

# THE BENEFITS OF UNDERSTANDING MICRO FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

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A person may try to lie to you with their words or even behavior, but micro facial expressions are hard to fake. Knowing how this non-verbal side of the human nature works will lift you on a whole new level of understanding body language.

Can you apply this body language skill anywhere and everywhere in the world? You bet!

That brilliant TV show called 'Lie To Me' relies a lot on body language and understanding facial expressions to solve crimes. In the show, the main character who has complete understanding of body language, manages to prove that facial expressions are universal.

A fun fact for fans: The show was inspired and written according to the actual groundbreaking findings of Dr. Paul Ekman who decoded the human face and proved the existence of universal emotions. This means that people all over the world make the same expressions for happiness, anger, fear, sadness, and so on.

Also, people born blind will make exactly the same micro facial expressions, even though they've never seen other people's face. Isn't that fascinating? What's even more fascinating is the speed in which an emotional reaction occurs.

### Hustlers and Their Trouble with Micro Facial Expressions

When you ask someone a question their face needs one quarter of a second to react. This micro facial expression happens involuntarily and most of the time without our knowledge.

Reading micro expressions is a very important part of my body language training. Even the best hustlers in the world have trouble erasing their true emotions from their face, and you should use this fact to your advantage.

There are seven universal microexpressions: disgust, anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise and contempt. They often occur as fast as 1/15 to 1/25 of a second.

According to Joe Navarro in his Psychology Today article:

"What is important for observers is that while these behaviors do occur, we must not attach more meaning to them than we should. Shows such as *Lie to Me* (now cancelled) made it seem that if you saw one of these behaviors then the person is lying. Nothing could be further from the truth. For as Ekman, Frank, DePaulo, Burgoon, and Vrij have repeatedly told us, there is no single behavior indicative of deception. 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?

So let's that a look at some of the more the basic, easier to detect clues and cues that will help you 'read' someone's facial expressions:

#### 1. HEAD

Look for Mismatched Signals

In the western world people shake their head when wanting to say NO, and nod it up and down to say yes. Be careful with a person that tells you something is ok, but shaking their head at the same time. This might be a hot spot.

#### 2. FACE

- If someone is hiding their lips (rolling them over their mouth) while answering a question, chances are you're dealing with a liar. This behavior is similar to covering your mouth with your hand.

- People constantly touch their faces, but if someone increases the intensity of scratching when asked a tough question, it's time to sound the alarm!

- People covering their face or eyes while they speak might have a hard time accepting a painful truth.

- Dupers Delight is a common signal among criminals signified by a big smile before answering a potentially very incriminating question. There's nothing happy about the situation or having to answer the question, but they still smile before answering.

And according to Navarro:

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 behavior are not only repetitive, they may increase in severity under stress and at times become very fast. Incidentally, as he mentioned in his fantastic book [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
- Asymmetry also applies to discord between what is said with what the body is transmitting, such as saying, "I love you" with clenched teeth or a tense face.

Facial gestures of Contempt or Disdain:

- A smirk (corner of mouth tightens on one side, dimples, or pulls toward eye or ear)
- Nose high haughty attitude
- Rolling of the eyes
- Looking dismissively askance

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.

When you see these tipoffs, it's because deep down inside— below the level they'll admit to—they are likely stressed about the subject matter and the story they're telling about it.

So, watch for these before they answer that tough question.

If you wish to learn more about body language and how it all comes together, make sure to check out my book 'How to Detect Lies, Fraud and Identity Theft - Field Guide.'

Your new skills won't only serve to catch liars and fraudsters.

Understanding how body language works, and even better, using that knowledge in your daily life brings many additional benefits:

#### 1. Understanding Emotions Makes for a Better Workplace

Knowing what people feel and addressing issues as they arise will help you develop good relations with your employees and co-workers. Being sensitive to other people's feeling can open up a world of opportunities for new friendships.

#### 2. It Raises Your Capacity for Empathy

Understanding how someone feels makes you appreciate what they're going through. This creates a higher level of empathy within you.

#### 3. Knowing How People Think Upgrades Your Social Skills

After you've learned how people function and what drives them, it becomes much easier to talk to anyone and get to know them better. This behavior brings good vibes to the work environment and in the circle of the family and friends as well.

If you're interested in discovering more about how body language works, how to connect with people, and become a better leader, feel free to give us a call and schedule Traci's online Fraud Spotting training.



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