

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Video: Breaking the Ice

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression” - author unknown

Meeting new people is an exciting opportunity to make new connections and to learn about our world. It can also be challenging and a little frightening. Remember that you have much to offer each conversation and that you also have much to learn. When having a conversation, think about what you already know about the topic and what you would like to learn. Also, pay attention to what the person is saying and how they are saying it. Finally, keep the conversation going by asking good questions.

Nonverbal Communication

We are sending and receiving messages without even saying a word. We make judgments about others by just looking at them and the way they move. We want to make sure that our faces and bodies are sending the messages that we want to communicate.

Examples of Nonverbal Communication

- **Facial Expressions - eye contact, smiles and eye movement**
- **Posture and other Movements - how a person stands and holds their body**
- **Gestures - hand movements (or lack of movements)**
- **Touch - contact between people**
- **Space - amount of distance between speakers**

Understanding body language with the help of these nonverbal communication examples may take a while. To pick up nonverbal cues requires you to watch out for them intently, and also learn how to complement the right cues with the spoken word, so that you don't give out the wrong message. Once you are able to do that, you will definitely minimize the chances of misconceptions and misunderstandings about others, and yourself.

Open Ended Questions

The goal of a conversation is to exchange ideas and to keep the discussion going. If the person we are talking to only gives "yes" or "no" answers, the conversation won't move very far. It is best to use "open ended questions" that allow the person to explain their answers and also allow you to respond to their points. Here are some examples of possible questions to use.

Examples of Open Ended Questions

- **How can I help you?**
- **Tell me more about...**
- **Could you help me understand...?**
- **What are advantages and disadvantages about (subject matter/topic)...?**

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- **What is the next thing you will do if...?**
- **Why? Why not? (after asking a closed ended question usually started with “Did”)**
- **How would you know if...?**
- **What do you feel about (subject matter/topic)?**
- **What do you think about (subject matter/topic)?**
- **Tell me what you think about...**
- **How do you plan to...?**

References:

Exforsys Inc. (2009). *Open Ended Questions*. Retrieved, March 23, 2012 from <http://www.exforsys.com/career-center/questioning-skills/open-ended-questions.html>

Lalwani, Puja. (2010). *Nonverbal Communication Examples: How does nonverbal communication affect our relationships?* Retrieved, March 23, 2012 from <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/nonverbal-communication-examples.html>