



# Blue Moon

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## Body Language

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### TOP TEN TIPS FOR POSITIVE BODY LANGUAGE

Our face, eyes, hand gestures and posture express what is going on inside of us.

They each give valuable clues to others (and to us), as to whether the words we say are consistent with what we are really feeling.

Being aware of our body language allows us to send a consistent message and be more aware of what others are subliminally conveying to us.

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#### **Eye contact**

Eye contact is the first thing that people look for when they meet us first and good eye contact will give them a feeling of comfort and genuine warmth in your company,

Maintaining good eye contact shows respect and interest in what they have to say.

Here in Ireland we tend to keep eye contact around 60-70% of the time. (However, there are wide cultural differences, so be careful in other countries)

By drawing the eyes away occasionally or looking at different areas of the face around the eye area, you create the impression of eye contact without making people feel uncomfortable. Any more eye contact than this and you can be too intense, any less and you give off a signal that you are lacking interest in them or their conversation.

#### **Posture**

Getting your posture right will automatically make you feel more confident. And when you feel good other people pick up on that.

Next time you notice you're feeling a bit down, take a look at how you're standing or sitting. Chances are you'll be slouched over with your shoulders drooping down and inward. This collapses the chest and inhibits good breathing, which in turn can help make you feel nervous or uncomfortable.

#### **Head position**

When you want to feel confident and self assured keep your head level both horizontally and vertically.

You can also use this straight head position when you want to be authoritative and want what you're saying to be taken seriously.

Conversely, when you want to be friendly and in the listening, receptive mode, tilt your head just a little to one side or the other. You can shift the tilt from left to right at different points in the conversation.

## **Arms**

Your arms give away clues as to how open and receptive we are to everyone we meet and interact with, so keep your arms out to the side of your body or behind your back.

This shows you are not scared to take on whatever comes your way and you meet things "full frontal".

In general terms the more outgoing you are as a person, the more you tend to use your arms with big movements.

The quieter you are the less you move your arms away from your body. So, try to strike a natural balance and keep your arm movements balanced.

Crossing your arms is a no, no in meetings or at interview as it can be interpreted as being passive aggressive or closed to suggestion.

## **Legs**

Your legs are the furthest point away from your brain; consequently they're the hardest bits of your body to consciously control.

When we are nervous, stressed or being deceptive our legs tend to move around a lot more than normal. So best to keep them as still as possible in most situations, especially at interviews or work meetings.

Be careful too in the way you cross your legs.

Do you cross at the knees, ankles or bring your leg up to rest on the knee of the other? Quite often this is more a question of comfort than anything else.

But do be aware that the last position mentioned is known as the "Figure Four" and is generally perceived as the most defensive leg cross, especially if it happens when someone is telling you something that might be of a slightly dubious nature or, just moments after.

## **Angle of the body in relation to others**

The angle of your body in relation to others gives an indication of your attitude and feelings towards them.

We angle inward toward people we find attractive, friendly and interesting and angle ourselves away from those we don't, it's that simple!

## **Hand gestures**

Our hand gestures are so numerous it's hard to give a brief guide but here goes.

Palms slightly up and outward is seen as open and friendly.  
Palm down gestures are generally seen as dominant, emphasizing and possibly aggressive, especially when there is no movement or bending between the wrist and the forearm.

This palm up, palm down is very important when it comes to handshaking and where appropriate we suggest you always offer a handshake upright and vertical, which should convey equality.

### **Distance from others**

The distance we place between ourselves and others is crucial if we want to give off the right signals.

Stand too close and you'll be marked as "Pushy" or "In your face".

Stand or sit too far away and you'll be "Keeping your distance" or "Stand offish".

As neither of these is what we want, it's always a good idea to observe other people in the group and see how close they are standing to each other. Then you can mimic that distance.

Also notice if you move closer to someone and they back away, you're probably just a tiny bit too much in their personal space, their comfort zone and should pull back a little.

Spatial distance varies greatly from country to country so always be aware of how others are spaced in groups around you.

### **Ears**

Yes! Your ears play a vital role in communication with others, even though in general terms most people can't move them much, if at all.

However, you've got two ears and only one mouth, so try to use them in that order!!

If you listen twice as much as you talk you come across as a good communicator who knows how to strike up a well balanced conversation.

Remember you never learn anything by speaking, only by listening

### **Mouth movements**

Our mouth movements can give away all sorts of clues about us.

We purse our lips and sometimes twist them to the side when we're thinking. Or, sometimes we use this movement to hold back an angry comment that we don't wish to reveal. Nevertheless, it will probably be spotted by other people and although they may not know the comment, they will get the feeling that you were not too pleased.

There are also different types of smiles and each gives off a corresponding feeling.

A full smile with the lip coming above the teeth shows genuine joy

A tight lipped smile implies disapproval or shyness

When one side of the mouth is raised in a closed lip smile it can imply attraction, or it can mean complicity for an 'in' joke.

A smile that does not reach the eyes is NOT a smile but manipulation

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