest book, *Be Exceptional: Master the Five Traits That Set Extraordinary People Apart*, I write of famed primatologist Jane Goodall and the difference she has made in how we look upon each other and the world. With those same eyes, we can do it gently and kindly, or with cold indifference:

Jane Goodall changed how we study animals by being humane, she did not look upon primates with clinical superiority, as many scientists before her had. She looked and gazed with wonderment and care, appreciation, concern, and an enlightened awareness of their unique traits. As a result, she saw with penetrating detail: the exquisite bond between a chimpanzee mother and child; the permissiveness they grant their offspring to play, fall, and express their personalities; the dalliances and naughtiness of the older apes as they seek to establish their relationships; their tool-making abilities that shocked scientists and that they pass on to their offspring as if in a classroom; their grieving and mourning for their loved ones; the jealousies and aggression that at times can be frightening, as well as their warmth and need for gentle hugs and kisses, which they serve up judiciously to maintain their social order.

No scientist had looked upon primates in this way. Goodall changed the study of animals and how we perceive primates in particular because of how she viewed our nearest relative. She had the same set of eyes as other scientists; it was just how she put them to use.

Perhaps most interesting of all, the apes themselves recognized her benign and empathetic interest and permitted her to get closer than anyone had before. Goodall's caring observation allowed her to gather even more information because she could observe from the intimate vantage point conferred by her trustworthy behavior and empathy for the animals she was observing. It was these experiences, I would argue, that helped Goodall shape how she views humanity, and that love and kindness we feel in her presence or through that screen, is due in part to how she uses her eyes to look upon the world.

While our eyes gather information, they also communicate something about ourselves, our curiosity, our wisdom, our travails, our empathy, our love, and our humanity. As far as I know, it is the only organ that we have that can do so.
In these times of restricted travel and COVID-induced mask wear, it is in the eyes once more that we look to for that humanity, that kindness, those gravity-defying behaviors that say they care. Those glorious eyes we often take for granted yet reveal so much to us and about us.

#JoeNavarro #BodyLanguage #Nonverbals

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Joe Navarro Apr 13, 2021 6 min read

Becoming a Great Observer - observation is key to survival yet few of us do it well

When I watched the National Geographic series, "*Brain Games*" I found it quite an eye opener. The show convincingly demonstrated that we humans are terrible observers because we are easily distracted and, for the most part, are unwilling to critically assess the world around us.

It hasn't always been this way. For tens of thousands of years our predecessors lived in very small groups and for them it was critical to carefully observe others and the world around them. Observation was crucial for survival and fortunately no one was there to say, "It's not polite to stare." If they had followed that admonition, we probably would have died out as a species.

For most of history, we humans have been very good observers because we had to be. We utilized all of our senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight to detect and to discern. The sudden vocalization of animals or

the scampering of birds alerted the knowing that someone was approaching. Even the sweat of a sojourner let our ancestors know who was in the area and what they had eaten. At a distance, by examining posture, gait, arm swing, clothing, and accoutrements (weapons, water vessels, etc.) our ancestors could discern friend from foe.

As generations evolved and eventually moved to cities, close proximity changed how we viewed and assessed each other. Because everyone was so close, we had less time to observe. Close quarters and circumstances dictated we interact first rather than later. This was the opposite of what we had done for thousands of years, which was to assess first at a distance, then interact. This close proximity also made us more sensitive to being observed, which is why we become uncomfortable when others stare at us.

So the question I often ask is, "Have we become observationally lazy?" Have we allowed ourselves to become careless when it comes to our own safety and that of our loved ones? This is not a pointless question. I ask it because like you, I see people distracted (applying makeup, making phone calls, texting) while driving and getting into traffic accidents. Or someone knocks at the front door and we open it without first seeing who it is and asking what they want. Perhaps, in an attempt to be nice and polite, we have abrogated our responsibility to ourselves, and each other, to be good observers.

It is bad enough when I ask in lectures, where is the nearest fire exit and only one hand goes up. Or worse, as I saw last week, a young person leaves the supermarket pushing a cart, talking on her mobile phone, without looking around. As she reached her car and opened the door she found herself trapped by someone begging for money at such a close distance that fear and surprise dominated her face. Fortunately the man merely wanted a handout, but it could have been a sexual predator or a robber. Had she been observing her environment she may have better anticipated this event.

Almost twenty years ago, Gavin de Becker wrote *The Gift of Fear*, in an effort to warn and educate us about being more observant and aware. He encouraged us to look around and to listen to that that "inner voice," which is really our *limbic brain* telling us to be careful, that something is wrong.

It is a shame that twenty years on few people know de Becker's work. I say that because we really need to improve our ability to observe and especially our situational awareness. We know this by how many times someone has been victimized or has been taken advantage of and later we hear, "You know I had a feeling, in the beginning, that something wasn't right." Failure to observe, if we are honest, leads to avoidable circumstances as well as accidents but it can also help us to avoid being victimized.

I talked a couple of years ago with a mother whose son was sexually abused by a camp counselor. She related to me how, "from the very beginning," she had a "sense" not to trust that counselor. The Penn State/Sandusky case also evinced such comments.

Likewise, I am sure many an investor with Bernie Maddof (or any other swindler for that matter) has had that same feeling of revulsion after realizing that they too had "hints," "feelings," or "an intuition," that something was not quite right. Which is important to remember because how we feel about something often completes the picture so that we can fully understand.

It is never too late to start observing, but what do we observe for? First let's get some things clear about proper observation. **Observation is not about being judgmental, it is not about good or bad, it is about seeing the world around you, about having situational awareness, and interpreting what it is that others are communicating both verbally and nonverbally.** To observe is to see, but also to understand, and that requires listening to how you feel, which was basically de Becker's admonition in *Gift of Fear*.

Good observation skills give us the opportunity to test and validate what others think, feel, or intend for us. Are they kind, unselfish, and empathetic? Or are they selfish, cruel, indifferent, and apathetic? Because if they are and we discover it early enough, we have spared ourselves, some might even say saved ourselves. But if we don't, we pay the heavy price of a burdensome relationship with someone that does not have us in his or her best interest. Perhaps this is why when we are young we have so many "friends" and as we get older we have fewer of them, but they are better. We have gotten rid of the ones that drained us or caused us pain. If only we had been more observant and judicious when we were young and paid attention to how we felt?

As I often say, we have no social responsibility to be a victim. If someone acts or even hints at anti-social tendencies it is best to avoid them and this can only be determined through critical observation. And that means we are always testing and validating. This is important because when we deal with individuals who have antisocial tendencies, we will pay the price either through their negativity, lack of genuine empathy, or through their indifference, callousness, or criminality.

Being observant does not mean being obnoxious or being intrusive. In fact, a good observer knows that intrusive observations affect what is observed; so it needs to be done with subtlety as well as purpose.

What finally do we assess for? Two things primarily: danger and comfort. Just that? No, but let's start with that. Simply ask yourself at all times, "How does this situation or this individual make me feel?" For example, you are walking to your car at night and you see someone out of the corner of your eye walking briskly and you sense that you will both intersect. Your *limbic brain* senses this for you and lets you know something is not right - but you have to heed that inner voice. That discomfort is your brain saying "warning - possible danger" so you become more alert, you look for a well-lit area, and you wisely change your pace, or return to the safety of the store.

Assessing for comfort can really open your eyes. When you are with someone new ask yourself, "Does this person make me feel comfortable at all times?" If he or she doesn't, then the question is "why?" We must never ignore clues that say something is wrong, no matter how bad we want a friendship to work. Your

subconscious is always working to protect you, it is there for a reason, but you have to be prepared to observe and recognize what you sense.

Conclusion: Observation is no less important now than it was ten thousand years ago. The only difference is now we have to do it more quickly and more efficiently because we may run into fifty strangers in a day where our ancestors saw but a few. We can improve this skill, we can even teach it to our children, but like everything else, it takes effort.

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Joe Navarro Aug 12, 2021 4 min read

Why Do We Touch Our Faces So Much?

The importance of the face—our primary go-to pacifier.

Ever wonder why we strum our fingers or tap our feet while waiting to be served at the counter? Why babies, when startled from sleep, reach out with fingers spread? Or why, when we hear a loud noise, we freeze in place? Ever notice why people pluck their upper lip or twirl their hair as they read a book? Why do we do these things?

The need for self-soothing

Consider these: We strum our fingers and tap our feet because repetitive behaviors soothe us. That startled baby for the first six months of life reaches out with fingers spread out (Moro reflex) because for millions of years our mothers had a lot more hair and babies needed to hang on (grasping reflex) if the mother suddenly moved.

We freeze in place when we hear a noise or we sense something is wrong (the deer caught in the headlights moment) because of predators—principally large felines. See a lion, hold still, for if you run, it will initiate the chase, trip, bite, sequence that all felines employ to kill—and you don't get to pass on your DNA at the end of the day if you are dead. So, we learned to hold very still as a quick response (more properly called the fight, flight, or freeze response).

Women twirl their hair and men stroke their beards because it feels good, it contributes to psychological comfort as does most of the touching we do all day long. Do it right and that touch releases oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin—chemicals that help us to deal with stress, calm us down, and leave us in a good mood.

From the time we are in the womb, we spend a lot of time self-soothing, be it with a thumb in our mouths to later holding on to a favorite teddy bear or blanket to wringing our hands as we wait for the test scores to be announced. Self-touching, or self-pacifying, is something we do so long as we are alive because our brain requires it.

Our hands are kept busy all day long, scratching this, rubbing that, massaging here and there. We do it to relieve boredom, to channel restless energy, in anticipation of news, when struggling to verbalize or organize thoughts, as we encounter something stressful, or to relieve the anxiety of a less than pleasant encounter. The brain does not do it by wishing it so; it requires us to use our bodies, principally our hands, to relieve that stress. And of all the surface areas of the body, no part of our body gets as much attention when it comes to touching as the face.

How touching the face can be self-soothing

Like me, I am sure you have seen everything from the touching of the chin as a question is pondered, to the tapping of pursed lips with an index finger or a pencil, to the pulling or plucking of the lips. Likewise, scratching, massaging, or squeezing of the cheeks or temples gets our attention as does touching the tip of the nose, rubbing their eyelids, or simultaneously stroking the corners of the mouth (commissures).

Nowhere else on our body do we touch ourselves with such variety or frequency—sometimes multiple times a minute. If you want to test this, invite a group of friends to watch a horror movie and you will notice how much face touching takes place. I touch my face repeatedly while watching the movie *Jaws, Alien, It, The Shining,* or *Get Out* even though I have seen them before.

Why do we touch our faces so much? It is a matter of economic efficiency. The body has many nerve endings which are useful for self-soothing, including those in our fingertips which can delicately and precisely feel. But, when it comes to pacifying the brain immediately, any old nerve or group of nerves simply will not do.

For expediency and economy, even when mildly stressed, and to get the quickest relief, the nerves we stimulate must be extremely sensitive and close to the brain so that the signals arrive quickly and robustly. Fortunately, our faces are amply innervated with nerves that can do just that. Gently touch your lower lip and that signal gets to the brain quickly, as does a gentle kiss to a closed eye—both sensations have a calming effect on us. This occurs and is easily explained because of the *fifth trigeminal* and the *seventh cranial nerve* (also known as the facial nerve) which infuse the face with a rich galaxy of locations that are sensitive to the slightest touch and which reliably comfort us.

And while a shoulder or foot massage can be very pleasing, day-to-day it just is not the same; it is not practical nor economically efficient enough to meet our instant needs. We favor the face parsimoniously when it comes to self-soothing because the face rewards us back consistently, calming our brain, returning us to a state of homeostasis.

So, the next time you see someone touch the very tip of their nose when asked a delicate question, congratulate yourself knowing that they are stimulating the most distal part of the fifth cranial nerve—that focused touch of the nose helping to relieve momentary stress through a proven short vector that is robust and effective. And that's why.

#JoeNavarro #BodyLanguage #NonverbalCommunications

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Joe Navarro Feb 15, 2022 5 min read

Why Do We Touch Our Faces in So Many Different Ways?

Over the years I have written about the variety of ways we touch our faces to self-soothe or to pacify our anxieties. We touch, caress, stroke, scratch, rub, pull, pluck, indent, press, squeeze, and do many other things to our own faces. No other area of the body gets this much varied attention on any given day. Consider the lips alone: We lick them, compress them, caress them with pencils or fingers, tap them, pull on them, or even make nonsensical vibrating noises with them, and, yes kiss with them. We do these things all for the sake of attending to our brain's need to remain calm and in a healthy state of equilibrium, or to enhance a moment (romantic or otherwise). Once we outgrow the thumb-sucking stage as toddlers, the face is our go-to medium for pacifying.

I postulated before that we touch our faces so much because the fifth cranial nerve (a.k.a., CN-V, trigeminal) infuses our face (forehead, cheeks, nose, eyes, jaw, chin) with so many rich and sensitive nerve endings that are so easily accessible. Hence, from a behavioral economics perspective, touching our faces to pacify ourselves, comparative to any other part of the body, makes the most parsimonious sense. In other words, the fifth cranial nerve is the most perfectly suited to assist in pacifying us quickly and efficiently because it is robust, broad in scope, and is very close in relative terms to the *pons*, near the crucial top of the brain stem

where signals from touching are received and immediately distributed to facilitate the release of neurochemicals if needed, such as oxytocin.

Different Ways of Touching

This helps us to understand why we touch our face so much—but it doesn't explain why we touch our faces differently each time. You have probably never thought of how you touch your face or when, but, as it turns out, how we do so is based on what the brain needs. When you feel an itch on your cheek, you scratch it. Simple enough, right? As it turns out, that itch, for whatever reason, subconsciously compels you to act. To alleviate the itch, it is not good enough for you to just touch the area, press on it, pull on it, rub it, or massage it. If it itches, the brain senses it as important (perhaps it's an insect, maybe a skin condition—the brain does not care, especially while asleep) and so it says activate the best response that will attenuate that itch, and for that only scratching will do—and if you have long nails, all the better.

Thus, depending on our mood, emotional state, or level of stress, as well as need, the brain chooses the adequate arsenal to deploy. Ever notice how, when we are thinking, we tend to touch our chin very lightly with our index finger and thumb? These digits, richly innervated with a variety of nerves for precise grasping and feeling, allow us to contribute to the process of thinking, perhaps even helping us to relax, through the touch of the chin. Try touching your chin while relaxed with just the tip of your pinky; notice the difference? It is not the same. The brain prefers the touch of the broader fingertips—in particular the index finger and the thumb—when we are contemplating something or just being pensive.

Alternatively, let's imagine you are now confronted with a difficult situation, perhaps a sudden conflict in your schedule, or you are frustrated, and you find yourself not touching your skin as before but rather vigorously scratching at your cheek as you ponder how to reconcile the conflict. Why the change in how we touch? Because the brain assesses circumstances and deploys a more robust action to deal with the sudden increase in stress. The greater the stress, the more vigorous, dynamic, and tactile the touching becomes. Everything from pulling on our own flesh, to plucking at the lips, to squeezing our cheeks tightly, to down-swiping the corners of the mouth all the way to the chin (peri-oral pacifying) are all available to the brain from this diversified pallet of pacifying resources.

Different Types of Nerves

To understand why this is so, we have to meet the Merkels, the Meissners, the Ruffinis, and the Pacinians, a family of nerves that underlie the skin of our fingers and face; each provides different sensations to the brain. For instance, Meissner's corpuscles are highly sensitive to the slightest touch and quickly recognize changes in texture. The Pacinian corpuscles are receptive to transient changes in touch or pressure and vibrations. The Merkel nerve endings can discriminate between different textures and objects, while the Ruffini corpuscles are sensitive to slower, more-nuanced touch—especially of pressure and stretching and where exactly the change in pressure is taking place.

These different nerves are not just specialized; they are in different concentrations, and some are so sensitive they can sense when a single hair is touched, while others respond more so to blunt pressure. For instance, signals from Meissner's and Pacinian corpuscles send brief electrical signals to the brain to let it know something has been touched; meanwhile, signals from Ruffini nerve endings and Merkel cells persistently send signals throughout the touching experience. If you were touching something for detail, such as if you were reading the raised dots of Braille on a page, it would be the Merkel cells that would communicate the information most accurately, as they are highly centralized in the fingertips and can differentiate in ways the other nerve endings cannot.

So, if you should find yourself wondering why someone is suddenly touching their face this way and that way, or why while trying to remember your new credit card PIN you found yourself frantically plucking your philtrum (the vertically folded skin just above your lip), it's a reminder that the brain needs what it needs—just in time and not always the same—to deal with the stresses of everyday life. It also reminds us, as it turns out, that how we touch ourselves and when we touch ourselves can reveal a lot about what is going on in the mind.

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When, Where, Why, and How We Touch Our Faces

We touch our faces all day long but not always the same way, nor in the same place. Circumstances dictate where we touch and how we touch. For example, when we are deep in thought or perhaps reading a book, we tend to touch our chin with our index finger and thumb. This touching contributes to that special pensive moment. Touching our face is not required for reading or thinking and yet it is so universally performed and personally satisfying.

Similarly, we touch or massage the temples of our forehead when we have a headache. When we're bored, we place our cheek on the palm of our warm hand as a viable substitute for a comfortable pillow. When we're annoyed, we may stroke our nose repeatedly or pull on an earlobe. When lost in thought or pondering a difficult question, we may pluck our philtral columns (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philtrum), or lick, pull, or bite our lips. We do these things because in touching these various areas of the face, we receive a momentary decrease in nervous tension, and it helps us to remain calm.

Take for instance a game of basketball when the score is tied, and someone is about to take a foul shot with three seconds remaining in the game. To deal with the mounting tension, fans grab or cover their faces, some pinch their cheeks between their index finger and thumb, others bring both hands to the mouth and nose, massage their temples, on and on. That is how we deal with increased stress. When we engage in this

touching, massaging, scratching, and at times grabbing our faces, we release oxytocin and serotonin which serve to calm and soothe us.

In *Why We Touch Our Faces So Much*, I posited that we likely touch our faces so often (more so than perhaps any other area of the body) because our faces are rich in nerve endings that are so very close (proximal) to the neural pathways that serve to soothe us. The closer a nerve is to our brain, the faster it sends pacifying or calming signals to the brain when touched. As we touch these nerves by stroking the face, touching the face, or even applying pressure on the face, chemicals are released in the brain which help to calm us.

In the article, I argued that the Trigeminal Nerve (5th Cranial Nerve) and its three major divisions (ophthalmic, maxillary, mandibular) along with the Facial Nerve (7th Cranial Nerve) provide us with a rich galaxy of nerve endings that we can use in a variety of ways to soothe and comfort ourselves. And while a back or foot massage (once we have outgrown thumb or finger sucking) may reduce stress or tension after a hard day's work, nothing works quite as well, or is as timely, as facial touching. Although, as with so many things, facial touching comes in many varieties and is at times very nuanced, and this is the focus of this article.

Ever notice that we tend to stroke our faces with a downward motion? According to researcher David J. Linden, a lot of that has to do with the hairs of the face, even the very miniscule ones we don't see, and the way the nerves are aligned around the hair follicles. It is pleasing and soothing to stroke our beards and cheeks downward, even around the corners of the mouth (commissures) as we attempt to de-stress. How much pressure we apply to that downward stroking depends on circumstances — the greater the stress and anxiety we feel, the greater the pressure we apply. And it is not just the pressure but also for how long? Is it quick like a frantic scratch, or is it one prolonged or repeated process? And of course, does that soft gentle touching turn to scratching, when a particular subject is brought up?

Over the years, while conducting interviews in the FBI, I noticed that a subtle change from facial touching to scratching served to reveal the sudden presence of greater stress when a particular question was asked, or a topic was mentioned. This is very similar to what I see as a teacher— when students get to a difficult question on a test, they will suddenly and vigorously scratch their head. Thus, the tougher the questions, the greater the insecurity, stress, or anxiety, and thus, the greater the need for a more vigorous self-soothing response.

Conclusion

For those of us who study nonverbal communication and body language, how, where, and when we touch our faces matters. Taking context into account, these behaviors can give us useful insights into an individual's internal state, such as changing degrees of worry, concern, doubt, insecurities, or stress. The potential benefits to understanding these subtle nonverbal cues means that hopefully we can use them to help recognize when someone may be distressed or in need of support.

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Debunking Body Language Myths - Some surprising truths

Co-authored by Abbie Maroño, Ph.D.

Every day, we get queries from around the world about nonverbals and invariably about detecting deception through body language. The biggest takeaway from the hundreds of messages is that despite the undeniable importance of nonverbal communication, many myths and false beliefs undermine its importance, relevance, or utility. So, we decided to pool our resources and comment on ten myths about body language that are currently trending, and you may notice some have been trending for a long time.

1. You can detect deception based on an individual's nonverbal behaviors.

False. While we wish we could, the answer is that we humans are "no better than chance at detecting deception"—a coin toss. So please put this myth away. We have known this empirically since Paul Ekman's best-seller, *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage*, came out in 1985. There is no single behavior indicative of deception, not one. We need to stop associating behaviors indicative of

psychological discomfort with deception and acknowledge them purely for what they are: signs of stress, anxiety, apprehension, despair, suspicion, tension, concern, nervousness, etc., but not deception.

Further, in a recently published Ph.D. thesis (2021), Mapala used the latest motion capture, virtual reality, and eye-tracking technology to examine nonverbal indicators of deception and concluded that "the non-verbal cues assessed could not distinguish between honest and deceptive people."

2. The polygraph can detect lies.

Big myth. The polygraph cannot detect lies; it never has and never will. As the APA reminds us, "The accuracy (i.e., validity) of polygraph testing has long been controversial. An underlying problem is theoretical: There is no evidence that any pattern of physiological reactions is unique to deception. An honest person may be nervous when answering truthfully, and a dishonest person may be non-anxious."

Lastly, the American Academy of Science reported in 2003 that the polygraph could not be relied on because "Overall, the evidence is scanty and scientifically weak."
Lastly, courts, including the United States Supreme Court (cf. U.S. v. Scheffer, 1998), have repeatedly rejected the use of polygraph evidence because of its "inherent unreliability."

3. Scratching with your right hand indicates the need for help, but scratching with the left indicates temporary uncertainty rather than needing help.
This myth was incredulously published in a "body language" book. The basis of this myth comes from research indicating that the right hand is connected to the rational left half of the brain while the left hand is connected to the emotional right half of the brain. It was argued that scratching with either hand indicates different internal states.

Although there indeed exists hemispheric dominance and lateralization for information processing, both hemispheres are deeply interconnected and *do not* function entirely independently from one another. There also exists no empirical evidence to support a causal relationship between feelings of uncertainty and scratching with a particular hand.

4. There are three different types of people, and you can tell their personalities and communication styles based on their body language.
This myth appeared after a popular talk made its way around the internet and is founded on the ephemeral argument that all human beings fit one of three distinct neurological profiles—unsurprisingly, research does not support this. Humans are far too complex to be leavened into three categories.

It was also proposed that each of these groups has distinctive nonverbal facial features, such as thin vs. thick lips, different preferences for eye contact, self-touching, clothing, and an array of other assertions that are not supported by research and ignore cultural factors.

5. Contempt is the only asymmetric expression shown on the face.

This argument stems from the belief that there is only one distinct emotion present on our face at any one time, which has specific associated features, and that asymmetric features can accompany no emotion other than contempt.

Let's consider that emotions are rarely felt in complete isolation. They are dynamic and highly fluid, overlapping, contradictory at times, and complex. Have you ever felt both happy and sad, excited about a new opportunity but also nervous about the change?

For example, the "Upper Lip Rise" (#174), discussed in *The Dictionary of Body Language*, where the person smiles and answers positively, but the upper lip pulls unilaterally, indicating disgust or dislike. Like that, there are various facial behaviors, including "Mouth Stretching" (#165), where the mouth is pulled to the side, usually seen when you realize you made a mistake and others are looking at you, and you fear you got caught. Both of these examples are asymmetric expressions.

Our facial expressions are not always indicative of only one exact emotion and an asymmetric expression does *not* always indicate feelings of contempt. Please consider reading this on *Emotional Chirality*.

6. Liars will avoid eye contact.

Another myth that needs to be shut down. As the research of famed psychologist Aldert Vrij (Vrij 2000, 88-89) showed, liars engage in greater eye contact because they want to make sure they are being believed. When we can relax around others, we have the freedom to look away. And, of course, we need to consider that in many cultures, they are taught to look down and avoid eye contact when they are being contrite.

7. Ninety-three percent of all human communication is nonverbal.

The percentages quoted often vary from anywhere between 70-93 percent. This came from a misunderstanding of a classic study by Albert Mehrabian. In his work, Mehrabian never stated that we can put an exact percentage to the verbal vs. nonverbal element of human communication in general, rather in that particular study when only one word was said, the nonverbal component was 93 percent.

Communication is fluid and reflexive as well as situational, in other words, there is no set number.

8. Crossing your arms across the belly, says, "keep away."

This misconception stems from research on blocking behaviors, which show that when an individual feels uncomfortable or threatened they may use parts of their body to create a physical barrier between themself and others. Hence, behaviors like the crossing of the arms signal discomfort. In my own (Maroño) research I have found that these behaviors can be a signal of distress and discomfort.

But, I have also found that more often than not, this behavior is just a comfortable way for us to rest our arms. Arm crossing is often nothing more than a tactile self-comforting behavior when we are waiting for something to start, while engaged in a conversation, or even when we are upset—children do this all the time. What matters is the context and accompanying nonverbals, like the full picture, not just an isolated behavior.

9. If a person answers a question by first touching their nose they are lying.

Another myth that is wrong and can have serious implications as I noted in "Detecting Lies vs. Detecting Truth–Serious Implications." We touch our faces all day long as a means to self-soothe. We naturally do so when we are being scrutinized, talked to, or feel apprehensive. Neither this nor any other isolated behavior, such as mouth touching or wiping, indicates deception. These are pacifiers, and the honest and the dishonest use them.

10. If a person looks up to the right or down to the left to answer a question they are lying.

As David Matsumoto noted in an article specifically written for the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin in 2011,

> Twenty-three out of 24 peer-reviewed studies published in scientific journals reporting experiments on eye behavior as an indicator of lying have rejected this hypothesis. No scientific evidence exists to suggest that eye behavior or gaze aversion can gauge truthfulness reliably.

Conclusion

This is a short list of the many existing myths about detecting deception and body language. The reader would be wise to ask,

> Has this been validated empirically, are there other possible explanations, does culture factor into any of this, are these universal, who is making these assertions, and in how many cultures around the world have they been observed?

A little scepticism goes a long way and of course there are plenty of empirical studies on the subject to which we should all avail ourselves.

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#JoeNavarro #Bodylanguage

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The Truth About Lie Detection

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We do it every day, but most of us only do it half right.

"What is the truth about lie detection?" This is a question that I am often asked and one that is profound because everyday we assess each other for veracity, be it at home, work, or social situations. Over the years, both in my writings and lectures, I have tried to give insight into this important question. I will try to do so again here.

As the best researchers can tell, and in my own experience as an FBI Special Agent (now retired), detecting deception is very difficult. Every study conducted since 1986, when the famed researcher Paul Ekman first wrote about this, has demonstrated that we humans are no better than chance at detecting deception (Ekman & O'Sullivan 1991, 913-920; Granhag & Strömwall, 2004, 169; Mann & Vrij 2004). That means that if you toss a coin in the air, you will be as likely to detect deception as the truth. And while it is true that a very few people are better at detecting deception than others, they are barely above chance. In fact, those that are really good are only correct somewhere around 60% of the time; that means that 40% of the time they are wrong and you would not like them sitting on a jury judging you.

Unfortunately many people have come along and declared themselves deception experts over the years and that has influenced professionals and society in significant ways. I have listened to jurors post trial comment that they thought a witness was lying because they had "heard somewhere that if you touch your nose you are lying." Likewise I have talked to many a law enforcement officer who is convinced that they are experts at detecting deception. They have deluded themselves that they are, as have judges and other professionals. In fact, every time I hear Judge Judy (of TV fame) say, "I know you are lying," I cringe (unlike us she is covered by judicial privilege in saying what she wishes, the rest of us would be sued for slander). What she and others don't realize is that as Ekman, De Paulo, Frank, Mann, O'Sullivan, Vrij and others have stated, there is no single behavior indicative of deception (Ekman 1985 *et.al., infra.*)

So much of lie detection is based on the verbal as well as the nonverbals that one would have to have expertise in psychology, anthropology, sociology, criminology, jurisprudence, sociobiology, neurobiology, psychiatry, anatomy, physiology, communications, zoology, ethnography, primatology, linguistics, language, and grammar (to name a few), to truly understand the depth of what is behind deception and how to detect it. Fortunately there are those who have availed themselves to a wide disciplinary approach to the study of deception, but sadly few have.

Starting in 1971, when I first started studying the subject, I have heard of claims of individuals being able to detect deception based on behavior such as when someone avoided eye contact, looked up and to the right, touched their lips while speaking, cleared their throat, or displayed micro expressions. Instructors both in law enforcement and even researchers came in and lectured us young FBI agents about deception armed with videos of someone who touched their nose or covered their mouth when lying, or they showed signs of contempt as if that were scientific proof of deception. They were wrong and they were also incorrect in insisting that they were right; an anecdotal vignette of a person as they perform a behavior when lying is not science. It is interesting, but it is not science nor is it reliable. There are other times when the person uses the same behavior merely to relieve or reduce stress based on circumstances (e.g., in a police interview or the person is worried about getting to work late during a stressful traffic stop) and they are not lying but those are never shown.

As I look back on everything that has been written since the 1970s, I have begun to question some of the research. Not because the studies were not properly conducted, but rather, what did the experiments really accomplish? For over forty years, well meaning researchers have studied deception in the lab using college students. Utilizing elaborate schemes they got participants to lie about what they saw on a TV screen or they got them to take money and hide it and then lie about it and if they were successful they could keep it. Observers were then asked to determine who was lying or telling the truth and from that we get accuracy rates of from 50-60%. These experiments sounded pretty good at the time and they are still being performed. There is only one problem: a sterile laboratory environment, using college students, to me is not reality.

I say this in no way criticizing the researchers and their intentions because I think they are honestly trying to figure out how to detect deception. Some of them I know personally and admire how long they have been at this and how clever some of their experiments have been. But what I do question is the assumption that what we see in the laboratory is the same as in real life. And I have to say it is not.

Unlike what we see on television, the majority of law enforcement interviews (in fact about 97% of all police interviews) are done at night or in low light conditions outdoors, where it is noisy, there are distractions, others may be present - conditions that are not ideal as they are in a laboratory (Schafer and Navarro 2004, 3-13).

While the laboratory uses college students most of our prisons are not made up of college students. These experiments on deception, as far as I can tell, do not include individuals who are psychopaths (about 1% of Americans according to Robert Hare) or who are considered clinically antisocial (about 4-6% of Americans but about 60-70% of the prison population); nor do they use white-collar swindlers or "conmen" in these

experiments who are experienced habitual liars (Hare 1993). Likewise most studies don't take into consideration that in 30-40% of arrests (with subsequent interviews), alcohol and drugs are a factor and if you ever do that kind of an interview, it is nothing like a laboratory.

Nor do laboratories test people who are stressed from travel such as at airports with canceled flights (that have serious consequences) or who may be stressed by being interviewed in a police facility: surrounded by officers with guns and handcuffs, and where their future is literally in the hands of strangers with power; not a clipboard and a white coat.

I spent a career interviewing spies and terrorists as well as criminals and I am still waiting for researchers to see how well observers perform in a laboratory on trained intelligence officers from the Russian FSB or Cuban Intelligence Service. Having done those interviews, I can say they are in no way like interviewing college students. Nor are the interviews of mobsters and "made" mafia capos the same as college students. In fact, most of the people who are interviewed in a forensic setting will not likely be in any way similar to students in a laboratory experiment. College students are not people who have to live and survive by lying such as conmen, spies, or repeat criminal offenders. These types learn to master the lie and deceit - their lives depend on it.

Likewise, no college laboratory can ever match what goes on between an intelligence officer and an interviewer conducting an interview in a hostile environment or a "denied area" of the world. Nor can it replicate the countless interviews of individuals in domestic situations where you have the wife who has been battered, tugging at you, as you interview the intoxicated husband in handcuffs, while three kids are screaming at you to let their daddy go. That lab experiment has yet to be performed and yet that is the reality of the swing shift (6 PM to 2 AM) for most enforcement officers. And not just that, most lab interviews are done while the subject is seated; conversely, at least for patrol officers, most police interviews (except the very few at the police station and on television) are actually done while standing up.

Of concern also is the profound dissonance of priorities between a law enforcement officer (who is desperate to get the facts to solve a homicide and needs information for leads or who seeks to fulfill the requirements of the statute's *corpus delecti*) and that of the interviewee who wants to hide what he knows because of consequences. There is a significant dynamic that takes place in the interview room between an officer and a suspect in the form of nonverbals as each feeds off of and reacts to the other. That alone effects perceptions, as does proximity to the interviewee this is very different than experiments where there is little interaction between the observer/interviewer and the interviewee. And of course, there is no social experiment that can replicate either life imprisonment or capital punishment. And so, because humans are sensitive to initial conditions as well situational context, I think it is very difficult to accept that what we see in a lab experiment with college students is congruous with what we see in real life when it comes to deception.

Recently there was talk of having machines detect deception based on cues from the face and eyes. To that I would ask, what about the rest of the body - that too transmits information? Additionally I would also ask, how have these machines been tested and vetted: in laboratories using college students?

I have to say that over the years, there has been an over-reliance on the face for clues to deceit by some researchers at the expense of other areas of the body. In fact I argue that there has been too much emphasis on the face when years of experience doing thousands of interviews teaches us that the whole body needs to be considered to get a more accurate read on a person.

Looking for cues to deception merely from ephemeral facial micro-expressions is questionable and likely fruitless. Micro gestures may be indicative of internal emotional turmoil that is being suppressed, but that is it. The distinguished Paul Ekman, who in fact coined the term micro - expression has stated in his book *Telling Lies* that micro expressions are rare and they "don't occur that often" (Ekman 1985, 131, 165). Plus as others have said, there is no single behavior indicative of deception (Matsumoto et. al., 2011, 1-4). I am concerned that machines that focus solely on the face will no doubt miss other information from the body (sweating, jittery hand, etc.) or generate lots of false positives because negative emotions abound especially where such machines are intended such as airports (stress of travel, stress of being subjected to searches, or inconvenient interviews, etc) or in a police setting.

I think we need to listen to experts such as Paul Ekman, Bella DePaulo, Mark Frank, Maureen O'Sullivan, Aldert Vrij, and Judee Burgoon, who have repeatedly stated, there is no single behavior indicative of deception and that the detection of lies is very difficult (Navarro 2008, 205-208). And this of course includes micro gestures such as a sneer or look of contempt, which is just that; contempt, not necessarily deception. That there are people who have been photographed lying while showing signs of contempt is interesting but again, that is merely anecdotal. If you interview enough people on the streets where there is a lot of police presence due to high crime rates, you will see the look of contempt quite often same as in a prison or when interacting with street gangs.

As for the polygraph, what can I say? Here is a machine that is very precise, which is why polygraphers reverently refer to it as an "instrument" and yet it does not detect deception. Wait, what? That is correct. A polygraph machine is not a lie detector and the so-called "instrument" does not and has never detected lies (Ford 1996, 221-236). It merely recognizes physiological changes in reaction to a cue (a question) but it doesn't detect lies and it can't. I repeat it can't. It is the polygrapher who interprets the instrument and your reactions to it and decides whether or not there is deception. It is this human factor, not dissimilar from some of the activity noted above, that the courts have found wanting (this is why polygraph result cannot be used against you in court) and why the American Academy of Sciences had less than choice words for the use of the polygraph in its formal report on the polygraph in 2002.

As for other gimmicks out there including machines that read eye behavior or voice stress analysis, again, I am dumbfounded by how many people are convinced that these machines actually work. Test after test has shown that these systems do not detect deception.

The Significance of This Topic:

This topic of deception would not be anything more than a curiosity if it did not have very serious consequences. Historically and even recently, people have been accosted, jailed, tortured, prosecuted, even executed when those in authority deemed them to be lying or complicit, based on their body language.

Sadly, many individuals have confessed to crimes they never committed merely because someone misread them.

The price we pay for believing the unrealistic expectation that some have handed us about the reliability of detecting deception through nonverbals or other means is this: In the 261 DNA exoneration cases I have looked at, where the suspect's DNA was not at the crime scene (it was someone else who committed the crime), in all of those cases 100% of the investigators and the prosecuting attorneys could not detect the truth. They weren't just coin toss wrong (50/50), they were 100% wrong (Navarro 2011). They were so arrogantly sure that the behaviors and protestations they saw were lies that they could not recognize the truth. That is the price of falsely believing we are good at detecting deception. And if that were not bad enough, fully ¼ of these DNA exoneration cases, the individual gave a false confession. It's a funny thing about abuse and a coercive environment, in time most people, even the innocent, will yield and so they admit to crimes just to make the interview process stop (Kassin 2004, 172-193).

Conclusion:
We all have a stake in detecting deception, after all, no one wants to invest with another Bernard Madoff or date a Ted Bundy. But we have to be realistic as to what we can detect, as Paul Ekman warned us decades ago (Ekman 1985,165-178). This goes for law enforcement officers, judicial officers, and clinicians, as well as the average person interested in the topic. It is also my hope that researchers in the future will consider who is tested, where they are tested, and how they are tested to give us a more accurate view as to who really is good at detecting deception and under what circumstances.

I have been the beneficiary of great instructors in my professional career and in my life and they have taught me how to use nonverbals to understand the thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions of others. In forensic settings I was able to use it not so much to detect deception but rather to detect issues or concerns based on the questions that I asked. This allowed me to identify the innocent, to detect criminal activity, to uncover unknown conspirators, and to pursue leads in furtherance of investigations. But in the end, and this is cautionary, no matter what technique is used to look for deception, the only way to really know the truth is to verify and corroborate every single last detail of what someone says. And that is the truth about lie detection.

If you are interested in how body language is used in a forensic setting, please read Three Minutes to Doomsday; An FBI Agent, A Traitor, And The Worst Breech in U.S History (Scribner) - a true life account of how body language was used to catch a spy and uncover the "worst espionage breach in U.S history."

#JoeNavarrro #BodyLanguageExpert
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