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BLOG

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PERCEPTION VS REALITY

It is a question I am asked often, "Can we size someone up within seconds of meeting?"

There is without doubt 'tells' from our body language, voice and breathing that will help us to instantly create a perception within our mind about whom we are dealing with.

It is why you instantly feel comfortable with some people, whilst you get that feeling that something is not quite right with others.

Yet, how accurate is this perception?

We may find someone who is resting their head backwards and perceive them to be arrogant, yet the simple explanation may be that they have a sore neck, whilst someone with a leg injury can appear disinterested.

So, whilst there are things we can draw from body language, we also need to ensure that what we are perceiving is accurate versus the reality, so using verbal communication to ask questions around our perceptions will help give us the bigger picture.

That said, understanding the 'tells' of people we meet can be valuable, as can understanding how our own can help us ensure that we are making the right impression.

The most important element is our use of breath as we speak, the more air we use then the more engaged and excited we seem in conversation, whilst the less we use our voice will become shrill and difficult to listen, even suggesting aggression.

Our posture suggests plenty about us. If we slouch and lean forward we can send an unintended message of aggression, whilst leaning back or favouring one leg suggests a lack of engagement.

Gestures are another give away, arms tight on the body suggests fear and protection, whilst folded arms equals defensiveness and if we overuse the same gesture we have a lack of direction.

They say the eyes are the 'windows to the soul', well if yours lack focus on the person you are speaking to, then your 'soul' will display uncertainty or even dishonesty and nobody wants that!

Jamming our head movements says we are defensive, whilst quick or continuous head nodding suggests agreement, so be careful what you seem to be agreeing to.

These body signals are something that we do every day, are unconscious and can be learnt from habit or replicating traits in your own family.

Whilst that may be factual the issue we face is that perception can get in the way of reality and it is how we are perceived that in many cases is how we are judged.

Take a job interview, you are well qualified with an excellent CV and feel the interview went well, yet you were unsuccessful and the reason could be as simple as an inability to hold your gaze.

The conversation after you left may have been, "was well qualified, but there was something about them, I cannot put my finger on it but they are not for us."

Perhaps you're a 'sloucher' who struggles to get a second date "was lovely, said all the right things, but there was something a little off," may be the words spoken after the date ends to friends,

These are the types of interactions that can happen regularly in our lives, with how we use our body being the reason why we did not get that promotion, pay rise, struggle to make friends or build relationships.

This is not necessarily a reflection of who we are in reality, and of course in an ideal world we should take time to get to know people before casting judgment, but we are human and humans judge instinctively, so knowing what our body may say about us can be beneficial.

So people get your mirror out and work on your posture, eye contact, gestures, head movements and open your lungs when you speak, it may just change your life!

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