

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Lecture No # 21
Module No # 05
Happiness and Body Language

Welcome to this talk on happiness and body language. One of the major challenges that we all have is that how do we communicate happiness or how do we communicate emotion? We all know that emotion is very easy to understand, but very difficult to communicate. More often we try to communicate without having any formal training for that and we have a tendency to communicate everything through our verbal languages, vocal and verbal languages. In today's talk we will try to understand what are the different ways we can communicate happiness?

As I said communication is a very intricate process and if you fail to communicate your intent we cannot deliver the content that we want to communicate. So for any communication, three things are important- the context in which we are trying to communicate, the content what we are trying to communicate and the intent, that what is the feeling behind it. If all three things come together, then probably we would be able to communicate what we intended to.

In this talk, we will try to understand specifically the role of body language in communicating happiness. As I said, none of us are trained in communicating any kind of emotional signal to others more often, we have been trained to communicate through verbal languages with or without guidance. So today's talk is basically on nonverbal communication that is a kind of communication which is written nowhere known by none but understood by all.

It is an universal language, it is an universal communication pattern, but how we do it what are those channels, and what are those implications we will be talking, about it.

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How does body language show happiness?

- How much of emotion communication verbal?
- What are channels of nonverbal communication?
- How do we communicate happiness?



Source: Getty image

So the question we have how does body language show happiness? Now you can see somebody is giggling in the photograph. Now the lady must not have been saying too many things but a simple gesture is giving us enough clues that she is happy she is amused. Question therefore, how much of our emotion communication verbal and how much it is nonverbal. Now if it is non-verbal then, what are the channels, what do we mean by nonverbal communication?

And then if we have several channels of communicating, what are those channels more often used in order to communicate happiness. These are the questions we are trying to address here. Put together, we express our emotions, feelings through different sources, through different channels primarily, verbal and nonverbal. If it is verbal then of course it, has got a meaning, it offers a meaning, and more often that meaning becomes redundant in face of how we say rather than what we say?

So, the question of nonverbal communication or body language becomes primary if we are interacting with someone with certain degree of feeling or intent. But if it is a logical processing, suppose if it is a classroom talk, then of course the verbal content becomes more, predominant. But if it is something which relates to as we mentioned about our connectedness, our belongingness, our happiness, which we want to convey with others through sharing then nonverbal communication becomes more important.

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Keywords

- Nonverbal communication
- Facial expression
- Paralanguage
- Kinesics
- Proxemics



Source: Getty image [unsplash]

Let us try to understand certain keywords. As I said nonverbal communication is not verbal. Somebody has said that well we try to talk too many things in order to show our expressions but God has given us speech only to hide our thought. We do not intend to we if we intend to talk something else but we are talking something different, there is always a degree of incongruity. So although we have got 2 different channels main, verbal and non-verbal channels of communication, there is often incongruity.

So nonverbal communication is a communication as I said which is, written nowhere known by none understood by all. And these channels I have written in the following words, one is face, because face is the major purveyor, a platform or a mediator of our expressions of emotion, we will discuss about it. Paralanguage is something which is more of vocal language rather than verbal language.

We make a difference between what we have said and how we have said paralanguage is extra linguistic characteristics which is how we have said rather than what we have said. Kinesics is a channel which is about gestures what kind of gestures we put forward when we try to communicate with others the gestural signals. And proxemics is a science of space that is the metric analysis of space, how much distance we are actually maintaining between the 2 interactants.

Therefore, these are the channels through which nonverbal communications are sent and in the photograph also you can see how the sign language or the language using your hand could convey meaning even without speaking a single word.

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Communication: Misconceptions

- Communication is always a conscious process
- Ability to communicate is an exclusive capacity of human beings
- Adults communicate better than children
- Good communicator has the capacity to deceive better
- We express ourselves better in verbal than nonverbal communication

Now, we have many misconceptions about communication. One is that communication is always a conscious process that we communicate knowing everything that we intend to. Much of our communication is unintended, we may be speaking something we may think that well I can lie or I can deceive someone with my feeling. But these feelings can have a nonverbal leakage we call it leak that nonverbal leakage will signify that no you are not telling the truth.

So communication is not always a conscious process, we believe that we can act the way our mind acts. Many times it happens that, our subconscious mind actually reveals our true intent which is different from the conscious intent. We believe that the ability to communicate is an exclusive capacity to human being. Now animal world also has their capability to communicate each other and they have been doing it very regularly.

Those who are in the comparative psychological sciences, they actually try to understand how animals communicate with each other. They also have belongingness they also have got certain groups, they also have the communities, they also interact very frequently and they interact through different ways. It may not be through verbal means but there are nonverbal means as well.

We have a misconception that those who have grown up better they probably are communicating better than the children. But the, children can actually communicate better than the adults; because children can communicate very spontaneously. And spontaneous expressions do not require a special understanding to get the intent behind. So if a child cries

the mother understand this cry is meant for certain personal belonging that he or she is wanting to or it is out of certain physical pain.

So children can communicate better, because they are more spontaneous, adults can communicate much less because they are less spontaneous. We also have a misconception that good communicator has the capacity to deceive better those who can speak better, those who can communicate better they can deceive better. But deception is not within the control of a good communicator as I said there are leakages available.

The very purpose of, having this talk is to let you know that if you are truly happy then you do not need to be a good communicator, your expressions will tell all. But if you are a good communicator still, and you are not happy you want to pretend happiness, you would not be able to make it. So we express better in our nonverbal communication, though our belief is that we communicate better in verbal communication as, compared to nonverbal communication. So these are certain misconceptions we have about communication.

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Why do we fail to communicate happiness?

- We fail to listen to others
- We process information differently
- We make incorrect assumptions
- We fail to articulate (what to say)
- We fail to express nonverbally (how to say)

Question is why do we fail to communicate happiness? Because you must have noticed by now that more often we do not communicate with happiness. Although we intend to, the reason is that we fail to listen to others if we are more engrossed with ourselves in order to communicate our point of view we, would not be able to express it innocently. Therefore if we do not listen to others we will not be able to communicate better. People who can communicate better happiness their ability to process information is different.

Therefore those who are interested in camouflaging their thought process not having the right kind of intent they want to actually express what they have been feeling then, they would process information differently. Because our feeling has three components one component is how we perceive, how we experience and how we express. These three things are very difficult to align unless they are spontaneously executed.

So if your happiness is not spontaneous your ability to perceive happiness in others, your ability to express happiness properly and your ability to experience happiness will not come together. This alignment will not come appropriately if you are not trying to show any kind of spontaneous happiness to others if it is camouflaged it would be difficult. So, therefore if we are not making any spontaneous attempt then we will make incorrect assumptions about others.

When we interact with others we believe that we have certain false assumptions that possibly, the person in front of me is not good. So if our assumptions are incorrect then in that case we would not be able to show our happiness. And therefore its important that we understand how we process information when we make a correct expression of happiness, what to articulate and how to articulate? If there is an incongruity if there is an inconsistency between these two then also we have not be able to communicate properly. So these are the reasons why we fail to communicate.

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The primary functions of NV communication

- Express our emotions
- Establish interpersonal relationships
- Supplement meaning to verbal interactions
- Reflect attitude, predisposition & personality
- Perform rituals, customs in a society



Source: Getty image [unsplash]

Now, the primary functions of nonverbal communication let us try to understand. As I said verbal communication is important but nonverbal communication is equally more important. Someone said that the verbal communication is responsible for communicating a content only 7 percent. Vocal is slightly higher, close to 35 percent, and rest of the communication is done

primarily through nonverbal means through gestures through your facial expressions, and through other kinds of channels.

So expressing our emotions is the primary function, establishing interpersonal relationship is the secondary function I mean not secondary I mean through this only we develop our interpersonal relationship. We as supplement verbal, interactions with our nonverbal means for example, if I want someone to do it very emphatically we said this has to be done. That is we have been telling it verbally at the same time we are trying to supplement it.

So it supplements or verbal interaction, it reflects our attitude that what kind of attitude I have with you what kind of personality I have. If I am an introvert person I will not use too, much of body language if I am an extrovert person I will have a tendency to flight into the reality introverts always go flight have a flight away from reality and extroverts always have a flight into the reality.

So their body language changes in this process and I mean it is nonverbal communication is also important for performing rituals customs in a society. Therefore we understand that, nonverbal communication has a great role in our day-to-day interaction and also in terms of finding our happiness.

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Channels of nonverbal behavior

- Facial expressions of emotions
- Paralanguage or vocalics
- Gesture or kinesics
- Gaze behavior
- Interpersonal space or proxemics




Source: Getty image

So the channels of nonverbal communication that we have are five, one is facial expressions of emotions that is the face itself we'll slightly know better than this concept. Paralanguage or vocalics gesture or kinesics gaze behaviour how we look it at and interpersonal space or



proxemics. So, proxemics, kinesics, vocalics, and facial expressions are the primary channel through which we express our happiness. Let us try to understand one after another.

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Facial expressions

- The face is exposed to the full view of others for the facility of the social system and interaction
- The amount (especially in a short period of time) & kind (emotional, attitudinal) of information that it conveys is easy to comprehend
- Total impact of message: 0.07 verbal + 0.38 vocal + 0.55 facial (Mehrabian, 1972)



Now, the most important channel of our expression is face because face is exposed to the full view of others. You can hide other portions of your body but you would not be able to other portions of your body in your day to day daily interactions. Therefore face is exposed to the full view of others for the facility of the social system and interaction. And the importance of face in communication is primarily because in a very short period of time it can convey lot of meaning.


A slight tinker in your face will allow me to understand whether you would like me or not a slight tinge of your muscle movement in the face will let me know whether, you are disgusted or whether you are happy with me or not. So the kind of information and the amount of information that goes through face is actually enormous. Therefore face can communicate happiness not only happiness, all kinds of emotions happy, sad, fear, anger, surprise, disgust, all emotions are actually better expressed through facial expressions.

So someone like as I mentioned you earlier Mehrabian, 1972 mentioned that the total impact of a message that we get at any point of time 7 percent is only verbal, 38 percent is vocal means how we said verbal means what we have said and 55 percent is facial. That is majority of our communicative potential lies in the facial expressions of emotion. Therefore our ability to communicate happiness is best reciprocated through face.

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Facial expressions that go unnoticed..

- Evident during deception, masking
- Typically, last for less than .5 second
- Spontaneous & involuntary in nature
- Behavior leakage during stress, low confidence



<https://insights.sei.cmu.edu/blog/revealing-true-emotions-through-micro-expressions-a-machine-learning-approach/>

Now facial expressions as I said often go unnoticed because face has a capacity to express emotions in a very brief period it may be less than 500 Millisecond 0.5 second. And these expressions brief expressions remain for a very brief period therefore it is very easy to detect. Because our eyes cannot detect something which is below 200, millisecond so; often what the person has been trying to express go, unnoticed.


So researchers have been doing have been done in order to understand how faces are expressing now if a face is expressing something below 200 millisecond. Why I will not be able to capture it. We need a high speed camera in order to capture it and then analyze it whether the expression was genuine or not? So more often it happens that we try to deceive somebody but we fail to deceive within the first 200 millisecond.

Most of these expressions which are involuntary and spontaneous can be captured at a very brief period. So if the two photographs that I have been showing, one is of happiness other is of anger you will not find in a normal eye, the difference between these two. But if you analyze their facial expressions through different analysis or coding system, one of this coding system is, called facial action coding system.

These days we have got computationally guided coding system through those coding system we can understand how long that brief expression lasted and if the person is genuinely happy what was the facial configuration. Thereafter, in 200, millisecond actually the facial configuration starts changing if you want to deceive someone if you are trying to express, something what you are not intending to.


Therefore facial expressions often go unnoticed but other channels do not so we can see other channels as well.

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Paralanguage or vocalization

- Vocalization vs. Verbalization
- Implicit characters of speech
 - Voice qualities: Pitch sense, vocal lip control, articulation control, rhythm, tempo
 - Vocal characteristics: Non-language sounds like laughing, giggling, sobbing, crying, etc.
 - Vocal segregates: Non-words as uh-uh, which stands for affirmation and negation



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k17p07yR8g>



One such is called paralanguage or extra linguistic characteristics or vocalizations. So there is a fundamental difference between verbalization and vocalization. As I said verbalization means what is that you have been saying vocalization means, how we have been saying. Now you see what you say and what you mean there is always a difference in our communication. And those who are very keen watcher of this communication pattern they will not only understand what has been said they will try to understand how it has been said.

There are major qualities of speech which is like the quality of voice unit, the characteristic of the voice what kind of, vocal segregators you have in your speeches. So if you take a voice clip of 5 minutes and then electronically filter the content of it you will find the pitch, the timber, the vocal lip control, articulation control, the tempo, rhythm everything can be analyzed electronically.

The vocal characteristics like more often we have been saying something with some form of laughing some form of, giggling, sobbing, crying they are non-language sound but those sounds become a vocal characteristic. So how long you have been doing it, how well you have been doing it, these things can also be an indicator of the intent that you want to communicate. And then we have got vocal segregates. Vocal segregates are those which are non-words like we often say you know, now there is no meaning of the word you, know because I do not know you have not said it even.

So affirmation, negation we seek affirmation by saying you know now you know is a vocal segregator so we consider them they are all part of your vocalization system rather than your verbalization system. So paralanguage or vocalization is a process through which we can understand the emotion communication very effectively.

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The slide is titled "Proximal behavior & posture". It contains two main sections of bullet points. The first section, "Physical distance", lists: Intimate space, Personal space, Social space, and Public space. The second section, "Spacing behavior", lists: Informal vs. formal space arrangement, Face to Face vs. diagonal seating, and Familiarity & liking. To the right of the first section is a photograph of three people (two men and one woman) standing close together and smiling. Below this photo is the text "Source: Getty image (unplash)". In the bottom right corner of the slide is a video inset showing a man in a light blue shirt speaking. In the top right corner, there are two logos: the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) logo and the NPTEL logo.

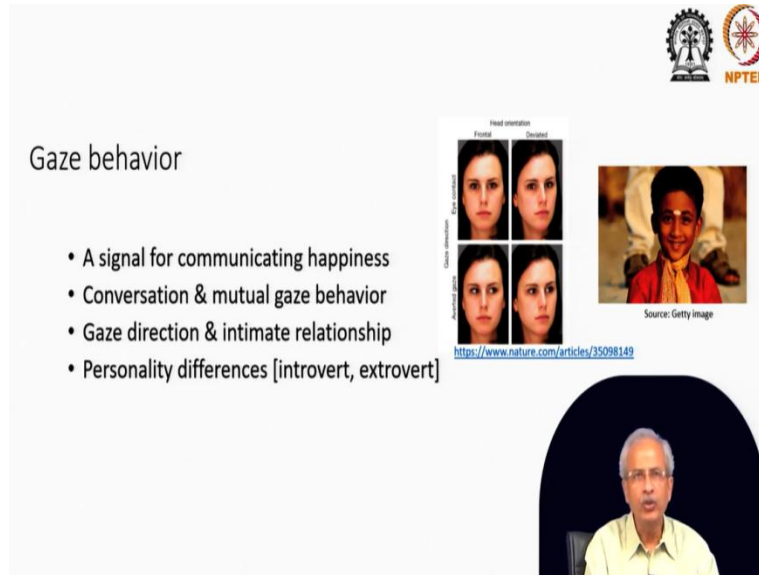
The next one is called, proximal behavior, what kind of proxemics is a science of which we often call the metric analysis of space. I mean it can be a physical space and it can be a spacing behavior. Now when you come in terms of physical space it can be intimate space, it can be personal space it can be social space or a public space. Now intimate space is generally the distance is within one I mean no distance to 1.5 feet.

Personal space is 1.5 feet to 3 feet generally it is and 3 feet to around 10 feet is called social space and if it is more than that it becomes a public space. So depending upon the kind of physical space we maintain during interaction the proxemics science has come up. Now spacing behavior is also very important is just not about stationary objects because human being when, they communicate they continuously change their spacing behavior.

So whether you are maintaining a formal space or informal space like in an interview situation we have a formal spacing arrangement. But the photograph that you see the friends have been talking to each other I mean this spacing suggests that it is in informal space is it a I mean it can be a face to face situation if it is a formal, space arrangement it would be a face to face situation.

But if it is informal space situation spacing behavior it would be diagonal so our familiarity liking, disliking, happiness, well-being, ill-being, everything is manifested how we are manipulating our space.

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The slide is titled "Gaze behavior" and features a list of four bullet points. To the right of the text is a composite image. At the top right of the slide are the logos of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and NPTEL. The composite image includes a 2x2 grid of faces showing different head orientations (Frontal, Deviated) and eye positions (Direct, Averted). To the right of this grid is a photograph of a smiling child. Below the grid is a URL: <https://www.nature.com/articles/35098149>. At the bottom right of the slide is a video inset showing a man in a yellow shirt speaking.

Gaze behavior

- A signal for communicating happiness
- Conversation & mutual gaze behavior
- Gaze direction & intimate relationship
- Personality differences [introvert, extrovert]

Head orientation: Frontal, Deviated
Eye position: Direct, Averted
Source: Getty image
<https://www.nature.com/articles/35098149>

How we look at it the look itself the gaze behavior is also important Gaze behavior is something it is a signal for communicating emotion or, emotion for happiness. When we converse with each other we mutually exchange our gaze it can be diagonal gaze it can be frontal Gaze by looking at the gaze you can also understand the kind of relationship you are maintaining. So gaze direction is also an important indicator for our social communication especially in happiness.

You can see the child his simple gaze suggests even if you do not see, the mouth region you can understand the child is very happy about it. There are personality differences of course introvert and extrovert they actually show different kinds of gaze behavior. So that is an important channel of communicating happiness.

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Staring & pupillary behavior

- A cue of interpersonal attraction
- Influence on other's behavior
- Conjugate eye movement
- Pupillary dilation/constriction



Source: Getty image (unsplash)

Staring and pupillary behaviour that your pupillary opening also gives you a cue to interpersonal attraction. So when we are interpersonally attracted, to each other our pupillary behavior also changes, it influences others as well. So the conjugate eye movement the two eyes whether it is going leftward out or rightward or if it is at a central fixation point with some degree of togetherness and how much people is getting dilated?

If you are interested with me your pupil will dilate if you are not interested in talking to me your pupils will not be, dilated. So the attraction is manifested through pupillary dilation or constriction if you are not attracted at all your pupillary dilation will not go. So it is also a channel through which you can actually communicate happiness.

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Touch & Tactile behavior

- Touch communication is an effective and intimate way to nurture relationship
- Touch involves physical attachment
- Effective tool for empathy



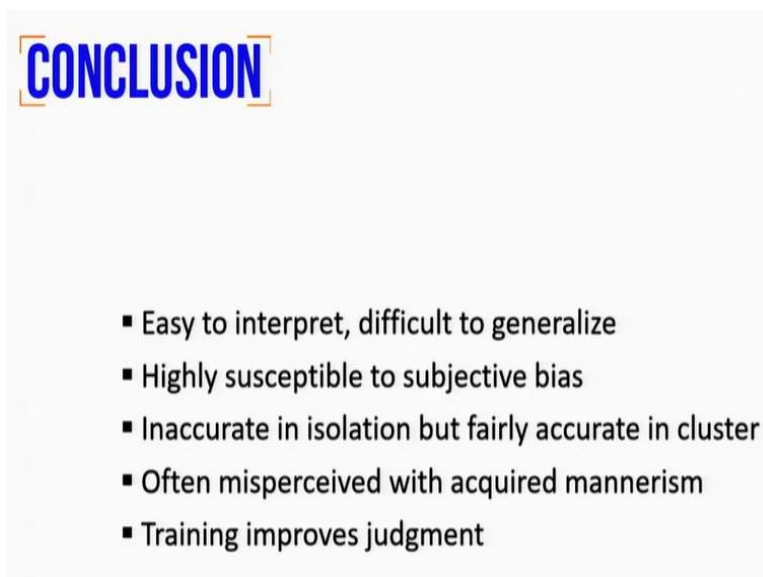
Source: Getty image

Touch behavior is another way to show your happiness touch communication is very effective it is a very intimate way to nurture relationship. If you want to communicate, happiness then

touch behavior is a very important way to show your happiness. So when we touch someone's feet to show our I mean grace to show our intimacy to someone. I think that touch behavior has become a part of a ritual today so we do not understand the real value it.

The real value is that you speak so many things in silence through touch so when mother touches a baby, the baby feels so comforted the mother does not need to tell the baby. So many things the baby may not even understand what the mothers have been saying but the touch behavior gives lot of joy for the baby and even if it is in the pain it can be comforted too so it is a very effective tool for empathy.

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CONCLUSION

- Easy to interpret, difficult to generalize
- Highly susceptible to subjective bias
- Inaccurate in isolation but fairly accurate in cluster
- Often misperceived with acquired mannerism
- Training improves judgment

So the conclusion is that well we have understood various kinds of nonverbal channels through, which we can communicate. They are very easy to interpret but very difficult to generalize you can't generalize it so easily. Because we all differ the way we express we may not differ much in the way we express verbally but there is a hell and heaven difference there is a great degree of heterogeneity in the way we express our happiness through non-verbal channel.

They are highly susceptible to, subjective bias if I want to see happiness in you may be in a non-happiness cue can also be perceived as happiness. So its highly susceptible to subjective bias is very inaccurate in isolation but when you see all the channels together like your facial expression your paralinguage your proxemics, your kinesics, your occulemics, your Gaze behavior, touch behavior when everything come together then it, becomes fairly accurate.

Some people may have got some kind of mannerism as well. Mannerism in this sense the blinking of eye not having a proper gaze direction may be part of their mannerism we may often misperceive that as well. So it requires a lot of training in order to improve upon your capacity to understand a particular emotion from someone. Especially I mean negative emotions like sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust.

Because happiness is something which is universally understood and Paul Ekman has done lot of research on this subject matter throughout the world is considered to be the father of nonverbal communication. And he has found after surveying 156 countries throughout the world that happiness is something which can be understood in 99 percent of the culture and 99 percent of the countries.

I mean irrespective of culture tribe caste or whatever be the anthropometric composition in that particular country. Therefore happiness is something which can very easily be understood non-verbally and if we try to understand this emotion very specifically through nonverbal channels we can isolate them into different ways and understand its importance in our social communication, differentially by putting some understanding that which channel is most important for expressing our happiness.

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So nonverbal communication is a book which is published by American psychological association that is a very important document if you want to go it for further. Thank you so much.