

# ***Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers***

## **Module 6**

### **Paying Attention to Body Language**

*Providing Independent  
Living Support:  
**Paying Attention to Body  
Language***



Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# PROVIDING INDEPENDENT LIVING SUPPORT: TRAINING FOR SENIOR CORPS VOLUNTEERS

## Module 6: Paying Attention to Body Language

### *Introduction*

Body language, or nonverbal communication, is body movement, facial gestures, and vocal nuances that further communication through expression. This can range from subtle movements of the eyebrows to the obvious changes in facial expressions or body stances. This 60-75-minute session will describe nonverbal communication and its function and offer tips for volunteers to better respond to nonverbal communication when assisting clients. In addition to a short lecture, the session includes a brief warm-up exercise, a more extensive small group exercise, and a reflection activity.

### **Objectives**

By the end of the session, participants will:

- Improve their understanding of nonverbal expressions used in communication.
- Increase awareness of the messages they may be sending through their own body language.
- Learn tips and strategies for reading and responding to the body language of clients.

### **Visual Aids (PowerPoint) and Facilitator's Notes**

If you are using the PowerPoint slides included with this curriculum, Facilitator's Notes are provided under each slide (to see them, select "View...Notes Page" from PowerPoint's main menu). These notes provide the same information as the Facilitator's Notes included in this document, however, they are not as detailed; the PowerPoint Facilitator's Notes are primarily main points for the presenter.

**If you do *not* use the PowerPoint slides**, we suggest you create other visual aids such as handouts or transparencies, or copy the information on easel paper and post it for participants. Duplicating the information on slide 4 (warm-up instructions) and slide 8 (exercise instructions) will be the most helpful.



### **Handouts**

The handouts for this session follow the facilitator's notes and instructions. Handouts 1-3 should be distributed during the session; this symbol in the Facilitator's Notes will cue you as to when: 📄. Handouts 4-6 can be distributed at the end of the session.

1. What Are You Saying? (optional)
2. Exercise Worksheet: Critique
3. Reflection: Using Increased Awareness to Assist Clients
4. Body Language Cues: Tips for Assisting Clients
5. Additional Resources: Paying Attention to Body Language
6. Training Feedback Survey

## Session Outline

Discussion Topic	Estimated Time	Method/Activity	Slide Numbers
<b>I. Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>20 min.</b>		<b>1</b>
A. Learning Objectives	2	Lecture	<b>2</b>
B. The Essence of Communication	3	Lecture	<b>3</b>
C. Warm up: 60-Second Autobiography	15	Pairs Large group discussion	<b>4</b>
<b>II. Basics of Nonverbal Communication (“Body Language”)</b>	<b>10 min.</b>		
A. Types of Nonverbal Communication  <i>What Are You Saying!?</i> (Optional)	5	Lecture	<b>5</b>
B. Functions of Nonverbal Communication	5	Lecture	<b>6</b>
<b>III. Enhancing Awareness</b>	<b>40 min.</b>		
A. Importance of Awareness	5	Large group discussion	<b>7</b>
B. Exercise: Critiquing Body Language  <i>Exercise Worksheet: Critique</i>	25	Small group (3-4) exercise Debrief, large group discussion	<b>8</b>
C. Reflection: Using Enhanced Awareness in Service  <i>Reflection: Using Increased Awareness to Assist Clients</i>	10	Individuals, pairs	<b>9</b>
<b>IV. Closing</b>	<b>5 min.</b>		
Last Thoughts  <i>Body Language Cues: Tips for Assisting Clients</i>  <i>Additional Resources: Paying Attention to Body Language</i>  <i>Training Feedback Survey</i>		Feedback	<b>10</b>

# Facilitator's Notes and Instructions



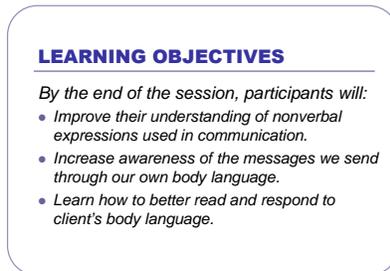
## I. Welcome and Introduction

Show slide 1 – the title slide.

Explain the purpose of this training session: Body language, or nonverbal communication, is the use of body movements, facial gestures, and vocal nuances used as expression. This can range from subtle movements of the eyebrows to obvious changes in facial expressions or body stance. This session will describe nonverbal communication and its function, and offer tips for volunteers to better respond to this type of communication when assisting clients.

### A. Learning Objectives

Show slide 2.



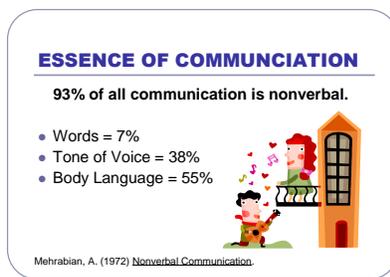
Read the learning objectives to the group. By the end of the session participants will:

- Improve their understanding of nonverbal expressions used in communication.
- Increase awareness of the messages we send through our own body language.
- Learn tips and strategies for reading and responding to client's body language.

Tell participants you will be distributing additional information and resources on this subject at the end of the session.

### B. The Essence of Communication

Show slide 3.



There are basically three elements in face-to-face communication: our words, our tone of voice, and our body language. Nonverbal communication expresses – and sometimes betrays -- our feelings and attitudes. If words and body language are incongruent (i.e. seem to be sending different messages), then people tend to believe the body language over the words we are speaking.

Research shows that when people are talking about their feelings or attitudes, 7% of communication is the words, 38% is the tone of voice, and 55% is body language.

Source: Mehrabian (1972)

### C. WARM UP: Your 60-Second Autobiography

The purpose of this activity is to raise awareness about the degree to which we all use nonverbal cues in communication, intentionally and unintentionally. While this short warm-up activity will also help participants get acquainted, they should not share particular details or stories from their partner with the large group.



**YOU WILL NEED:** A watch or clock with a second hand, easel paper and a marker. You may also want to ask a participant (or co-facilitator) to help you write main points on the easel paper during debrief.

Show slide 4.

#### WARM UP: 60-SECOND AUTOBIOGRAPHY



1. Find a partner (someone you haven't met yet, if possible)
2. One person is the Speaker; the other person is the Listener.
3. Speaker: tell your life story... in 60 seconds. Listener: just listen – don't ask questions.
4. After 60 seconds, change roles and do it again.

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Ask participants to pair up with someone they haven't met yet (ideally), or don't know very well. Each pair should choose one person to be the speaker and one person to be the listener. Both people will get a chance to participate in both roles. (Note: This should not be used in the place of introductions.)
2. Once pairs have chosen who will speak first, ask the speakers to share their entire life story with their partners...in 60 seconds. Instruct the group that the listeners must listen as intently as possible, without talking (e.g. no questions or comments during the 60 seconds). Note: People may think this activity is some kind of test and, if so, may interfere with their attentiveness to the 60-second autobiography. Acknowledge this tendency with your group and tell participants that this is a simple warm-up activity – not some kind of test.
3. After 60 seconds, call time and have the pairs switch roles: the speakers become listeners and vice versa.
4. After another 60 seconds, call time and ask everyone to come together for a discussion.



**TIP: ADDRESS TRAINING EXPECTATIONS.** Consider putting packets of "Post it's" out on tables and asking participants to jot down any questions they have about nonverbal communication. Post the notes on an easel and review them later, while participants are involved in the exercise. Try to address these questions during the session or immediately afterward.



## DEBRIEF

Go around the room to each pair, or pose the questions to the group as a whole, to start the discussion. Use the easel paper to jot down the nonverbal cues that participants noticed, both as a speaker and as a listener. Below is an example of how you might do this.\* The following questions can help you start the discussion.

- “When you were the speaker, was your partner listening to you? How did you know?”  
(Jot down the nonverbal cues they noticed on easel paper titled “Listener”, such as nodding, smiling, or leaning in. Sometimes people even “mirror” the other person by crossing the same leg, for example.)
- “When you were the listener, what type of nonverbal cues did you notice from your partner as he/she was speaking? What do you think those cues meant? How did you interpret them?”  
(Jot down the nonverbal cues they noticed on easel paper titled “Speaker”. For example, the speaker might show discomfort at not knowing what to say or having extra time by looking around the room, fidgeting, giggling, biting lips when thinking, etc.)

After this discussion, ask participants to keep in mind: “How might this experience of paying attention to the nonverbal cues help when working with clients?”

### \*Example:

#### List of Listener’s Nonverbal Cues

<u>Listener’s non - verbal cues</u>	<u>How did you interpret?</u>
<i>Smiling</i>	<i>Interest, enjoyment</i>
<i>Good eye contact, nodding</i>	<i>Interest, concern</i>
<i>Looking around the room, poor eye contact</i>	<i>Not interested, bored or uncomfortable</i>

#### List of Speaker’s Nonverbal Cues

<u>Speaker’s nonverbal cues</u>	<u>How did you interpret?</u>
<i>Fidgeting, squirming in chair, looking around the room</i>	<i>Uncomfortable, unsure</i>
<i>Good eye contact</i>	<i>Serious, desire to engage listener</i>
<i>Smiling, laughing, animated, eyes wide</i>	<i>Enjoyment, happy, good mood</i>

## II. Basics of Nonverbal Communication (“Body Language”)

### A. Types of Nonverbal Communication

Show slide 5.

**NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Posture
- Proximity
- Paralanguage (vocal tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection)



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We depend heavily on nonverbal communication, or body language, in our daily lives. Research shows that we typically spend about 70% of our waking time in the presence of others but communicate verbally for only a fraction of that time (individuals speak for only 10 to 11 minutes a day, each utterance taking about 2.5 seconds). This underscores the reliance we place on nonverbal communication to express ourselves and to interpret the unspoken cues of others.

Keep in mind that body language can be interpreted differently. How we interpret body language (gestures, eye contact, and proximity) depends on our context: the culture we are living in and our cultural background, the relationship we have to the person, and the circumstances (e.g. the physical and social environment where the communication takes place). The best advice is to be careful about interpreting body language; be cautious until you know the person well enough to understand their preferences and needs.

This is what is meant by body language and some of the ways it expresses attitudes and feelings:

- **Eye contact.** Strong eye contact may indicate interest, concern, warmth, and credibility, or anger and suspicion. Fltering eye contact may indicate respect, fear, or disinterest.
- **Facial expressions.** Smiling may indicate happiness, friendliness, affiliation, or deference. Wincing may indicate fear or distaste. Frowning may indicate seriousness, disapproval, or fear.
- **Gesture** (a non-vocal body movement used to express meaning): Waving hands may indicate trying to get someone’s attention or expressing shock. Pointing at someone may show disrespect or emphasis. Gesturing with the fist or fingers may indicate anger.

## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Posture
- Proximity
- Paralanguage (vocal tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection)



- **Posture and body orientation:** Standing or sitting erect and leaning slightly forward may indicate interest. This posture may also make the person look more approachable. Slouching, hands in pockets, and looking at the floor may show lack of confidence, hesitancy, or self-consciousness, or it may be a deliberate pose to convey apathy (e.g. a teenager's posture).
- **Proximity:** Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction (i.e. how close together people typically stand or sit). Status, age, gender also affect norms for appropriate proximity. Both cultural norms and personal preference influence how much touching and physical affection people like.
- **Paralanguage:** This is the vocal tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection. A high loud voice might indicate the person is upset, surprised, or happy; a low soft voice might indicate calm or discretion. Paralanguage can change the meaning of words (note how a vocal tone can be used to indicate sarcasm, for example).  
Again, cultural norms are important here. In some cultures a loud voice indicates authority and confidence; in others, the person speaking would be considered rude or lacking self-control.

Source: Knapp & Hall (2006)

Optional: If participants seem interested in how different cultures use nonverbal communication, distribute the handout *What are you Saying* that they can complete another time. This handout is a fun quiz that might inspire some participants to research cultural differences on their own.



**TIP: SHARE A STORY.** Share a personal experience (or ask the group to share) of a time that you were misunderstood, or misunderstood someone else's nonverbal communication, because of cultural differences (e.g. a gesture). This could be a funny story, but a disastrous or embarrassing experience can also bring the point home in a memorable way!

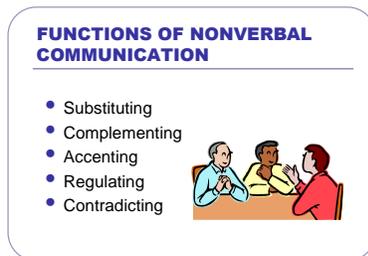
**KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING.** Consider doing an additional workshop on cultural sensitivity in general, or education/awareness of particular communities in your service area. You may be able to partner with a community organization in your area that promotes international, multicultural, and intergenerational understanding.

## B. Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is used:

- To express emotions and attitudes (e.g. smiling, eye contact, posture)
- To express personality through self expression (e.g. clothing, posture)
- For rituals, such as greeting a person (e.g. shaking hands, kissing on the cheeks, bowing slightly)
- To cue interaction during verbal communication (e.g. facial expressions, accompanying hand gestures)

Show slide 6.



There are five primary ways we use nonverbal messages to support, or replace, verbal messages when we communicate. (Note it is not necessary to memorize these categories; this is just background information to help participants increase awareness of how we communicate, often without consciously realizing it.)

- **Substituting** occurs when we use a nonverbal cue instead of a verbal one to express a thought or emotion (e.g. winking, waving, smiling, or rolling the eyes).
- **Complementing** occurs when we use a nonverbal cue with a verbal message (e.g. when the words, “good job” are accompanied by a smile or a “thumbs up” sign, or when the word “unbelievable” are accompanied by hands thrown in the air)
- **Accenting** occurs when we stress a specific word in the message with our tone of voice or gesture (e.g. “Please organize into *small* groups” or “*Please* organize into small groups!”).
- **Regulating** occurs when we use nonverbal communication to monitor the conversational flow (e.g. nodding our head as someone is speaking, which encourages people to continue talking).
- **Contradicting** occurs when our verbal and nonverbal interpretations of the message are at odds with each other (e.g. the words “No, I don’t mind doing that” are accompanied by a sigh, a downcast look, and slouching shoulders).

Source: Knapp & Hall (2006), Argyle (1988).

### III. Enhancing Awareness

#### A. Importance of Awareness

Large group callout: “Why do you think it’s important to be aware of nonverbal communication, or body language, as you serve elderly clients?”

Give participants a minute to respond, and then show slide 7. Reinforce what participants say and add the following as needed.

#### IMPORTANCE OF AWARENESS

- Become better receivers of client messages.
- Become better senders of messages that reinforce your kind words and attitude.
- Improve the quality of the relationship between you and your client.

Being aware of your own nonverbal behavior and noticing clients’ cues is important for three major reasons:

- **Become better receivers of messages:** An awareness of nonverbal behavior will allow you to better understand clients’ feelings, or read between the lines (for example, the client may say, “I’m fine” but the nonverbal cues indicate something different such as “I need to talk about something that’s bothering me,” or “I am putting on a brave front but really I am frightened,” or “I need help but I don’t like to ask for it”).
- **Become better senders of messages:** You can strengthen your communication skills by reinforcing what you want to communicate to clients (for example, instead of just saying the words, “I am interested” or “I care about you”, reinforce or complement your words with appropriate nonverbal cues).
- **Increase the quality of communication:** Nonverbal communication increases the perceived quality of the relationship between you and your client. Nonverbal communication, such as a smile or a light touch on the arm at the right moment, reinforces your words.



**TIP: MAKE THE MOST OF THE GROUP’S CONTRIBUTION.** When participants contribute something that is not clear, rather than interpreting what you think they said, try probing first: “Can you say more about that?” After each section or debrief, validate and reinforce what participants have shared by summarizing their main points, and then move on with the session. For more tips on running a workshop, see the *Facilitator’s Guide*.

## B. EXERCISE: Critiquing Body Language

This exercise is intended to help participants enhance awareness of their own body language and that of their clients, particularly those clients with disabilities. The exercise will reinforce what participants already know through experience and allow them to learn from each other. During the debriefing, the facilitator should add information that the participants may not have shared. The whole exercise, including debriefing, should take about 25 minutes.



**YOU WILL NEED:** Easel paper (one sheet for each of the three situations), markers, and copies of *Exercise Worksheet: Critique*. You may want to ask one of the participants to help you jot down main points on the easel paper during debriefing.

Show slide 8.

### EXERCISE: CRITIQUE

1. Get into small groups and read the situation assigned to your group.
2. In your group, discuss questions 1 and 2 on the worksheet. Have one person jot down some notes. (You have about 5 minutes.)
3. Think about the extra credit question.
4. Be ready to discuss.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1.  Distribute the handout *Exercise Worksheet: Critique*, and ask participants to get into small groups of 3 or 4. Assign each group a different situation (if there are more than 3 groups, assign more than one group to the same situation).
2. Participants should take a minute to read the description of their situation. Then as a group, they should discuss and answer the three questions (about 5 minutes).
3. After 6-7 minutes, ask the group to come together for a discussion.

### DEBRIEF

Starting with the first situation, ask the group to which it was assigned, “What message did Sally send with her body language?” (Question 1) and “What do you think Sally should have done to send a more positive message?” (Question 2). Note main points from question 2 on the easel paper.

Do this for each of the three situations (Sally, Mathew, and Maria), adding points the group may not have mentioned (see Facilitator’s Debrief Notes for Module 6 Exercise).

Finally, ask participants to share stories: Have they, or someone they know, ever been in a similar situation, as the recipient (“extra credit” question)?

### C. Reflection Activity: Using Enhanced Awareness in Service

Show slide 9.

**REFLECTION: USING INCREASED AWARENESS**

- What are you already doing well?
- What would you like to improve?



Tell participants that their attention to subtle nonverbal cues will not just help them be better poker players; it can also help them improve their relationship with their clients, especially those clients who may not be comfortable expressing their feelings openly and directly.

 Distribute the handout *Reflection: Using Increased Awareness to Assist Clients*. Ask participants to take a few minutes to think about what they've learned and jot down some notes. If they like, and if there is time, they may share their thoughts with a partner.



**TIP: EDUCATE PARTICIPANTS ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.**

For ideas and information, check the National Service Inclusion Project (<http://serviceandinclusion.org/>), a TTA provider sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. You may want to print some of their FAQ sheets for your participants. There is information on specific disabilities (e.g. cognitive disability, communication disability, hearing and vision loss), and general etiquette tips:

<http://serviceandinclusion.org/index.php?page=etiquette>

#### LAST BUT NOT LEAST...

*"No matter how one can try, one cannot **not** communicate."*

~Author Unknown



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## IV. Closing

Show slide 10.

Tell participants that it is time to end the session, and ask if they have any further questions. After responding to questions, leave them with this last quote: *"No matter how one can try, one cannot not communicate."* That is, we humans are always sending out signals and continually looking for signs on which to base our assumptions about each other (correctly or not).

 Distribute the remaining handouts and briefly describe the information in each of the handouts: *Body Language Cues: Tips for Assisting Clients* contains tips for reading a person's body language and staying aware of your own. *Additional Resources: Paying Attention to Body Language* includes sources for the research you have been quoting and helpful website links for more information on nonverbal communication.

Tell participants that the session is over, and you would very much appreciate hearing their thoughts via the *Training Feedback Survey*. Let them know their responses are anonymous (no names are required on the surveys), and that the surveys are collected to help improve future training sessions. Make sure to indicate where you would like the completed surveys to be placed.

Thank everyone for coming.

## FACILITATOR'S DEBRIEF NOTES for Exercise: Critique

### Situation 1: Sally

Sally, the volunteer, is visiting her clients this week. One of her clients, Joaquin, uses a wheelchair. When Sally got to Joaquin's house, she greeted Joaquin and asked about his week. They chatted a bit and moved into the kitchen, where Joaquin had set out cookies and coffee for the two of them. Sally noticed the sugar on the shelf above Joaquin's head and reached over Joaquin to grab it before sitting down. Later, when Joaquin's niece Robin arrived, Sally stood and chatted with her for a few minutes. Sally asked Robin if Joaquin would like to sit outside, and Robin helped push Joaquin's wheelchair out to the porch as she and Sally continued to chat.

#### 1. What message did Sally send with her body language? *(Notes include tips for volunteers working with someone who uses a wheelchair.)*

*There are several messages that Sally is sending with her body language that she probably does not intend to send; the main message is disregard or disrespect.*

- *She is intruding into someone's private space without permission (for the sugar).*
- *She is reaching over Joaquin's head, which could be understood as an intrusion or an insult about ability levels (not to mention she could also accidentally drop something on Joaquin's head!).*
- *She discounted Joaquin by standing to chat with Robin, and asking her about his preference – in front of Joaquin as if he were not there.*

#### 2. What do you think Sally should have done to send a more positive message?

- *Be polite and patient when offering assistance, and wait until your offer is accepted before acting.*
- *Speak directly to the person with a disability, not just to the ones accompanying him or her.*
- *Do not push, lean on, or hold onto a person's wheelchair unless the person asks you to. The wheelchair is part of his or her personal space.*
- *Try to put yourself at eye level when talking with someone in a wheelchair. Sit or kneel in front of the person.*
- *Relax; everyone makes mistakes. Offer an apology if you forget some courtesy. Keep a sense of humor and a willingness to communicate.*

## FACILITATOR'S DEBRIEF NOTES (continued)

### Situation 2: Matthew

Matthew, the volunteer, visited his client, Frank, yesterday. Frank is hard of hearing in his left ear. When Matthew arrived at Frank's house, he greeted Frank at the door by waving and shouting, "How are you doing, Frank? Are you ready for your visit to the proctologist?" As he entered the house, Matthew noticed that the TV was on. He reached over to turn the TV off and then asked Frank if he wanted to have lunch before going to the doctor this afternoon. He then sat down on Frank's left side and asked him a series of quick questions. Frank looked at him quizzically and Matthew rolled his eyes, smiled, and said, "Never mind. Let's just watch some TV."

#### 1. What message did Matthew send with his body language? (Notes include tips for volunteers working with someone hard of hearing.)

*There are several messages that Matthew is sending with his body language that he probably does not intend to send; the main message is condescension.*

- *He may have startled Frank by shouting and waving, rather than identifying himself and speaking calmly.*
- *He used his voice loudly at the front door about a personal matter.*
- *He did not behave like a guest in Frank's home; rather, he intruded on Frank's private space without permission (turning off the TV).*
- *He created additional communication difficulties by sitting on Frank's left side.*
- *He rolled his eyes when Frank didn't understand him right away, showing his impatience and quickly giving up on communication. In this context, his smile could be taken as ridicule or condescension.*

#### 2. What do you think Matthew should have done to send a more positive message?

- *When greeting the person, identify yourself. To get their attention, gently touch the arm if appropriate.*
- *Face the person directly; speak clearly and with a moderate pace.*
- *Keep a notepad handy. Rephrase a question if it is not understood. With some people, it may help to simplify your sentences and use more facial expressions and body language.*
- *Give the person time to think and respond before asking another question.*
- *Be patient, and when you find this difficult, be especially aware of your facial expressions and tone of voice.*

## FACILITATOR'S DEBRIEF NOTES (continued)

### Situation 3: Maria

Maria, the volunteer, was visiting clients this week while trying to squeeze in a few errands. One of her clients, Ellen, had been waiting for her for 25 minutes. Ellen uses a walker to get around and her hearing is poor. Maria rang the doorbell three times quickly before Ellen answered. When she answered the door, Maria was standing on the doorstep with her arms crossed. She sighed and shrugged her shoulders before saying hello, then opened the screen door before Ellen, who was reaching for the door handle, could open the door.

#### **1. What message did Maria send with her body language?** *(Notes include tips for volunteers working with clients who are frail.)*

*There are several messages that Maria is sending with her body language that she probably does not intend to send; the main message is impatience.*

- *She did not let Ellen know about a change in schedule, and then did not give her time to answer the door. She demonstrated impatience with ringing the door three times and then folding her arms.*
- *She shrugged her shoulders and sighed, which gives an impression of impatience and possibly disapproval.*
- *She is intruding into Ellen's private space without permission (opening the door).*
- *All of Maria's body language, and the fact that she was late, is a message to Ellen that she doesn't want to be there.*

#### **2. What do you think Maria should have done to send a more positive message?**

- *Be considerate of the extra time it might take for the person to get from one place to another (e.g. to answer the door) or hear you at the door. Wait patiently before knocking or ringing the bell a second or third time.*
- *When greeting the person, identify yourself and use body language to show you are happy to be there.*
- *Adapt to the person's pace. Don't barge in the door or rush around the person; this is frightening for someone who is frail and can be knocked over and injured easily.*

## ***References for Module 6: Paying Attention to Body Language***

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Knapp, Mark L, and Judith A. Hall. 2006. *Nonverbal communication in human interaction*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Mehrabian, Albert. 1972. *Nonverbal communication*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Mori, Isabelle. Gestures from Around the World.

<http://isabelle-mori.homestead.com/questionsgestus.html> (accessed June 2, 2008).

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## ***Handouts***

The following handouts are included in this module:

1. **What Are You Saying? (optional)**
2. **Exercise Worksheet: Critique**
3. **Reflection: Using Increased Awareness to Assist Clients**
4. **Body Language Cues: Tips for Assisting Clients**
5. **Additional Resources: Paying Attention to Body Language**
6. **Training Feedback Survey**

*Providing Independent  
Living Support:  
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Language***



Trainer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## What Are You Saying!?



Directions: Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

- How do people from Asian cultures show disagreements?
  - By shaking their head back and forth
  - By looking away
  - By squinting and sucking air through their teeth
  - None of the above
- What is the correct way to illustrate length in Latin America? (Important note: measuring the space between two extended index fingers suggests a part of the male anatomy.)
  - Hold one hand at the appropriate height from the floor
  - Extend your arm and measure from your fingertips up to the correct distance
  - Use a measuring tape or ruler
  - None of the above
- People in the U.S. are generally comfortable standing with about two feet of space between them. What is the normal speaking distance in much of Latin America?
  - About the same, two feet of space
  - Less than one foot of space
  - More than two feet of space
- In Japan, what does tapping one's finger repeatedly on the table signify?
  - That you are annoyed with the speaker
  - That you want a chance to speak
  - That you agree and support the speaker's statement
  - None of the above
- Showing what part of your body would insult someone from an Islamic country?
  - Your teeth
  - Your left hand
  - The sole of your foot
  - None of the above
- In Hawaii, a common gesture for greeting is called "shaka" and is done by:
  - Nodding your head rapidly up and down
  - Shaking two clasped hands in the air
  - Folding three fingers to the palm, then extending your thumb and pinkie and raising this hand up and shake
  - None of the above
- In most Western cultures, what does a prolonged gaze signify?
  - Sexual interest
  - Respect
  - Disapproval
  - Condescension
- In India, the correct way to break bread is:
  - With your left hand only
  - With your right hand only
  - With both hands
  - With a knife and fork
- Islamic cultures generally don't approve of any touching between genders, but non-sexual touching between same-sex persons (including hand holding and hugs) is appropriate.
  - True
  - False
- In Thailand, a man speaking in a loud voice would be considered:
  - Confident
  - An authority on whatever he is saying
  - Impolite
  - Deranged

Answers: 1.) c. 2.) b. 3.) b. 4.) c. 5.) c. 6.) c  
7.) a. 8.) b. 9.) a. 10.) c.

(Adapted from "Gestures from Around the World"  
[isabellemori.homestead.com/answersgestus.html](http://isabellemori.homestead.com/answersgestus.html))

## Exercise Worksheet: Critique

*Instructions: Read the situation assigned to your group. Take about five minutes to discuss and answer questions 1 and 2.*

### Situation 1

Sally, the volunteer, is visiting her clients this week. One of her clients, Joaquin, uses a wheelchair. When Sally got to Joaquin's house, she greeted Joaquin and asked about his week. They chatted a bit and moved into the kitchen, where Joaquin had set out cookies and coffee for the two of them. Sally noticed the sugar on the shelf above Joaquin's head and reached over Joaquin to grab it before sitting down. Later, when Joaquin's niece Robin arrived, Sally stood and chatted with her for a few minutes. Sally asked Robin if Joaquin would like to sit outside, and Robin helped push Joaquin's wheelchair out to the porch as she and Sally continued to chat.



1. What message did Sally send with her body language?

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2. What do you think Sally should have done to send a more positive message?

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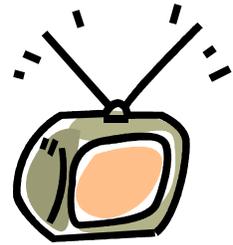
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**\*\*Extra Credit\*\*** Consider...Have you ever been in a similar situation (as the recipient) or know someone who has? What happened? What did you learn from the experience?

## Situation 2

Matthew, the volunteer, visited his client, Frank, yesterday. Frank is hard of hearing in his left ear. When Matthew arrived at Frank's house, he greeted Frank at the door by waving and shouting, "How are you doing, Frank? Are you ready for your visit to the proctologist?" As he entered the house, Matthew noticed that the TV was on. He reached over to turn the TV off and then asked Frank if he wanted to have lunch before going to the doctor this afternoon. He then sat down on Frank's left side and asked him a series of quick questions. Frank looked at him quizzically and Matthew rolled his eyes, smiled, and said, "Never mind. Let's just watch some TV."



1. What message did Matthew send with his body language?

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2. What do you think Matthew should have done to send a more positive message?

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**\*\*Extra Credit\*\*** Consider...Have you ever been in a similar situation (as the recipient) or know someone who has? What happened? What did you learn from the experience?

### Situation 3

Maria, the volunteer, was visiting clients this week while trying to squeeze in a few errands. One of her clients, Ellen, had been waiting for her for 25 minutes. Ellen uses a walker to get around and her hearing is poor. Maria rang the doorbell three times quickly before Ellen answered. When she answered the door, Maria was standing on the doorstep with her arms crossed. She sighed and shrugged her shoulders before saying hello, then opened the screen door before Ellen, who was reaching for the door handle, could open the door.



1. What message did Maria send with her body language?

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2. What do you think Maria should have done to send a more positive message?

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**\*\*Extra Credit\*\*** Consider...Have you ever been in a similar situation (as the recipient) or know someone who has? What happened? What did you learn from the experience?

## Reflection: Using Increased Awareness to Assist Clients



*Being aware of the signals we are sending through our body language and staying attentive to the nonverbal cues of others is not just for poker players! It can also help you improve communication with your clients.*

*Take a few minutes to think about what you learned today and jot down a few notes. If you care to, share your thoughts with a partner.*

1. What are two things in nonverbal communication (signals you send or pick up) that you discovered you are doing well with your client, or if you don't have a client yet, a friend or relative? (e.g. "I'm careful to maintain good eye contact when \_\_\_ is telling me a story, even the long ones that I have heard before!")

1.)

2.)

2. What are two things in nonverbal communication (signals you send or pick up) that you would like to improve? (e.g. "I want to be more observant of signs that my client is tiring when we go to the senior center, such as slower movement and slouching posture, so I can suggest we leave early if need be.")

1.)

2.)

## Body Language Cues: Tips for Assisting Clients



We communicate both explicitly, through words, and implicitly, through body language and voice inflection. Body language is most important when communicating feelings and attitude. Being aware of the nonverbal messages you are sending about your feelings and attitudes, and learning to pick up on cues that clients are sending, can help you improve your relationship with your client and your ability to assist them.

### Body Language Cues

Remember that different people (e.g., people of other cultures, generations, backgrounds, etc.) use and understand body language differently. So, as you proceed with caution, here are a few tips about reading a person's body language and being aware of your own.

- A client may indicate that he/she is enjoying time with you by being talkative, engaged, laughing, smiling, eyes opened wide, and animated.
- A client may indicate he/she is uncomfortable with you by being quiet or sullen, physically moving away or using aggressive language, fidgeting, giving you no eye contact or staring away.
- Crossing arms across the chest can indicate that a person is putting up an unconscious barrier, thinking deeply about what is being discussed, or expressing opposition, and/or the person may simply feel cold.
- Consistent eye contact can indicate that a person is thinking positively of what the speaker is saying. Some people who do not maintain eye contact may be experiencing anxiety or discomfort, and/or their lack of eye contact may be rooted in their own cultural norms (e.g. averting the eyes may be a sign of respect). Lack of eye contact can also indicate negative feelings or distraction. An averted gaze, touching the ear or scratching the chin, may indicate disbelief. However, it may also indicate eyestrain or simple itchiness.
- Boredom is indicated by the head tilting to one side, or by the eyes looking straight at the speaker but becoming slightly unfocused. However, a head tilt may also indicate a sore neck, and unfocused eyes may indicate ocular problems in the listener.

### Awareness of your Body Language

To use body language to reinforce the positive verbal messages you send to your client such as *I am not in a hurry; I sympathize; I am interested, I am here to help, etc.*

- Speak in a low, soft tone of voice.
- Listen actively and keep eye contact.
- Smile, move slowly and don't be in a hurry.
- Never be a "clock watcher". Your clients need to feel validated, loved and cherished. They need to know that someone really cares what they think, feel and say. They need to know that they matter and that their opinions count.

Be conscious of negative messages you might be unintentionally sending through body language, such as: *I feel impatient; I am bored; I disapprove, etc.* Common mistakes volunteers make without realizing it include speaking too quickly or too loudly; frowning, sighing, and fidgeting when a client is talking.

## Cultural Differences

If you and your client do not share the same cultural backgrounds, be aware of nonverbal messages you may be sending that could be misunderstood by your client, especially if you are just getting to know each other. For example,

- Eye contact varies; some people perceive too much eye contact as aggressive.
- Some people do not like to be casually touched.
- A loud tone of voice, or a stern expression, might be misinterpreted as anger or disapproval.

The best advice is to be cautious until you learn your client's preferences and needs. Here are some recommended volunteer practices:

- Be careful when trying to interpret what is meant by a gesture or action. Tolerance is the best policy; try not to take things personally.
- If your client's primary language is not the same as yours, listen closely, speak slowly and enunciate words. Paraphrase to summarize what was said, and ask questions.
- Be open-minded. Take it slow and easy until you and your client get to know each other well. Have a friendly discussion about upbringing and background; find the things you have in common.
- Finally, there is always something interesting to learn about other cultures! On your own, or with your client, you might like to attend a community festival or ceremony commemorating an important event, or read books, watch movies, view art, listen to music, and try new foods. You may want to attend a cultural awareness workshop if it is offered in your community.



**Honing your Observation Skills: Suggestions for Activities** (This may be activities you and your client could do together.)

- Go “people watching” in the park or mall to see how people commonly communicate with each other. Notice how far apart people stand when they are talking to each other or waiting in line.
- Notice gestures used when giving directions such as “Come here.” or “I’ll take one of those.” Pay attention to how people get another person’s attention. For example, if most people snap their fingers, you can guess that this is normal and not considered rude.
- Check what gestures people have for expressing complete thoughts like “I don't know” or “That's crazy!” For example, American English speakers draw a circle around one ear to indicate “crazy”.
- Pay attention to facial expressions, particularly the eyes and mouth. Do expressions seem restrained? Exaggerated?

Source: National Senior Corps Association.

## **Additional Resources: Paying Attention to Body Language**

Are you interested in learning more about the topics covered in this workshop? You may find the following online resources helpful. References consulted for this module are also included in this handout.

**Exploring Nonverbal Communication** provides information and short quizzes on nonverbal communication, including proximity, facial expressions, voice, and gestures, and cross-cultural communications. The website also advertises a University of California video series on nonverbal communication for training purposes, available for rental or purchase: <http://nonverbal.ucsc.edu/>.

**Nonverbal Communication: The Hidden Language of Emotional Intelligence** (Jeanne Segal, PhD and Jaelline Jaffe, PhD) is a helpful article posted on the website "HelpGuide.org" about how body language contributes to the quality of communication, and consequently, the quality of our personal relationships: [http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq6\\_nonverbal\\_communication.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/eq6_nonverbal_communication.htm). **HelpGuide.org** is a noncommercial resource for nonprofits and covers a variety of other topics around health and wellness: <http://www.helpguide.org/>.

**The Nonverbal Dictionary of Gestures, Signs and Body Language Cues** was developed by David B. Givens, Ph.D. at the Center for Nonverbal Studies, a private, nonprofit research center in Spokane, Washington. The website contains an A to Z listing of items and topics, with citations, researched by scientists studying human communication, including anthropologists, linguists, psychiatrists, and others: <http://members.aol.com/nonverbal2/diction1.htm>.

### **Module References**

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Mehrabian, Albert. 1972. *Nonverbal communication*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Mori, Isabelle. Gestures from Around the World. <http://isabelle-mori.homestead.com/questionsgestus.html> (accessed June 2, 2008).

National Senior Corps Association. <http://www.nscatogether.org/>.

## Training Feedback Survey

Please help us improve our training sessions by providing feedback on the training you attended. Thank you!

Training/Session Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Program you serve with:  SCP  RSVP  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please rate this session using the following scale:**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The subject matter was presented effectively.					
2. The facilitator was knowledgeable.					
3. The facilitator responded to questions.					
4. There were enough opportunities for discussion.					
5. The written materials are useful.					
6. The session met my expectations.					
7. As a result of this training, I gained new knowledge applicable to my volunteer assignment.					
8. I plan to apply what I learned at this session.					

9. What did you like best about this session?

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10. What would have improved this session?

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**Thank You! Your feedback will help us to improve our training!**