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Module Four: Reading People

Module Description
This module provides an introduction to kinesics or body language. You will briefly learn about the history and theory of kinesics and its primary creator. You will also learn how to understand people better by observing nonverbal characteristics such as posture, facial expression, and attire and verbal characteristics like pitch and vocal habits. By the time you complete this course, you will be able to gather information about a person from his speech, his appearance, his body language, and his surroundings.
Module Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Identify whether a person is lying, frustrated, happy, depressed, etc. from body language exhibited.
- Distinguish between the different types of nonverbal communication.
- Recognize behaviors in both familiar and unfamiliar acquaintances from verbal and nonverbal cues, including vocal traits, habits, and physical traits.
- Comprehend the motivations that keep people from seeing objectively.
- Apply techniques to improve communication and aid understanding.
- Discern aspects of personality from environmental context, including office, home, social, and geographic environments.
- Recognize hidden communications in conversation.

Key Terms

**Adaptors:** Postural changes and other movements that occur at a low level of awareness and are frequently made in order to feel more comfortable or to perform a specific physical function.

**Affective Displays:** Body (usually facial) movements that display a certain affective state, i.e. emotions.

**Body Language:** The gestures, postures, and facial expressions by which a person manifests various physical, mental, or emotional states and communicates nonverbally with others.

**Defense:** The act of defending against attack, danger or injury.

**Emblems:** Nonverbal messages that have a verbal complement.

**Empathy:** Understanding of another person’s situation, feelings or motives.
**Fear:** A feeling of agitation or anxiety caused by the presence or imminence of danger; apprehension.

**Illustrators:** Nonverbal messages used to illustrate what is being said.

**Kinesics:** The study of nonverbal body movements, such as gestures or facial expressions, as a systematic mode of communication.

**Regulators:** Nonverbal signs that regulate, modulate, and maintain the flow of speech during a conversation.

**Sympathy:** The act of sharing the feelings of another person or being affected by something in the same way as another person.

**Want:** The condition or quality of lacking something usual or necessary.
Lesson 1: Kinesics and Paths to Understanding

Lesson Topics
This lesson focuses on the following topics:

- Introduction
- History of Kinesics
- Types of Nonverbal Communication
- Mental Preparation
- Enemies of Objectivity
- The Path to Understanding People
Lesson Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify whether a person is lying, frustrated, happy, depressed, etc. from body language exhibited.
- Distinguish between the different types of nonverbal communication.
- Recognize behaviors in both familiar and unfamiliar acquaintances from verbal and nonverbal cues, including vocal traits, habits, and physical traits.
- Comprehend the motivations that keep people from seeing objectively.

Introduction

Most people consider themselves to be pretty good judges of character, but we all have times when we feel that we have been completely wrong about a person. In hindsight, we see indications of dishonesty or weakness that seem so clear that it's amazing we didn't notice them at first. We can be acquainted with someone for years and be blind to essential aspects of character that could potentially have helped in dealings with that person.

History of Kinesics

Kinesics, the scientific study of body language, was pioneered by the anthropologist Ray L. Birdwhistell. When Birdwhistell became a professor at the School of Communications of the University of Pennsylvania, Anneberg, he was very interested in nonverbal communication and body language and decided to spend most of his time there studying kinesics.

Dr. Birdwhistell did not study people on the street or in his classrooms; instead he primarily watched people's recorded interaction on film. Birdwhistell made an eighty-minute film of people in a London hotel pub. Along with Jacques van Velck, he studied the interactions between speakers and listeners throughout this film.
He realized that people were communicating with much more than just their words—their means of communication included facial expressions, posture, and eye movements. People weren’t even aware of the way they were using these other means of communication. Birdwhistell published his first book, Introduction to Kinesics, in 1952, based on his observations.

In his 1960 book, Kinesics & Context, Birdwhistell set forth six propositions about nonverbal communication:

- All body movements have potential meaning in communicative contexts.
- Behavior can be analyzed because of patterns and repetitions.
- Although body action has biological limits, the use of body motion in interaction is part of the social system.
- People’s visible bodily activity can influence others.
- Communicative functions of bodily activity can be studied.
- A person’s use of bodily activity will have unique, idiosyncratic aspects while also being part of a larger social system shared with others.

**Types of Nonverbal Communication**

Kinesics covers nonverbal communication related to the body’s movements. Generally, all communicative body movements are classified as kinesic. Nonverbal communication is very important and talked about a lot, but the forms of this type of communication often vary significantly from culture to culture. In 1969, Ekman and Friesen asserted that there were five distinctive types of nonverbal behavior:

- Adaptors
- Emblems
- Affective displays
- Illustrators
- Regulators
Adaptors are often thought of as the key to understanding what your conversation partner is truly thinking. This is because the motions (postural changes and other smaller movements) known as adaptors occur at a low level of awareness. Sometimes these motions are performed to increase comfort or execute a different physical purpose.

Confusion over the meaning of adaptors can arise from the fact that people often shift or move around when they are uncomfortable in a situation. Generally, this discomfort is not merely physical, but comes in part from the person with whom they are interacting or what that person is saying. However, adaptors can be just physical motions made in pursuit of comfort and in these cases it would be a misinterpretation to suggest that they have emotional dimensions.

Emblems are nonverbal signs that have a verbal complement. For example, during World War II, the British would hold up their index and middle finger in a V-shape, palm facing outward, to signify “victory.” This same emblem can mean peace in the United States. With the palm turned inward, facing the person making the gesture, it is used as an insult in some countries. Because emblematic messages are usually widely known, it is easy to recognize when one is used incorrectly.

Affective displays are movements of the body, primarily the face, that express certain emotions, sentiments or feelings. Affect is defined as a display of emotion. Normal affective displays communicate universal emotions that span all cultures, so they are usually easily understood. There is, however, a great deal of variation among individuals in the frequency and intensity of their affective displays.

A good example of this disparity in affect is the difference between facial expressions in people from the northern United States and people from the South. In the South, others may get offended if someone is very stoic because it is much more common for Southern people to smile at each other or even to themselves.
However, if a person were to go to New York and smile at everyone they met, they would probably be considered a bit crazy.

Another common kind of affective display is the gestures associated with anger in different parts of the world. Americans exhibit anger – not as frequently as Italians do, but more often than people from an Asian culture would. If an Asian person were to have a disagreement with an American, the American might think that the Asian was timid or condescending because of the lack of affective response, while the Asian might think that the American was hot-headed, even if both had equal conviction about their side of the argument.

_Illustrators_ are affective displays that can occur only in conversation, and can only be performed effectively by the person speaking. There is often no direct correlation between an illustrator and what is actually being said, but they generally perform text functions like speech. Some examples of illustrators are snapping, pointing, and tapping. Illustrators can be very important in a business context, because they tend to accentuate important points that a person is trying to make. They also help to draw interest to the words being spoken. Illustrators can be used to stress something and they also serve to indicate space, rhythm, direction or location.

_Regulators_ are nonverbal messages (kinesic or non-kinesic) that regulate, modulate and maintain the flow of speech during a conversation. These can include making an “mmm” or “uh-huh” sound, nodding, blinking or raising eyebrows. Regulators are usually performed by the person listening. It is often considered impolite not to offer regulators during the course of a conversation. In their absence, offense is likely because the speaker could assume that the listener’s silence equals disinterest or boredom.
The World Around You

No one can deny that communication in the world has changed a lot in the last century. As it has become easier to interact with people without seeing them, it seems that we have lost some of the interpersonal sensibilities that existed when people primarily communicated face-to-face. Even the most important people in our lives, we sometimes see only occasionally. Because of this, we must work extra hard to understand the people we come into contact with.

Mental Preparation

Your attitude and attention must be prepared and honed to discern an individual's motivation and predispositions from physical indicators. When you meet someone for the first time (or even if you're just catching up with an old friend), be attentive to what he is saying and not saying. Spend enough time with him so that you can get beyond the surface of things. If you would normally just have a five-minute conversation, stretch it out to 15 minutes. To get someone to open up to you, it helps if you are open with him. It isn't a bad idea to reveal something personal, even in business transactions.

If you are trying to sell something to someone, for example, bringing up a pet or talking about a family member without getting into too much detail may enhance your listener's perception of who you are. Suddenly, you are no longer a salesman, but a caring neighbor who has a dog named Mitzi. Remember that you can share aspects of yourself while still remaining objective about the person you are interacting with. Try to be objective even with people with whom you have emotional bonds. Try to see what strangers see when they look at your friends or family members. It is important to set aside prejudice and bias to ensure that you don't misjudge someone.
Enemies of Objectivity

There are several reasons that people lose their objectivity and it is very important that you identify these states of mind so that you can recognize when your judgment is clouded and take a step back to regroup and assess people clearly. We will now discuss the four main situations that keep people from being objective.

Emotional Attachment

The most common situation that leads to a loss of objectivity is emotional attachment. This doesn’t happen just with people whom you love or like – any emotional conviction can lead to a loss of objectivity. So if there is someone whom you strongly dislike or even hate, you will probably not be able to see other aspects of his character very clearly. For instance, if you particularly dislike a man because he’s on the school board and snapped at you in a PTA meeting in front of many of your friends, you may be less likely to entertain the possibility that he is actually a very friendly person whose wife had left him only the day before the meeting.

The truth is that once we form an opinion about someone, we prefer to leave it the way it is. Also, if we commit to an opinion of a person and express it strongly to others, we don’t like to have to tell other people that we have changed our mind. Most people don’t like change so it naturally follows that we prefer people to continue playing the characters we have selected for them, even if that means relegating someone to a negative position when, in actuality, we could be quite good friends with her. The opposite situation occurs as well, when we over-emphasize people’s positive aspects. For example, if a woman begins a relationship with a man and focuses only on his positive features while failing to see larger problems (like heavy drinking or often avoiding eye contact with her), she is likely to ignore these negative aspects of his character and persist in her belief in his overriding goodness.
When friendly relationships become business relationships, this is likely to happen. In this case, it is usually because of a confusion of roles. We are used to being much more objective and even critical when it comes to dealing with people in business situations. When we mentally accept that a friend is now a business associate, we are likely to be much more critical of his dealings with us. For example, the chronic tardiness that we've laughed about for years at parties becomes a liability when he shows up 20 minutes late to an important meeting for which we have rearranged our schedule.

If we had truly understood this aspect of his character from the beginning, we could have either chosen not to deal with him in a business context or altered our approach and insisted from the beginning that we would only do business with him if he altered his problematic conduct. While a requirement like that might surprise him at first, he should know that you are treating him as you would any business associate, which will hopefully result in honest dealings and no resentment in your friendship after your business dealings are complete.

**Fear**
We've all heard stories about people in particularly frightening situations where they experience a rush of adrenaline and forget their own strength only to perform phenomenal acts that humans shouldn't be able to do. When they get that adrenaline rush and see that a family member or other person is in danger, their brain focuses only on stopping a tragedy. Fear pushes out rational thought. If the person stopped to be rational, he would know that he couldn't lift a heavy fallen tree from his daughter's body, for example. But he does not acknowledge that.

While fear is a great motivator in that particular stressful situation, it is something that almost always affects judgment.
This is why serious threats and torture are such effective means of getting information out of people—they are much more willing to give up secrets if they fear for their lives or the lives of those close to them.

Fear manifests itself in many ways in relationships. You've probably heard stories from girlfriends of men afraid of commitment who choose to run from that responsibility even when they care deeply for the woman. This is a great example of fear clouding judgment. If the man were able to put his fear aside with someone to whom he was close, his chances of looking at the situation rationally and being able to objectively measure the consequences of staying in the relationship would be much better—perhaps good enough to plunge ahead. He would also be better able to objectively measure the qualities of his partner. Fear manifested in personal relationships usually has to do with pain. Most likely, he is not just afraid of commitment but is afraid of the pain that his partner could cause him if he gets too emotionally involved.

The best way to overcome a fear like this, as with most fears, is with knowledge. One method would be to write down the fears that you have regarding the situation. What are the worst things that could happen if you remain in the relationship? What are the worst things that could happen if you get out of it? If you remain in the relationship, perhaps things could go on for quite some time and then end terribly with your partner leaving you. But if you get out of the relationship, you could get into a really bad one and lose your original partner forever.

Making these lists will help to subdue the fear associated with the experience. By acknowledging your fears and the possible consequences of each situation, you can remain a bit more objective about it. Generally, we will choose the situation that is least likely to be painful in the end.
But if the fears turn out to be roughly equal, a list makes it easier to look at them and judge which is more likely to produce a positive outcome in the end. With this method, you can learn to make better decisions in all your life situations and to judge people more fairly despite your fears.

**Want**

Most likely, at some point in your life, someone has told you “Don't go to the grocery store hungry.” The reason for this is that you tend to make poor decisions about food when you are very hungry. You’re less likely to think about the nutritional benefit of something if all you want is something to fill your stomach. So perhaps you end up with potato chips and cake instead of chicken and vegetables.

A similar sort of reasoning can apply to many situations in life. If you are in desperate need of an apartment because you waited too long to look for one, for example, you're more likely to make compromises in your true desires. Perhaps you'll take an apartment that costs too much or you'll cave in and agree to a location twice as far from your job as you had wanted. Need makes us bend our true priorities—it makes us settle.

One of the best examples of this behavior in interpersonal relationships is the infamous “rebound” relationship. When a relationship ends, we find ourselves wanting physical and emotional affection and so, instead of taking time to objectively figure out what we need or want in a relationship, we jump into a relationship with someone who fulfills only the most basic of our relationship requirements. The sharper our sense of want, the more clouded our judgment.

So what is the best way to deal with the way that want distorts our objectivity? Finding something that will tide you over is really the best way to subdue your need. If you’re going grocery shopping, have a snack before you go.
If you find that you’re likely to choose an apartment that is inadequate for your actual housing needs, ask a friend if you can sleep on her couch for a couple of weeks, or perhaps you can pay a fine and an extra month’s rent to your current landlord so that you’ll have a bit more time to find an adequate location.

As far as the rebound relationship goes, spend time with your closest friends and family often so you don’t feel as intense a need to be with someone romantically. You’ll find that interim solutions can help you get a firmer grip on your situation and will pave the way for permanent solutions to your problems.

**Defensiveness**

In the same way that we lose our objectivity because of fear, we also lose it from defensiveness. Have you ever heard the phrase “Kill ‘em with kindness”? It basically means that you’re likely to get a lot further with someone if you’re nice to her, rather than mean or critical. When people feel they are being attacked, they shut down and lose their neutrality. Even with issues on which they would easily have compromised, if they feel they are being challenged, then they’re likely to stop negotiation. Suddenly, less-firm opinions become set in stone.

Honestly, there are very few times in life where you will want someone to be defensive if you actually want to accomplish anything with the person besides making her mad. Few people will respond to intimidation or aggravation with anything besides defensiveness (usually manifested as anger). The idea that bosses, for example, should be imposing and somewhat volatile is false. Think of a cornered animal, muscles tensed, hair raised—this is an animal that will bite. Humans experience the same defense mechanism when they feel threatened.

If you are being attacked, your senses will be alert but you will probably not be impartial. Your focus becomes defense, not compromise or interaction. The actual subject being discussed loses importance.
This is true regardless of whether your opponent actually intends to attack you or means well and has just misspoken. When you are in a situation like this, try to take a step back for a moment and determine whether or not the person means to upset or intimidate you. If he does, then reacting calmly and accepting his demands or agreeing with him is likely to throw him off kilter. He will not expect this.

If you are participating in a conversation with more important consequences, something in which you have a clear stake, you need to try to understand what the other person is saying and what his problems are. Keeping a clear head and really listening will help you withdraw your defenses and understand the issue and how best to handle it. You will also be able to read the other person more thoroughly without your defenses up.

**The Path to Understanding People**

**Make It Personal**

Remember that dealing with someone in a more personal capacity, even when you are reluctant to do so, helps your understanding of him. Speaking to someone in person is preferable to speaking to him on the phone. And talking on the phone is more personal than sending an e-mail. Whenever you have the opportunity to make an interaction more personal, do it. When you can look someone in the eye or hear his voice, you have a definite advantage and more opportunities for insight.

With e-mail, positive or negative undertones are often missed, whether in formal or informal dealings. For example, if you write a friendly e-mail to a friend and ask how she is doing, you may get a reply back that starts with “I’m doing fine.” But in truth, her mother may be sick and you have no way to know what’s really going on, because you can’t hear the tone in her voice or see the pained expression on her face. So when it comes down to it, all communication is not equal.
A lot of the problems with communication have to do with the size of the places we live now. If you've ever been in a small town, like, say, Philipsburg, Montana, population 780, you've witnessed that small-town friendliness that seems so foreign to people from larger cities. Why is that? Well the people in Philipsburg have one stop light and only a handful of restaurants and bars. They see each other regularly in their one grocery store or at the gas station. They have festivals to which the whole town comes and plays that everyone sees. Basically, they just have every opportunity to know the people around them. Chances are that if you're in their town, they'll meet you sooner or later, so it may as well be sooner.

In larger cities, there's a bigger fear of the unknown. Children are taught from an early age not to talk to strangers. There's a fear of kidnapping, of safety in almost every parent's mind. As the children become adults, they have most likely appropriated this fear as well. Even when someone genuinely likes people, he's spent so much of his life avoiding others that meeting someone new or just communicating with someone he doesn't know well can become stressful, and this spills over into more intimate relationships as well. So, the question is: what can we do to make ourselves more in tune with those around us, be they strangers or friends? Don't just listen to their words; learn to read the messages in their actions and appearance.

**Banish Bias**

Generally, if you have a specific opinion of men from, say, Milwaukee, this judgment has come from previous experience with men from that city. And while your judgment of character could be quite accurate, there is also a good possibility that this judgment is actually based in one of the four issues that lead to loss of objectivity. Perhaps you dated a man from Milwaukee and found that work was much too important to him and you noticed that his friends also had this preoccupation, which you feel is quite skewed.
As a result, when you are considering hiring a project manager from the same place, you worry that the two of you will have difficulties agreeing on how many hours need to be devoted to a specific project. As you interview him, he makes a comment about how important work is to him and how he wants to make sure that adequate time is devoted to each and every project. How do you think that your preconception about someone from his location affects his chances of getting hired?

Chances are, you would give a woman from New York more credit if she had made the same comment about work ethics. If you do have biases, it’s important for you to acknowledge them and then work to move past them. If you know someone is coming in about whom you may have a specific opinion, say an oilman or a recent college graduate, remind yourself that the person is the same as everyone else and there is no reason to form an opinion about him until you have met him and he has given you adequate reason for a specific impression.

No matter the age, gender, race, sexual preference, clothing or nationality of an individual, all people have unique characteristics that combine to make them who they are. No single trait will determine someone's whole personality. That said, determining whether to hire the man from Milwaukee based upon your interpretation of his work comment and your view of his home town is not good practice. Make sure that you look at as many aspects as possible of a person to best judge him as a whole.

**Committing to Your Judgments**

One of the most necessary steps to reading people effectively is following through with the conclusion that you have reached about them in your negotiations or interaction with them. If you hire an interior designer and she constantly belittles your own design ideas and tries to coerce you into letting her have free rein over your home, and everything that you observe about her predicts a bad ending for
your redecoration, then it is your responsibility to yourself to fire her and find someone who is more open to your opinions and who is willing to compromise and work cooperatively with you on the project.

Reading people effectively goes beyond making an accurate assessment. If you choose not to take action after you assess their character and their relationship to you, you are worse off because you now know their true nature and haven't done anything to better the situation. This could happen because you don't feel confident about your judgment or because you think you should give them the benefit of the doubt.

Many people are likely to continue going to a psychologist who makes them uncomfortable or to stick with a piano teacher who doesn't challenge them just because they don't want to hurt the person's feelings. Even in relationships, some people stay with their significant others out of habit and a feeling of responsibility for the other person, even when they have identified the person's negative character traits and realize that the positive thing to do would be to end it. Commit to your judgments. Try to take your time making them, but when you do, it is imperative that you follow through on them or you will end up in the unfortunate situation of being aware of everything that is wrong with a person or situation, yet unwilling to change it for the better.

A good way to determine whether or not you should act on a decision you have made about a person with whom you deal regularly is to ask yourself this question: if someone new were to enter your life and occupy the same position, be it husband, friend or dentist, and this person exhibited the exact same characteristics as the one you are acquainted with, would you accept him or her in that position? If the answer is “no” and history is the only thing keeping you connected to this person, then your assessment of the person is probably correct and you should remove him or her from that role in your life.
Lesson Summary

While pioneering the study of body language, Dr. Ray L. Birdwhistell made films of people interacting and used these to study nonverbal communication and to support his basic propositions about it. He believed that all body movement has the potential to communicate meaning to other people and that it can be studied and analyzed. Everyone's use of body language is unique and has the potential to influence others.

There are five types of nonverbal communication, as described by Ekman and Friesen. Adaptors are minor postural adjustments that occur at a low level of awareness and can sometimes be misinterpreted as emotional rather than physical discomfort. Emblems are nonverbal signs with a verbal complement, like the V hand sign representing “victory.” Affective displays are primarily facial movements that display emotions. Illustrators are affective displays that happen only in conversation to illustrate what a person is saying. Regulators are nonverbal messages that encourage or affect speech flow during conversation, such as making an “mmm” sound or raising eyebrows.

The next time you have a conversation with someone, pay attention to all the elements that are part of the conversation but are not spoken words. You’ll be surprised to find how much of the conversation depends on these elements.

When possible, choose the most personal form of communication so that you can learn more about a person and understand him on a deeper level. Pay attention to people – really listen to them – and you will be rewarded. Decide what you really want and need before you try to get it. Rushing to make any kind of decision, whether it’s about a person, place or situation, can have disastrous effects.

Be confident enough in your decisions to act on them. If you are wrong, however, don’t be too proud to change your mind. If you are right, stick with your decision.
Lesson 2: Reading People

Lesson Topics
This lesson focuses on the following topics:
- Making Sense of Your First Impression
- Predictive Traits
- Physical Appearance vs. Body Language
- Physical Indicators
Lesson Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Apply techniques to improve communication and aid understanding.
- Make a more effective first impression.
- Identify the predictive traits of a person to have more effective communication with them.
- Observe physical appearance and body language to more effectively communicate.
- Utilize physical indicators to assess the other person's honesty.

Making Sense of Your First Impression

It is true that first impressions are important because often we see some of the most significant aspects of a person in our first meeting with them. But it is possible that in that first meeting we will not have enough contextual information to truly judge what everything about a person means. People are usually very eager to convey a certain image on first meeting. Negative traits will be suppressed if the person is able to do so. Often this is not even a conscious action, but results from years of being conditioned to put one's best foot forward.

Nonetheless, you should pay careful attention to a person during an initial meeting; because once a relationship begins you will be less likely to see the negative. What you must do is form a first impression and accept it. But once you have come to this conclusion, keep an open mind and allow your first impression to be subject to revision.

Even though it is important that you not let your biases toward singular aspects of people conflict with how you read them, it is important to pay attention to the most prominent aspects of a person’s character. Whether this is the way the person dresses or his infamous habit of interrupting people in conversation, people usually have a few strong defining characteristics.
If you know what these characteristics mean and how they combine with all the others, you will be able to interpret people effectively even when you don't know them very well.

To start with, try to notice which things stand out the most; this could be voice, mannerisms, attire, actions or size. Perhaps someone's attitude will be the most overwhelming thing about him. If you meet a person who seems excessively cheerful, try to keep in mind that people often laugh, smile or make jokes to compensate for their nervousness. However, the strong need to appear a certain way says something about a person's emotional or mental state, even if the enthusiasm isn't his usual personality.

Once you have a clear impression of a person, continually test other information about the person against this impression. See if a pattern develops. As you notice more and more new information about someone, either most things will fall into line with your first impression or the information you gather will cumulatively discount your first impression. There is also the possibility that what you notice afterward may have little or no effect on your general impression. It may be that the person is secretive or he could just have a very flat personality that keeps you from noticing particularly dynamic points to his character.

A Matter of Degree
Within the most striking parts of a person's character, you may find that there are different degrees to everything. The degree to which a person manifests a trait has much to do with its interpretation. Say that you meet a sophisticated young woman with a body piercing—a small diamond stud in her nose. It is likely that the stud is more a fashion statement designed to draw attention to and accent features of the face, rather than to create controversy or make a statement about the conservative nature of society. How do you know this? Well, her clothing is very sophisticated and her haircut is trendy without being over the top.
You can tell this from all the different aspects of the way she presents herself and the way that they come together to form a pattern and convey her image.

If her piercing were much more extreme, combined with an extreme haircut, hair color and shredded jeans, you would probably be accurate in forming the conclusion that she has some criticisms of society or feels that it is important to stand out as a non-conformist. Whenever there are several other traits consistent with the most extreme of a person's traits, your chances of making an accurate assessment are very good. If you observe an extreme that seems very incongruous with the rest of a person's personality, there are probably less obvious reasons for it. It will require many more questions and additional observation time to determine the reasons for and meaning of this more extreme aspect of the person's image or character.

**Predictive Traits**

While it isn’t good to generalize a lot about people, there are certain traits that often say more about a person than others. In the normal course of a conversation, it may be difficult to get information pertaining to these characteristics. You don’t usually have the opportunity to put someone up on a witness stand and freely ask questions about their background. Even when you are on a first date where questions about a person’s background are quite acceptable, there is only so much you can gather from general questions. In fact, only one of the three most important predictive traits can be easily discerned in the normal questioning process. This trait is one's sense of life fulfillment.
Life Fulfillment

Contentment is something that almost everyone is trying to find. Those of us who have it are likely to have a sunnier outlook on life, be more open to other people and also to be more supportive. Fulfillment in life is usually the result of hard work and accomplishing goals. It is entirely subjective and depends on what a person's desires and priorities are. Therefore, if one person has always wanted to play guitar in a band, and finds himself in this situation even though he's still delivering pizzas to make money, he could be completely happy. Many people would feel this was a very unfulfilling life, but your sense of fulfillment directly reflects your values and for this man, there may be nothing more valuable than playing music.

On the other hand, you may meet someone who's been playing guitar in a successful band for many years who isn't happy with the situation because he's really always wanted to sing in the band. He could even be so successful that he's able to play music full time and doesn't have to hold down a regular job. In this case, despite his success, he will probably have a lesser sense of life fulfillment than the person who still has to deliver pizzas.

Generally, one's sense of fulfillment depends on life expectations. If you expect to be making $150,000 a year by the time you're 40, you may be grossly disappointed and discontented with your lot, even if you have a good job and make $100,000 per year. When people are unable to accomplish their goals, they tend to think that it isn't their fault and that things just worked out poorly. They may feel that others didn't appreciate their talents enough to provide them with the reward they deserved. However, if a person is pleased with where he is, he will probably have a greater sense of personal responsibility and accountability. This will extend into other realms besides business. Chances are that in relationships, a fulfilled person will show greater sympathy, optimism, and effort than an unfulfilled person.
You may have had someone ask you what you would do if you were rich. From the answer to this question, the theory is that you’re supposed to be able to tell what you should be doing with your life and what would bring you the most happiness. This question may reveal what would fulfill your life if earning money (probably by holding a conventional job) wasn’t a concern. Other good questions to ask in order to learn more about a person’s fulfillment in life is what she wanted to be when she was in high school or perhaps what she majored in during college. You can also explicitly ask someone how content she is with her life.

**Empathy**

Many people are unclear about the meanings of “empathy” and “sympathy.” Sympathy is actually sharing the feelings of another person, or being affected in the same way. Empathy is an understanding of a person's situation, motives or feelings. Empathetic understanding can help predict many things about a person's behavior and personality. Most people want to be understood. It is no surprise that we look for friends who are good listeners and sincerely try to understand our feelings. Though you may not have thought about it concretely, there are many reasons for this.

People who try their best to understand someone and to listen to his whole story are more likely to be fair when judging people. By exhibiting empathy, they are likely to be warm, honest, open, fair, forgiving, charitable, and to have close relationships. You may think that because these people question others more, they are harsher in their judgments, but what they actually do is try to get to the truth and be as fair as possible. An empathetic person is also more likely than others to be patient, probably because she knows the importance of allowing a person to speak his mind in his own time in order to get to the heart of things.
A lack of empathy generally indicates a lack of concern for people. And if someone really doesn’t care about other people, he is less likely to be understanding, forgiving, tolerant or kind. Instead, he will probably be quite selfish and critical. With all of these traits combined, a person who is not empathetic will likely make judgments about people without the patience necessary to extract the truth. As a result, their judgments of others will be harsher and they will be less open to listening to a person’s opinions or concerns.

Background
The way that you are raised is often a strong predictor of who you will become. The people who surround you, your parents’ presence in your life, your economic situation—these all help to determine your world view and the way you interact with those around you. The effect of your background has as much to do with how you were treated as how much money you had. For example, if a child is coddled—regardless of whether he is raised in a wealthy household—he will usually behave much differently than a child who is cared for and provided for but not indulged.

We are greatly affected by how well our needs are met as we grow. Having your needs met is not the same as having everything handed to you. Indulgence goes beyond the fulfillment of needs into the fulfillment of desire. For our needs to be successfully met, we need both physical and emotional fulfillment. While money may take care of the physical aspects, it doesn’t necessarily fulfill emotional needs.

If all of your needs are met, you are likely to be a fairly stable individual. You will have greater confidence than people who have been denied a lot and will probably exhibit greater empathy for others and the other traits that go along with that, including openness, kindness, consideration, and tolerance.
If a child has to fight for everything, and is denied much when he is young, he will probably eventually view himself as a victim of neglect and probably have lower self-esteem and confidence as a result. He may be less generous as well, if he and his family struggled to keep it together. Prejudice can have similar effects, producing people who are suspicious of those who try to help them or who claim that they deserve as much as anyone else. People who are criticized a lot as children usually become more judgmental and this is more likely to happen with a lower socio-economic status. Children who are treated well generally feel that others should be treated kindly also.

Physical Appearance vs. Body Language
Body language and physical appearance are the most prominent things you can observe about a person. You will notice this before anything else and they often go hand in hand. Just like any other aspect of a person, if it is not viewed in conjunction with everything else, you will probably not get an accurate idea of what it means.

There are two kinds of physical traits: elective and non-elective. An elective trait is something that a person chooses to do to himself physically. Elective traits can include any jewelry, clothing, makeup or wardrobe accessories. Non-elective traits are traits that people are born with, such as body proportions, height, physical abnormalities or deformities, race, complexion and voice. Non-elective traits often deeply and significantly shape a person’s personality and how he or she deals with the world and other people. The response to one’s non-elective traits can vary a lot from person to person.
**Non-Elective Traits**

Most non-elective traits will not affect a person's general outlook. The shape of a person's eyes or the color of his or her hair will probably not greatly determine how that person interacts with others. But certain non-elective traits can drastically affect a person's development. They can influence personality and outlook on life, so pay attention to strong non-elective traits.

Perhaps you know short people who are particularly quiet and reserved, because they accepted early on that they would be overlooked by some people. However, maybe you know a short woman who developed a particularly loud and boisterous demeanor to compensate for her height difference, and is referred to by those around her as “a firecracker.”

Perhaps a woman who has never had weight problems or any problems like acne to threaten her appearance may be more comfortable with herself, but less likely to exercise regularly or eat well. She may also be used to getting attention and help from people without asking, which may make her more dependent on others than she is aware of. If you meet a rather unattractive, overweight gentleman with a jolly, yet biting sense of humor, you should pay attention to see if his sense of humor comes from a history of abuse from peers and a need to stand out for some reason other than his appearance.

The most severe cases of non-elective traits affecting how someone deals with other people are mostly found in people who are minorities, whether racially, mentally, physically or emotionally. Also, people with health problems, including disease or obesity, experience discrimination and negative reactions that often affect their lives. If people have had very particular obstacles in life, you may be able to tell from how they deal with you and those around you.
They probably either learned not to pity themselves and develop a good nature, or they learned to view themselves as shameful or helpless and developed bitterness toward the world.

**Elective Traits**

Elective traits usually indicate how we would like the world to view us or what we think is most important to convey with physical appearance, such as the individuality demonstrated with tattoos. When you are dealing with elective traits that are easier to change, like accessories or makeup, you should put less emphasis on their importance if you are meeting the person for the first time.

Obviously, if these traits are extreme, as we discussed in an earlier section, like wearing heavy black eyeliner to a job interview, this probably says more than showing up with silver hoop earrings. There are many other elective traits that can be changed that you wouldn’t normally think could be so malleable. People’s mannerisms and way of speaking can change when they are in different environments, even though you would expect these to be relatively non-elective.

Also, certain elective traits can decrease in importance as a person ages. If a person gets a tattoo when she turns 18, but becomes more conservative as she goes through life, the tattoo is likely to represent only a freer period in her life. It is important to take that into account.

Make sure that when you are trying to establish a pattern in a person’s traits that you remember these fluctuation possibilities. If you see someone in an informal setting and set up a business meeting with him for the next week, chances are that he will not be dressed the same way or have the same casual demeanor. This is not to say that people change completely, but they usually do have a certain amount of discretion and know how to behave appropriately for a situation.
By looking at the common patterns in people’s behavior, no matter what situation they’re in, you can best determine who they are in a broader sense.

**A Physical Example: Hair**

When it comes to indicators of a person’s lifestyle and self-image, hairstyle is one of the best. Your hair is one of the only things about which you can change everything if you choose to do so. If you have straight hair, you can get a perm; if you have curly hair, you can get it relaxed; if you have long hair, you can cut it; if you have short hair, you can grow it out. You can dye your hair, shave your hair off and make its style very conservative or very extreme. It can reveal many things about you, including your socioeconomic background, where you were raised, where you live now, how important appearance and style are to you, how much you want to make an impression on other people, how you feel about aging, and how much emotional maturity and sensibility you have.

There are several things that you should keep in mind when trying to get a sense of a person from his or her hair: make sure you know what the current popular styles are. For instance, long hair is no longer as popular as it was in the ‘90s, but ‘80s haircuts have made a comeback. Also, it may be very common for women to have long or mid-length hair through their 40s or 50s, but older women tend to have rather short hair. So if people have a cut that is rather uncommon for their age, look for other things that can help clarify why that might be the case.

**Women’s Hair**

Women are usually raised to have a moderate concern for their appearance and view hair as a necessary part of style that they must maintain regularly. Because it is so normal for women to pay attention to their hair, it is the extremes that tell the most about a woman’s personality. If a woman has a style of moderate length, possibly colored, possibly not, and well-maintained, chances are that you are not going to be able to tell much about her from her hair.
However, if a woman has short hair, you will probably have an easier time discerning her opinions about herself and her appearance. In general, the more high-maintenance hairstyles are worn by high-maintenance women. If she has very short, stylish hair that is precisely cut, then she could be creative or artistic. Her hair could be one of the ways that she prefers to express herself.

In other cases, a woman could be financially well-off and prefer to have her hair very chic all the time. However, you should be careful not to assume that a precise and fashionable haircut means that the woman has a lot of money. Many women view hair as particularly important and spend significant amounts of money to put forth a very precise image. These women probably feel that acceptance is very important, worry about how other people see them, and may be insecure.

When a woman's hair is less styled and short she may be a rather practical person. If she has any style at all, she has some concern for her appearance, but unless it is excessive, this isn't a bad thing that necessarily indicates insecurity. If her wardrobe is simple and comfortable and her makeup is minimal, then chances are that the short hair is just another indicator of this practical nature.

Dramatically short hair could mean that a woman is so practical that she has no real concern for her appearance and doesn't wish to be judged this way. Usually, looking at her clothing can show whether this is true or not. If the woman is dressed in a particularly basic way, then it probably is true. If she is dressed in flamboyant clothing, maybe she is trying to draw attention to her personality or show she is a free spirit. In this way, very short hair can have much the same effect as long hair.

Long hair is generally a symbol of youth in American society. Long hair in women often means the same thing as it does in men: a resistance to aging or growing up.
If you see particularly long hair on an older woman, perhaps she never began to think of herself as an adult, or she may not have a practical opinion of herself. Sometimes women wear their hair long because of a hippie mentality, believing that it indicates a free spirit, individuality and a lack of conventional ideas having to do with politics or religion. Generally, a woman who has long hair for these reasons will not have it styled or dyed.

Long hair can also indicate something as simple as laziness. Perhaps the woman doesn't care how she looks or doesn't feel it is important enough to spend the money. If her hair is unkempt, the woman could be ill. This can also be seen in women who have very short hair—either way can be low-maintenance. If it is long, unkempt and dirty, then you must consider that her poor hygiene may be found in other areas. This can indicate depression or low self-esteem.

Some hairstyles reflect the style of certain regions. One of these is simply referred to as “big hair.” While it may have been more broadly popular in the ‘80s, it can still be found in the South, though not many other places. Most of us have a very specific image when we think of a Dallas woman, and chances are, her hair is not flat, but teased or permed. Most women who style their hair this way in places other than the South are probably older and have thinning hair and find that teasing it and using lots of hair spray is the only effective way for them to get any volume in their hair. Also, they may still view big hair as stylish, since that was considered attractive for a large part of their lives.

It is very common for women to color their hair, so this particular practice may not reveal much about them, except that they do have an interest in their appearance. When aging women choose to color their hair to get rid of gray, then chances are, they are not comfortable enough with themselves to accept the aging process.
If a woman lets her hair go gray, then it will generally indicate that she doesn’t worry too much about other people’s opinions. Her idea of beauty probably doesn’t include maintaining a youthful appearance as long as possible, but rather allows for the course of nature. It could also be about practicality; perhaps a woman thinks it silly to spend time and money to maintain her natural hair color or appear more youthful. No matter the reason, she must be at least somewhat comfortable with aging to decide against dying her hair.

**Men’s Hair**

Generally, long hair on a man indicates that he sees himself as artistic or radical. But there are many other things that long hair can mean. Long hair on Native Americans is considered a point of pride. In another man, long hair may just mean that he doesn’t like to spend money on a haircut or his appearance isn’t that important to him. In still other situations, a man could grow his hair out longer when he begins to lose his hair as a way of trying to maintain his youth and compensate for that loss.

A basic, short haircut generally conveys to people a conservative nature. However, it could also mean that the man likes the way he looks with short hair, or finds it easier not to worry about style and prefers just to spend a few dollars at a barber every month or so. The man might also be in the military or perhaps have a military past to which he is very connected and never grew out of in terms of practical style. The same style preferences can be found in men involved in other professions, such as firemen or policemen. Similarly, men who play sports often keep their hair short so it doesn’t get in their way.

On the other hand, there are currently many short haircuts that aren’t conservative at all. These can be just as much a sign of artistic expression as long hair once was. If a man has a very well-maintained cut, chances are that style is very important to him and he is trying very hard to project a specific image.
There are not many men who have the desire to put a lot of effort into the maintenance of hair. Men usually do not feel that hair is important enough to justify spending much money.

Men with more money are often more willing to pay the price to show that they are financially successful. Once again, look for patterns. If a man is dressed as well as his hair is cut and styled, then it is definitely important to him what image he is projecting. A successful man with a highly-styled haircut is probably more concerned with status and power than a man who is also successful but has a neat reserved haircut. In our society, this also applies to other excessive grooming habits, like regular facials or manicures.

How men deal with hair loss can reveal much about their character. Some men deal with hair loss in the easiest way possible, which is to wear a hat. If a balding man is wearing a hat outside, this could just be to keep his head from getting sunburned. However, if he is wearing a hat inside, then he is probably insecure or has been covering it up so long that he is no longer comfortable without that superficial protection.

Some men deal with their hair loss in ways that indicate that, while they are uncomfortable about how they appear to others, they are not adequately sensitive to the image that they actually project. When men get extreme comb-overs, cheap hairpieces with the wrong color or texture, or coloring sprays to fill in their thinning areas, it shows that they do not have a very good sense of how much other people notice.

The most extreme way of dealing with hair loss is to go the surgical route. When men choose to get hair-replacement surgery or hair plugs, they are demonstrating a lack of acceptance of aging and self as well as vanity.
If men are willing to put time, money, and effort into restoring their hairline, chances are that they feel particularly unattractive and insecure without a full head of hair. If men have the means to pay for this surgery without it having an effect on their pocketbook, then their concerns are possibly only moderate. However, if a man with less wealth chooses to get the same surgery then he may have a bit of an obsession with his appearance.

**Body and Facial Hair**

There are many things that facial hair can say about a person, but it doesn't usually indicate a secretive nature, though some people still believe that is true. Beards and mustaches can mean many things: the man may be trying to conceal his age by covering wrinkles or he may be trying to hide a facial scar or flaw. He may think he has a weak chin or thin lips and that the mustache or beard compensates for that. If the man is young, he may believe that growing facial hair makes him look older and he may be proud to finally be able to grow facial hair. He could also be lazy or not want to invest in a razor. Facial hair often overlaps with a rebellious or artistic nature.

What can often say more than just the presence of a beard or mustache is how well it is maintained and its length. When you see a man with a mustache that comes out several inches to points which he has waxed, he is probably not going for the same image as someone with a plain mustache of average thickness and length which is kept trimmed. The former man probably has a somewhat obsessive nature and must execute a certain amount of control over how people perceive him. On the other hand, unkempt mustaches or beards may show a lack of concern for the perceptions of others, or indicate physical or mental illness.

When men have other hair on their faces that does not receive adequate attention, they usually don't have much concern for how others view them.
They may also feel that to trim nose or ear hair or pluck the hairs between eyebrows shows that they are not men and must leave these things untouched to be considered masculine. After all, men do not have to shave their legs or armpits and they may think that trimming any hair makes them feminine.

Women, on the other hand, are usually expected to shave their legs, their armpits, pluck unruly eyebrows, and remove or bleach other facial hair. If a woman chooses not to do these things, it can mean several things. She could be from a different country, where women are not expected to shave their legs or armpits and there is no double-standard for appearance between men and women. This is the case in some European countries.

When American women choose not to do these things, they could be showing that they are comfortable with themselves enough to not conform to other people's expectations of them. They could also be feminists who are trying to prove a point about the double standard applied to women. Some women are bohemians and are going for much the same image as unshaven hippies were in the ’60s. Another thing that could be true is that the woman is ill or depressed and is too preoccupied to be concerned with how others perceive her.

**Physical Indicators**

There are many indicators revealed through body language that will help you to identify different emotions or mind states. Most people aren't very good at masking their true feelings; if you want to know if someone is being straight with you, if someone is interested in what you’re saying or many other things, studying the following indicators will help you to be sensitive to different situations and to what signals you are giving off to others.
Honesty and Dishonesty
There are many important things to pay attention to when determining whether someone is being honest with you or not. The traits below will help you form a clearer image of how people generally behave when lying. Remember that if someone is being accused of lying, he may show certain signs of dishonesty because he is nervous and in defense mode. The best that you can do at this point is look for the pattern and see if the behavioral signs he is exhibiting is consistent with dishonesty.

If a person is defending his lies, chances are that he will waver between hyper-defense and sincere appeals. His posture and manner of speaking may change depending on what he is talking about. He may throw in some honest comments to attempt a balance but then overcompensate for the dishonest ones. The best thing to remember is that if someone is telling the truth, whether he is nervous or not, his manner should remain basically consistent throughout the discussion.

Indicators of Dishonesty
Some indicators of dishonesty include
- Shifting weight
- Leaning forward
- Fidgeting
- Any nervous behavior
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Evasive eye contact
- Blinking a lot
- Speaking quickly
- Change in speaking manner
- Covering parts of face with hands
- Licking lips
Running tongue over teeth
Invading personal space to feign familiarity (backslapping, touching arm)
Obviously feigned sincerity

**Indicators of Honesty**
- Some indicators of honesty include:
- Comfortably leaning back, shoulders open
- Relaxed demeanor
- Calm
- Direct eye contact
- Genial gaze
- No excessive blinking
- Steady
- Sincere smile
- Consistent behavior

**Thoughtfulness/Attention and Boredom/Inattention**
From the time animals are born, it is very easy to tell if something is paying attention to something else. A baby can go from crying and squirming to calm and unblinking while looking at a mobile or a rattle. In nature, you can see the same thing: a feline’s steady gaze while watching prey or judging another animal’s intentions. When a soldier stands “at attention,” it is without movement. This lack of movement and steady gaze is what generally indicates a person’s interest in what is going on or being said. Stillness is a natural part of concentration.

When a person makes small movements while paying attention to something else, it will probably be a motion of the hand or the head, but not of the eyes. People tend to have one repetitive motion they will perform while paying attention to someone or something. For instance, students who have participated in debate often twirl their pencils repeatedly.
Others might chew on their lips or play with their hair. If people are truly concentrating on what you’re saying, it is unlikely that their motions will overlap. For instance, they wouldn’t stop playing with their hair and then switch to chewing on their lip.

**Indicators of Attention**

Some indicators of attention include:

- Maintaining constant eye contact
- Chewing on pencil or lip
- Tilting head
- Overall body stillness

**Indicators of Thoughtfulness**

Some indicators of thoughtfulness include:

- Furrowing brow
- Scratching head
- Gazing upward
- Staring into space
- Leaning back in chair
- Resting head in hands
- Resting chin on hands
- Crossing arms

Most of us know what boredom looks like. Why? Boredom is one of the hardest states to hide. The indicators of boredom and inattention overlap for good reason—both states reflect the fact that a person isn’t interested in what’s going on around her, and would probably prefer to be in a different place or doing a different activity altogether. When a person wants to be somewhere else, chances are that his body is trying to get him there, even if it’s not conscious.
The body wants to join the mind and abandon whatever is keeping it from being active and interested. So when a person is bored or inattentive, the body will try to distract with physical motion.

**Indicators of Boredom/Inattention**

Indicators of boredom and inattention include:

- Pointing body away from other person
- Wandering eyes
- Glazed eyes
- Staring into space
- Looking at watch or clock
- Rolling eyes
- Heavy sighs
- Yawning
- Stretching
- Moving head from side to side
- Crossing and uncrossing arms and legs
- Leaning forward and backward in chair
- Shifting weight
- Tapping fingers
- Tapping feet
- Twiddling thumbs
- Picking at fingernails
- Trying to do something else
- Playing with glasses
- Playing with pens and paper
- Doodling
- Picking at clothes
Often these motions emerge not just as a way to keep the body aware but as a way to keep the body awake. Moving around, tapping fingers, shaking your head, stretching, etc., are all efforts to stave off lethargy and boredom. If you ever want to appear interested when you’re not, try to remain still and keep relaxed but consistent eye contact with the person. Most twitching will indicate that you are not truly concentrating on what he is saying.

**Anger/Hostility**

Because many people are not comfortable expressing displeasure or anger with someone or with a situation, anger can be manifested in several ways. The most obvious way is aggression: chances are that if someone is being aggressive, the person is angry about something. With hostility frequently comes an invasion of personal space. An angry person may move closer to you as a way of forcing you to be aware of his feelings. Or if he doesn't get physically closer, he may stick out his chin or chest to exhibit the same desire for confrontation.

Anger can also be exhibited in defensiveness and withdrawal. Oftentimes we get into an argument with someone only to find that the person is not reacting in the way we would have expected. You may remember doing something wrong as a child and expecting your parent's full wrath, only to be faced with icy calm. Perhaps the lack of reaction was even scarier than being yelled at or reprimanded. Some people tend to retreat when they get very angry, so the lack of visible anger in these cases means that it is all being held below the surface.
**Indicators of Anger**

Possible signs of anger include:
- Pointing fingers
- Fists clenched
- Arms crossed
- Hands on hips
- Near uncontrollable arm movements
- Quick body movements
- Legs or ankles crossed
- Red face
- Lips pursed
- Unchanging expression
- Set jaw
- Scowl/glare
- Sarcastic laughter
- Rapid speech
- Rapid breathing
- Shaking
- Stiff back/rigid posture

You should also note that men and women may handle anger in different ways. While it is possible for men to have the same reaction, some women get so angry that they cry. So remember that sometimes tears may have nothing to do with sadness, but could indicate someone getting so upset that the anger is manifested in this way.
**Frustration**

We have all heard the expression that talking to so-and-so was “like talking to a brick wall.” When you are faced with someone who is not receptive or understanding about what you are trying to communicate, chances are that you will get more and more frustrated with the person. You'll stare a lot, make rapid motions, point, and begin to repeat certain phrases in an effort to penetrate the other person's thoughts. When you feel that there is no way to successfully make your point, you will probably sigh or throw your hands in the air, look down at the floor and shake your head as you walk away.

These actions comprise a two-part mode of frustration. When first manifested, frustration comes out as confrontation. This is because a person usually believes that he can rectify whatever is frustrating him, so he will confront the problem in order to find a solution. The signs of confrontation are much like those of anger. However, when a person realizes that he cannot make his case understood, he will show signs of passive and agitated surrender.

**Indicators of Confrontation Frustration**

Some indicators of confrontation frustration include:

- Direct and frequent eye contact
- Hand gestures/pointing
- Repeating oneself
- Shrugging
- Invading personal space
**Indicators of Surrender Frustration**

Indicators of surrender frustration include:

- Sighing
- Grimacing
- Exaggerated motions
- Fast and loud exhalations
- Putting hands on hips and head
- Shrugging
- Shaking head
- Closing or rolling eyes
- Throwing hands in air
- Walking away

Because frustration can look like other emotions, it is important to know how to make a distinction between them. Remember that the beginning stages of frustration can resemble anger and the ending stages of frustration can resemble unconcern or even boredom. Generally, frustrated people make quicker motions than bored people, even when they have reached the point of surrender, so if you are unsure what others are feeling, look to the speed of their actions and how constant these movements are.

**Grief/Sadness**

Everyone has different ways of dealing with grief and sorrow. Perhaps you are more apt to discuss exactly how you’re feeling, while someone else could hold it all inside and try to keep up a positive front. No matter how a person deals with grief, there are certain signs that he or she will exhibit which point to inner turmoil.
**Indicators of Grief/Sadness**

Some indicators of grief/sadness include:

- Lack of or slow, deliberate motion
- Crying/tears
- Downcast eyes
- Lethargic/listless
- Slack facial muscles
- Slumped body posture
- Apathy
- Isolation
- Inability to finish everyday tasks
- Additional signs of depression and confusion

People tend to act in ways contradictory to their normal behavior when they are grieving. You may find that a grieving man who is normally a very upbeat, positive and social individual may suddenly seem consumed by negativity. When people are in the beginning stages of grief, they often go through denial, anger and a search for reason. At this point, motions can be very exaggerated and they may speak very quickly, showing many signs of hyperactivity.

Their subject matter in conversation may seem mixed up as well, and they may switch from subject to subject or ramble just to avoid talking about how they feel, the sorrow they are experiencing. When you are in front of a grieving person like this, you may notice that for a moment, the curtain will drop and you will get a glimpse of the wizard. This truth behind the curtain can be revealed when a person stops abruptly in conversation and looks into the distance or when the muscles in the face slacken. Remember that when a person is grieving, it is unlikely that he or she will really be able to think of anything besides the loss. As a result, physical, emotional and mental processes will lack focus and reflect that sadness.
Depression

It is a common misconception that depression is the same thing as sadness. There are many degrees of depression and many reasons it can occur. When a loved one dies, one can remain depressed beyond the grieving process. A person who is grieving may not actually be depressed, though. Generally, both grief and depression can be dealt with. However, people with serious “clinical” depression experience it more as an illness. It is constant and tremendously affects their ability to function.

This more serious form of depression can affect relationships, concentration, work, hygiene, and can even be connected with eating disorders. The only real difference between common depression and clinical depression is the degree to which it affects a person's ability to function in life. Over time, if someone remains depressed, the symptoms don't really change, but they can become more severe.

You will find that depressed people often lack energy, not only in their movements but in things like their gaze. If someone is depressed, their eyes may appear dull, as if nothing he or she sees holds any interest. Movements will be more lethargic and the person may seem to not be there mentally, but rather raw or listless.

**Indicators of Depression**

Indicators of depression include:

- Avoidance of social contact
- Downcast eyes
- Slow but deliberate movements
- Slumped body posture
- Low and quiet speech
- Inability to concentrate
Forgetfulness
Inability to plan anything in the future
Alteration of appetite
Lack of attention to hygiene or attire

One of the most common examples of a depressed person is the “goth” teenager. Depression is actually very common among teenagers. Goths are the kids who dress in black, may have dyed and unkempt hair, slump their shoulders when they walk, keep to themselves, and seem to have no interest in anything that's going on around them or that might occur in the future.

**Indecision**
If you’ve ever been in line at a coffee shop or lunch counter, you have seen signs of indecision. Perhaps a man doesn’t order coffee very often and is standing at a coffee shop trying to decide if he wants a single or a double, caffeinated or decaffeinated, and the difference between latte, cappuccino, and mocha baffles him. He shifts back and forth, looks from one item to another, tilting his head. These are all classic signs of indecision. When people are trying to decide between two options, they physically go “back and forth” in their body language, clearly manifesting their indecision.

**Indicators of Indecision**
Manifestations of indecision include:
- Looking back and forth between two fixed objects
- Opening and closing mouth without speaking
- Moving head from side to side
- Shifting back and forth on feet or in chair
- Opening and closing hands or moving one hand, then the other
- Jarring movements, as if the body is trying to force action and decision
It is also possible for indecision to produce signs similar to those of boredom. If someone isn't sure what he wants to do, then he may shift back and forth and exhibit signs of trying to stay focused, when in truth he is trying to determine what he should focus on. You've probably seen the romance movies where the hero stands speaking to his boss, looking over his shoulder, trying to pay attention but unable to keep from looking into the distance and imagining meeting his love before her plane takes off. The boss may wrongly think that his employee is bored with what he is saying, when in truth, the man is trying to decide if he should catch a cab and get to the airport before she gets on that plane. He may open and close his mouth, unsure whether or not he should tell his boss he has to leave work.

Indecision has the potential for adverse effects in terms of business. Most businessmen understand the delicacy of business negotiations and the importance of not betraying their doubts when they are trying to convince someone else of something. When emotions are heightened, it can be more difficult to keep a poker face. If someone is worried that he may betray his true feelings regarding a deal or decision, he may choose to use the phone or e-mail rather than risk his voice or eyes giving him away when faced with his opposition.

**Nervousness**

Like many other emotional states, nervousness is marked by signs of discomfort. When someone is trying to ease this discomfort, she is likely to engage the body with motion to channel the nervous feelings. Without an outlet, it is much more difficult to disguise emotions and keep the signs from being revealed.
**Indicators of Nervousness**

Signs of nervousness include:
- Clearing throat
- Biting lip
- Coughing
- Rambling
- Becoming quiet
- Curling body
- Tensing muscles
- Rotating upper body side to side
- Shifting weight from side to side
- Rocking in chair
- Crossing and uncrossing arms and legs
- Tapping fingers, feet or hands
- Chewing nails
- Playing with pens, jewelry, fingernails, hands, hair, glasses, cups
- Putting hands in pockets
- Wringing hands
- Quick, repetitive smiling
- Eyes darting back and forth
- Looking down
- Shaking
- Sweating

Because nervousness shares indicators with many other mindsets, you must be sure to look at these signs as a group and make sure that all of the clues point to this particular state. For example, if someone is particularly quiet, it could mean that she is nervous, but it could also mean that she is very angry and trying to hold her tongue. Also, if someone shifts her weight from side to side, she could just be indecisive about things.
As long as many of the indicators are there, then chances are that the person really is nervous. It is unlikely that you will meet someone who shows only one indication of being nervous. If you don't see any of these, but have a feeling that the person is nervous, then look for habits a person may have of channeling nervous energy. Methodical actions like smoking cigarettes may be the only sign you get of a person's true feelings.

Lesson Summary

Look at everything about a person: shoes, fingernails, hair, posture, attire, habits, voice. Everything has the potential to teach you something essential about a person. Non-elective traits and unconscious behavior will probably say more about whom the person is, while elective traits and conscious behavior will reveal who the person wants to be and the image he or she wants to project. Involuntary body movements may be the only sign you get for negative traits, because people tend to try harder to disguise negative emotions and traits.

Always look for the unusual or unique aspects of a person's mannerisms or appearance. If something is particularly noticeable, then it is probably significant. However, if it seems that someone has done something like dress in a completely inappropriate way, then make sure that your judgment takes into account whether it is a consistent action or if there is another reason for it. There is always the possibility that someone was met with unforeseen circumstances that lead to an impropriety, circumstances for which you won't have immediate evidence in your judgment.

Remember that it is not as easy to interpret a person's true feelings as it would be in a play. In real life, we do not usually exaggerate our actions to help the people around us better understand exactly what we are feeling. In fact, chances are that many of us try our best to cover up what we are feeling.
We have defense mechanisms to keep others from finding out too much and having an unfair advantage over us. Unfortunately, the good guy doesn’t always ride in on a white horse and the bad guy is not necessarily dressed in black.

Because body language is so subtle, we must always pay close attention to discern a person’s true feelings. As long as you remember to search for the pattern in a person's actions, you will be successful in your people-reading endeavors. You've probably heard the old adage that says “don't judge a book by its cover.” When you read a person, it's important to pay attention to the cover, but only in combination with everything else.
Lesson 3: Establishing Market Presence

Lesson Topics
This lesson focuses on the following topics:
- Introduction
- Home Environment
- Work Environment
- Auto Environment
- Social Environment
- Life Environment
- Temporal Environment
- Circumstantial Environment
- Geographic Environment
Lesson Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Discern aspects of personality from a general environmental context.
- Discover aspects of personality from the person’s work environment.
- Select aspects of personality from the person’s auto environment.
- Predict aspects of personality from the person’s social environment.
- Infer aspects of personality from the person’s life environment.
- Identify aspects of personality from the person’s temporal environment.
- Distinguish aspects of personality from the person’s circumstantial environment.
- Select aspects of personality from the person’s geographic environment.

Introduction

From birth, we are natural explorers; you probably remember nosing around your grandparents’ house or exploring your parents’ bedroom as a child. We are curious by nature, but it is only with age and convention that we train ourselves to not pay excessively close attention to others out of politeness. Try to unlearn this habit. That doesn’t mean that you should snoop around in someone’s nightstand – instead, learn to tune in to what is easily visible. Since most of us enjoy exploring a person’s environment anyway, you will probably find it relatively easy to do.

Homes and workplaces are usually very revealing about who people are and what is important to them, if only because this is where people spend the bulk of their time. From each environment, you can get clues about education, wealth, marital status, priorities, culture, job, interests, political ties, friends, family, and religion.

Disparities between public and private images are particularly noteworthy as they can indicate how important it is to a person to convey a certain image to others.
For instance, if you meet a girl with dyed blue hair, facial piercings, and very shocking clothing whose home turns out to be quite conservative, you will know that the assumptions you made about her based on her appearance are probably not entirely correct. Perhaps she only dresses that way because she is in a band and feels she will connect better with her audience if she seems more non-conformist. She may want people to think she doesn't care what they think about the way she looks, even though she would be more comfortable in just jeans and a t-shirt.

**Home Environment**

When you are first getting to know someone, you should be especially observant of his surroundings. As with body language and physical appearance, you should look for the patterns in the environment to learn as much as you can. Seeing someone in this context can help confirm or refute the impressions you already have just based on a person's interaction with you and his personality.

**Neighborhood**

Where a person chooses to live can say a lot about who he or she is. People's neighborhoods can indicate how important quietness is to them, or if they have or would like to have a family. It could also show how important it is for them to live in a high-status neighborhood. They may also want their children to go to a specific school, so they moved to a specific district to ensure that would happen.

If a person is single, buying a house in a family-oriented neighborhood could show a certain optimism about the future. It could also show that the person doesn't care what others think of her, because buying or living in a house alone is not usually smiled upon. Apartment living for a single person is much more accepted by society than dwelling in a house.
If a person chooses to live in an urban apartment close to work and social areas, then it is probably more important to him to spend time with others. Living in an apartment on the outskirts of a city, however, can show that the person considers leisure and quiet evenings more gratifying than an active social life. Either way, a person's neighborhood can tell us a lot about his priorities and way of life.

**Inside/Outside**

A person’s home can also say a lot about his or her priorities. If you meet a new couple in a four-bedroom home, with a modest exterior and warm family-friendly interior, they probably live modestly, aren’t too concerned with how other people view the exterior of the house, and plan to have a number of children. When there is a disparity between the outside and the inside of a house, you can often tell what the people inside value more: appearance or comfort.

Why does this happen exactly? Well, when people move into a new home (and don't happen to be exceptionally wealthy) they often have to choose between remodeling or decorating the inside and working on the façade and patio or outdoor areas. They could choose to work on the outside because the inside is already in perfect condition, whereas the exterior needs paint and other serious attention. But it could also be because they feel it is particularly important to project a certain image and are willing to give up some interior comfort to achieve it.

Priorities can change, however, so there is always the possibility that the general appearance of someone’s home says more about who the person was at the time the house was purchased. Perhaps a woman purchased a three-bedroom home at the beginning of her marriage with her husband, but it ended in divorce before they had any children and she remained in the house even though it was too big for just her.
Civil rights attorney Clarence Darrow coined the phrase “A man’s home is his castle” to convey that people are rulers in their own homes. As rulers, we all have the opportunity to do what we would like with that space. When you see someone’s home, you know that you are seeing what brings the person comfort and enjoyment. You see what is most important to someone, whether that be family, as evidenced by the many family portraits on the wall and kids’ pictures on the fridge, or perhaps the multiple animals with cat and dog figurines and knick-knacks peppering the whole house.

In a person’s workplace, much less is under his control. Usually, there are other people who are exerting control over the appearance and location of the office. Also, there is a chance that someone may not be comfortable bringing many personal things to work, even if he would prefer to have such things around him.

If someone shares a home with someone else, then it will probably be more difficult to determine which aspects of it are most influenced by the person you are trying to learn about. If you are observant and persistent in asking questions, then you should still be able to learn a lot from the home environment. You should be able to learn what you need to from observing only the public areas of a person’s home. This generally includes the living room, kitchen, outdoor patio or yard, guest bathroom, and surrounding neighborhood. The only time you should observe a person’s bedroom, bathroom or other personal space is when you have an intimate relationship with him or her. Otherwise, be content with what is easily and publicly observable.

When you go into someone’s home and everything is consistent with what you’ve observed publicly, it means that that person is probably pretty comfortable with himself and that what you see is what you get. It is likely, then, that what you have already observed about the person in his public persona is in line with whom he actually is and that it’s not an affectation.
However, if this isn't the case, then you should try to figure out which persona is the more accurate of the two; generally, the private persona will give you more clues to a person's true nature than the public one. We are all more apt to be ourselves and to surround ourselves with the things that are most important to us in our home environments, where there is no one around to impress.

A person's home will probably more accurately reveal his financial status than his attire will. If you will recall the section concerning hair, remember that it can often be a mistake to assume that people are wealthy because they have very chic hairstyles; in the same way, people can often dress the part of a wealthy businessperson even when they have only modest means. This is their way of projecting a specific image to those around them, but that can only go so far, and if you visit one of these people at home, you will probably quickly learn that their public appearance is more important to them than their private appearance.

If appearance is more important, then the person probably has a driving ambition to become successful no matter what he or she has to go through at the present. This could show that the person is very goal-oriented and determined, but it could also show that he or she is materialistic or vain and willing to compromise in areas that shouldn’t be compromised.

Just as it is possible for someone to dress the part of a wealthy businessperson, some businesspeople may choose to dress more casually and simply than you would expect if you knew their financial position. Perhaps the owner of a very lucrative business is very practical, had a great idea, and built a business around it, but feels it is important to remain grounded and show his employees that he is no better than they are. If he wants to maintain that “common man” image, he probably dresses very simply and perhaps doesn’t have an office on the top floor, drive an expensive car or refuse to chat with his employees.
However, he may value comfort highly, and feel that he has earned the right to have a nice home. If you go to his house without meeting him, you may presume that he would dress in suits and drive a Mercedes or other luxury car. On the other hand, if you do know him and go to his house, you may be surprised to learn exactly how well-off he is, since he doesn't feel it is important for those around him to be aware of his wealth. In this case, the home gives us an accurate picture of his financial status, but also of his comfort with himself in relation to others. Because you've seen the difference between home and office, you have a much more accurate impression of this man as a whole.

Other kinds of discrepancies should raise red flags in your mind as well. If a man's office is covered in golf paraphernalia, yet his home lacks even a set of clubs, you should probably pay attention to why that is. Perhaps his boss is an avid golfer and the man felt that it would help his career to take on this interest. This man is taking a risk to place himself in a favorable light. From that, you could possibly conclude that he would be willing to do other, more dishonest, things to get ahead at work. Perhaps he would take credit for another employee's idea or lie about a person's actual contribution to a project.

That example is an extreme, of course, but it's important to remember that when people pretend to be something they are not, they are likely to deceive in other areas as well. If you found that this deception fit into a pattern of other things that you observed, it would probably be a bad decision to trust this person. It could also indicate that the person is not secure with his or her public image.
Three Important Senses

**Hearing**

Upon first entering someone's home, you are sure to look around and try to take in as much as possible. But you use much more than just your eyes when you are developing your first impression. You will probably notice if the house is extremely quiet, if you can hear an air conditioner running, a washing machine churning or music playing. It could be quiet jazz coming from a stereo in the living room or muffled rock from behind a teenager's closed bedroom door. Both will tell you something about the family or person.

**Smell**

Smells also provide important clues to a house. There could be the smell of animals, which would instantly tell you if a person has a dog or cat, even if there are none in sight. Or perhaps there is potpourri simmering in a crock pot or the smell of baking bread coming from the kitchen. Maybe a window in the back is open and you can smell fresh-cut grass or chlorine from a swimming pool. Smells can definitely tip you off to a person's interests and to the state of the house she is living in.

Here are some common odor sources you should pay attention to:

- Babies
- Elderly
- Cigarettes/pipes
- Alcohol
- Medicine
- Disinfectant/cleaning products
- Food
- Fire smoke
- Flowers
- Animals
**Touch**

There are many things you can tell by the feel of the furniture in a person's house. In the same way that a person's choice of decorating either the interior or the exterior can say a lot about her values, so can choice of furniture reveal what is important to him or her. If you go to a woman's home and find that all of the furniture is antique and well-maintained but extremely stiff and uncomfortable then it would be safe to say that she is more interested in how attractive, old or valuable the furniture is, rather than how it actually feels to sit in. She may think that entertaining in such an environment is much more sophisticated, even though her guests will probably not feel as welcome sitting on hard antique seats.

On the other hand, if you attend a party and walk in to feel a warm cushy carpet beneath your feet and sit on comfortable sculpted wooden chairs and a soft velvet couch, you would probably be correct in thinking that your host places a high value on the comfort that he and his guests experience.

You should also pay attention to the temperature in a house. If you pay a summertime visit to someone who is so concerned with energy conservation and keeping a low electric bill that it is close to 90 degrees when you enter, you probably wouldn't feel very welcome. Make sure that you take into account how your host reacts if you voice a concern with the environment. If you walked into this same house and commented on how warm it was, and your host immediately apologized and went to turn the air conditioning on, then he is probably a considerate person who is kind enough to know which is more important: saving a dollar or two or making his guest comfortable.

If you are spending a while in someone's home, then you can pay attention to even more revealing things through touch. If you stay overnight with a friend, pay attention to the quality of the toilet paper, towels, and sheets in the guest room.
If you are in a particularly comfortable home, chances are that the quality of these things will be better.

However, you may find yourself in a more practical home, where such things are considered luxury. The couch may be vinyl to eliminate worry from kids’ spills and the floor may be tile for the same reason. Perhaps the toilet paper and towels here were bought based on a sale price instead of choosing them for their quality. When people have to buy on a budget, they are likely to prioritize according to bigger concerns instead of small comforts.

**Surrounding Items**
Most of us collect the items that will become a mainstay in our homes from the time we are children. What has value moves on with us from place to place, from youth to adulthood. With many objects in a person’s home, there will be a history, an indication of values and past desires. Even the most mundane objects have the potential to reveal a wealth of information about their owner.

Here is a list of common home items that can reveal information about the home’s tenant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Fireplace</th>
<th>Plants and flowers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal toys and food bowls</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Garden equipment</td>
<td>Reading material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashtrays</td>
<td>Gun racks</td>
<td>Refrigerator items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Holiday decorations</td>
<td>(magnets, drawings, photos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candles</td>
<td>Knickknacks</td>
<td>Religious paraphernalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s toys and furniture</td>
<td>Lamps/lighting</td>
<td>Rugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clocks</td>
<td>Mailbox</td>
<td>Signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medicine/vitamin supplements</td>
<td>Sports equipment and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collections
Cooking equipment
Entertainment center

Mirrors
Musical instruments
Photographs

paraphernalia
Stereo
Television
Tools
Welcome mats

Most of these items have a pretty straightforward meaning as long as you notice them. If there is a lot of sports stuff in a home, such as autographed basketballs, baseball cards, and sports equipment, then someone who lives there is pretty interested in playing or watching sports, or both. Piles of CDs next to a very nice stereo system with an amplifier and several guitars in guitar stands in the living room sends a clear message as to what the person enjoys.

A person who has a large flat-screen TV, expensive speakers, and a full Blue-ray library on shelves in an entertainment center is probably a film buff. It wouldn’t be surprising to see movie posters on the walls or film magazines on the coffee table as well. When you are reading items in a person’s home, follow the pattern rule as usual, and look for similarities between items and the interests that are represented.

If you enter a home that is decorated in a very minimalist fashion with sparse furniture and only a few abstract pieces of sculpture or paintings, then the person probably does not feel it is important to keep sentimental items out in the open. Perhaps it is more important to him to keep things simple and having an uncluttered artistic environment helps his peace of mind. If this is the case, it is unlikely that you would find his workplace covered in papers and family photos.
Reading Material

What people read says a lot about who they are. Whether it is books, magazines, journals, or newspapers, reading material can be one of the most revealing things you find in a person’s home. If a person’s bookshelves are filled with poetry books, journals, magazines, and guides on how to write poetry, then the person is probably a poet. Books on medicine combined with school notebooks and doctors’ memoirs most likely indicate a medical student or resident.

If a person doesn’t have any books, but the coffee table is covered in fishing and outfitting magazines, you’re probably in the home of a fisherman. An abundance of reading material on one subject most likely indicates an avid interest or possibly an obsession with a subject. For instance, if you visit someone who has an entire shelf of books on the Holocaust, the person could be very interested in social issues, history, and could also be Jewish.

Occasionally, just one book can reveal as much as the whole of a person's library. Very specific books are not usually purchased and read unless a person has a particular way to relate to a book. If you see a book on Alzheimer’s on someone’s shelf, there is a good possibility that either the person or someone he knows has Alzheimer’s and he bought it to better understand what was going on. Look for those somewhat incongruous books and you may find evidence of more personal issues. After all, the person in someone’s life who has that disease is probably more important to him than a whole collection of science fiction.
Photographs
Most people will have some type of photograph in their home. Photos are such a common part of special events and activities that they tend to be taken at the most important times of someone's life and also indicate the more important people in a person's life. Because of this, you should always pay close attention to the photographs that are on display in someone's home. You may find antique framed family photos of a person's ancestors on a wall in the hall. If this is the case, the person probably values family and tradition.

Many parents like to put up yearly school photos of their children or posed sports or band pictures. If you find yourself in a home where this is the case, then you can learn more than one thing from these pictures: the age and interests of the children and also the importance of family to the parents.

You should also pay attention to how the photographs are displayed – are they in an album or several albums? Are the frames expensive with matted photographs or did the children decorate the frames? As with most things, the amount can be important as well. Are there just a few professionally photographed and mounted photographs hanging above the mantel or are they squeezed onto as many tables and walls as will hold them? Anything displayed in the public areas of a home reflects a conscious decision on the part of the owner.

Art
Just like photographs, art is something that is displayed with complete freedom of decision. It is usually a reliable indicator of taste and interests, whether someone spends the money to buy original art or just posters. There are many different reasons that someone can like a particular artist or piece; perhaps there is a political dimension to the art or maybe a person is particularly drawn to impressionistic paintings. If someone likes Monet and you see the soothing water
lilies and purples and blues all over her home, perhaps it provides an escape and allows more relaxation and comfort in the home.

Art can reflect tradition or unconventional thought. In the home of a photographer or artist, perhaps you will see her own art displayed on the walls, which can provide even greater insight into the person. Some people may have their children’s art displayed in frames on the walls. Any choice of artwork can reflect a person’s values, sense of humor, and particular interests.

**Refrigerator Art**

The refrigerator is often a melting pot of the things that are significant to people living in a house. It is where things of value, interest, humor, and importance converge. The reasons for this have nothing to do with the actual refrigerator, but more to do with the purpose it serves. Because we all have to eat, it is natural to turn this appliance, which we all use daily, into a place to display things we need to remember or want to see. As a result, you will find many refrigerator surfaces brimming with evidence of the inhabitants’ lives and interests.

Lists, art, photographs, comic strips, magnets, postcards, bills, appointments, drawings, tickets, phone numbers, and many other things all have a way of ending up on the fridge. These items have been placed in a prominent position for a reason; you can try to determine why that is. If someone doesn’t put anything on his or her refrigerator, it probably doesn’t mean anything, unless the rest of the house is equally blank, but if there are things displayed, be sure to take a look.
Collections
When someone chooses to acquire a number of similar items that don't really have any practical uses, you have to know that there is something that particularly appeals to him or her about these things. A collection of something can tell you a lot about someone's hobbies, wealth, interest in pop culture, investments, travel, and about the different life experiences a person has had. If you see a collection of crosses, chances are that the collector is religious, but he may just like the shape of the cross. In the same way, a collection of matchbooks doesn't necessarily have to be owned by a smoker. The collector could have lots of candles or just like the variety he finds in matchbook covers.

Another reason that many people have collections is that someone close to them gave it to them or they inherited it. It is common for women to collect things like china, teacups, dolls, and postcards. Men will often collect things like baseball cards, coins, fishing lures or model cars. There is a certain crossover, of course, and this list of collectibles is definitely not exhaustive, but it still provides a basis for thoughts on what and why people collect what they do. Keep in mind that when someone has decided to collect something, there is a sense of stability contained within this person, because you usually must not move too often or be in a particularly chaotic situation if you are able to acquire and keep the many small items that make up most collections.

Plants
In some families, parents will make a child take care of a plant before they will allow him to get a pet. The reason for this is that plants are living things that require daily care and attention and the consequences are not so dire if you forget to give them water. If a person has lots of green plants and flowers, then he or she is probably more attuned to the needs of others and willing to spend time and energy making a vital and hospitable environment in the home.
If a person has plants that are not well-kept, this would indicate that the person is forgetful, particularly busy, or just not good at maintaining a neat and inviting home. If the plants are dying, then the rest of the house will probably be in a similar state of messiness. It is important to remember, though, that dying plants do not necessarily indicate an inattentive nature. Plants can't bark or move, so if they are not placed in very visible places, they could be a lot harder to remember to water or feed than an animal could. The parental test is not fool-proof.

**Alcohol/Bar**

Several decades ago, it was all the rage for people to have bars in their homes. A bar was a symbol of a person's ability to entertain and an emblem of a true host or hostess. These days, the bar has gone somewhat out of fashion. It is not very common for people to have their hard liquor on display and most bar glasses, stirrers and bottles are kept in closed cabinets. When a person who is middle-aged or younger has a fully stocked and/or visible bar or liquor cabinet, take note. It might be particularly important to this person to be an exceptional host or to at least give off that impression.

No matter what age the owner, a functional bar typically says that the homeowner places value on entertaining guests. A bar in newer homes especially says this. If a couple has chosen to include a bar in their home plans, then they probably would like to throw parties at their home sometime in the future. Don't make too many inferences from bottles on display, whether full or empty. To believe that this specifically indicates whether someone is an alcoholic or not is like assuming that someone with an ashtray outside is addicted to cigarettes. Both of these negative judgments could be true, but it is also possible that the person has both the liquor and the ashtray out for friends and is trying to be a considerate host.
Lamps/Lighting

Whether you are aware of it or not, your body probably tunes into a home’s lighting as soon as you enter. Lighting is one of those things that many people take for granted until they feel the effects of poor lighting. Imagine a family who moves from one home to another, but stops spending time together in the kitchen. They aren’t busier and they still enjoy being together just as much, but they find they’ve started hanging out in the living room more. It’s entirely possible that the family might not consciously acknowledge this change, but like plants, we are living things and we need the sun.

If you enter a home where there is very little natural light and the windows are heavily curtained, try to be sensitive to why this could be. There is a chance that the person prefers more dim areas or that it is very important for her to maintain a high degree of privacy. Perhaps she just enjoys a dark, Gothic atmosphere. It could also be true that she has migraines and bright light triggers headaches. For the most part, if you are visiting people who live in a house, they will have had the opportunity to make use of light effectively; how they choose to use it can say a lot about their nature and sensitivity.

Seller’s Challenge

After you have observed and learned the seller’s personality and have praised and been amazed at all their ‘stuff’ that is unique to them, you then must begin the process of reverse psychology. You must help the sellers recognize that finding buyers who have their same tastes, interests, hobbies, or decorative talents is probably not going to happen. So...you guide them to thinking like a buyer who is their total opposite and educate them on the changes that need to be made before showing their home.
Example:

- The buyer may be against hunting...so, put away the guns.
- The buyer may be single...so, put away all the drawings on the fridge and the family photos that are scattered throughout the house.
- The buyer may not like animals...so, plan where to hide the pet-bedding when a buyer is coming—and—buy a gallon of Febreeze to spray on all the furniture just before showing.

Basically, the seller must understand the importance of neutralizing his home. To achieve this goal you will need to delicately use all the negotiating techniques you have learned.

**Basic Home Feng Shui**

Feng Shui is fast becoming a selling positive. There are buyers who are devout followers of Feng Shui principles. Feng Shui literally means “wind” and “water” in Chinese. The practice of Feng Shui is an old Chinese (3,000 to 6,000 years old—most historians cannot pin down the exact year) wisdom that deals with harmony with the surroundings. Once you become familiar with Feng Shui principles, you will be surprised at the ‘accuracy’ of the outcome it claims to produce.

Since the yard is the first thing a buyer sees, here are some Feng Shui rules:

- Remove dead trees: Dead or decaying trees are believed to draw a tremendous amount of energy from a home.
- Trees must not touch the house: Any tree touching a house will give the house “yin” energy, which is negative energy.
- Trees must not be planted in front of the door: Trees that block a door, block opportunities and promote personal struggles with finances and career.
- Be sure to remove outdoor clutter first: Remove dead and dying plants, leaves, and fallen branches.
Install a water feature to boost outdoor relaxation: Fountains create a calming effect and drown out noises.

Have a fireplace or barbeque area: Back yard is better. Include good lighting.

Add a touch of Asia to your garden: Plant a clump of bamboo. Use gravel for borders.

Give your garden some weight: Boulders anchor the landscape—one for each resident.

Bring movement to the yard or garden: Place a twirling object and/or flag in your yard.

Add sound to your outdoors: Windchimes or bells are perfect. Place on a shepherd’s hook.

Put a touch of gold into your landscape: Plant shrubs or flowers with gold accents. Gold is considered a very auspicious and wealth-attracting color.

A good listing agent could negotiate the following with their seller:

“Mr./Ms. Seller, Agent Carol is bringing a buyer to view your property on Saturday. Carol feels her buyer will be very interested in your home because your home exhibits all the features her buyer is looking for. Agent Carol did mention how her buyers would be more attracted to your property with a few additions. Would you be open to placing a small windmill or flag in the yard; some wind chimes or bells on a shepherd’s hook in the front yard near the door; and a small water fountain in the entry way?”

If the seller really wants a fast sell, they will be more than happy to add some features that will attract your buyer.
Here are some interior ‘don’ts;’ you’ll notice some of these have been pointed out in previous sections:

- **Front:** Front door lines up with the back door? Does the front door face the stairway?
- **Structure:** Overhead or exposed beams? Ceilings too high or are they low and slanted? Skylights over sleeping areas or kitchen? Foundation cracks or problems? Serious plumbing or electrical problems?
- **Entrance:** Can you see the toilet/bathroom door from the entrance? Can you see the kitchen/stove from the front door? See the dining room from the front door? See the bedroom from front door?
- **Toilets:** Located in NW, SW, center, or corners of the house? Bedroom, dining area or kitchen located under or over toilet?
- **Staircases:** Spiral staircase? Staircase interrupted with landings? Staircase stops at front door? Split or scissor-style staircase?
- **Hallways:** Too long? Divide the house into two sections? Too dark?
- **Bedrooms:** Over garage? Over bathroom or laundry? Have empty space below, i.e., patio area?
- **Odor:** Smells musty, smoky, putrid?

Here are some subjective considerations:

What does the buyer see first upon entering home from back and rear doors that will most likely be used to enter the house after returning home? The first sight should be pleasant, not bathrooms, laundry, or kitchen.

Placement is important to good Feng Shui:

- **Furniture**—Seating should be backed up to any windows that have bright sunlight coming through. Less is more when arranging furniture pieces.
- **Mirrors**—Only use one piece mirrors. Never place a mirror across the foot of the bed. Place a mirror in front of you when sitting at a desk with your back to the door.
Plants—Include plants in every room. Focus on simplicity rather than quantity. The goal is to bring in natural beauty. Make sure plants/flowers are healthy. Plants in front of windows, but not covering them, is best in areas with a window ledge. Soften corners with tall plants.

Fountains—Placing one or two fountains in the home produces a peaceful setting.

Pictures—Use calming pictures: waterscapes, dolphins, subdued nature scenes.

Finally, pay attention to color:

Active rooms are family rooms and play rooms and they can handle active colors—red, orange, or yellow.

Passive rooms like bedrooms and studies need quieter colors—warm pink, pastels or beige shades.

Feng Shui is a fascinating subject. The basics are amazingly similar to simple common sense techniques that foster emotional and mental balance because we all are affected by what we see.

**Work Environment**

Generally, when you first come into contact with people, it is more likely to be in their place of business than in their home. How a person has chosen to spend the bulk of his waking hours can reveal a lot about his personality and values. Many people end up in jobs they never expected to have and perhaps don’t even like, but if you freely choose to work at your job it always says something about you. This applies not only to the job itself but also to its location.
Work Neighborhood

Depending on the degree of a person’s involvement with a company, the location of his workplace can say a lot about him. If he is the president or founder of the company and is the one who chose the office location, then it will say more about him than it would if he were an employee working at the same company. As the boss, he can determine the part of the city in which he wants to work as well as the type of building—he could put his office in a historical building or a home, work in a large office building downtown, or a quiet suburb or business complex on the edge of town.

Each of these choices can indicate something different about the man. If he decides to rent a space in an office building downtown, it is probably important to him to be close to downtown and adhere to conventions. However, if he chooses to buy a historical or unique building, he is probably thinking more long term by saving rent money and investing in something that could be worth more in the future. It also may not be important to him to follow conventions in his choices and he may be more creative and willing to think outside the box when it comes to business. Choosing a space in a business complex in an area that isn’t very developed may indicate that he wants to be close to his family in the suburbs and that he prefers to have a quiet environment with a good view in which to work.

Remember to take into account how close a person chooses to live to his or her work. If you choose to buy a condominium that’s only six blocks from your place of business, then you have made a significant financial commitment based mainly on the location of your job. This would probably indicate that you feel very stable and content where you are and that you feel your job is quite secure. However, if you have children and choose to live downtown rather than in a house in a residential neighborhood, this could indicate that you are thinking more of your convenience and comfort than that of your family.
Always consider what alternatives people have when making a choice to live or work in a specific place in the context of their lifestyles.

Choosing to work from home or choosing a job that allows you to work from home probably indicates that the person has other priorities in life or does not feel comfortable or successful working in an office environment. It often indicates that someone needs to be available to family members or is in business for herself.

The neighborhood in which a person chooses to work often reflects a lot about the person's business. Don't let neighborhood names fool you – there are often places within cities that used to be suited to one type of business but have shifted throughout the years. This could be the result of a city overhaul, where money was poured into a specific area to make it more appealing to different types of businesses.

In New York City, the meat-packing district has become a hub of fashion and trend setters. If you only knew that a design office was located here, and didn't know about the restaurants, hotels, and clubs actually in this district, you might falsely think that the designer didn't have enough money to afford to live in a more suitable area. However, if you know the history of this district, you could probably guess accurately that the designer is already well-established and not a fledgling at all.

Take notice of whether the area and office are practical without lavish frills or are marked by luxury that isn't necessary to attract business. If someone sets up shop in a space that's very indulgent, he is probably concerned with his public image and feels that he must impress his clients and competition. While a choice like this can often indicate success, it may also indicate arrogance, insecurity, need for approval, extravagance, and an impractical nature.
A man in the same business who is just as successful as the person with a lavish office but chooses an office that is more modest and comfortable, without the bells and whistles, is probably more confident and frugal than his fellow businessman.

Office Feng Shui
The way that a person organizes things within a given space can tell a lot about his nature. Some people feel it is important to loom over others in their office environment and arrange their furniture accordingly. This is something that a boss or member of upper management is more likely to do than a regular employee. She may have her chair elevated as high as possible or have a very large desk requiring many feet of space between her and someone she’s meeting with. A different person may choose to sit in another chair next to or directly across from a visitor to make the situation more comfortable.

In these two situations, the placement of barriers is particularly important. The person who insists on inhibiting the natural flow between people is probably insecure or egotistical. It is important to him to exert power over others. However, another person who makes a point of meeting without these barriers is probably much more confident, personable, and open to other people's suggestions.

- Ask yourself the following questions when observing a person's office space:
- Is her desk facing the door so she can immediately see visitors or is it more important for her to be able to see out the window while she works?
- Are pictures or posters arranged carefully on the wall and are there seats for guests to sit in?
- Does the arrangement of these seats invite conversation?
- Does the placement of the office inhabitant's chair allow for as few barriers as possible between him and his guests?
- How stimulating is the environment?
Of course many people will not have the ability or space to set up their office exactly as they would like. If this is true, then the smaller details and items in the office will probably say more than the layout. For the most part, it’s the personal touches that will tell you about the person and his or her attitude toward guests.

**Auto Environment**

An automobile can say much about the person who chooses it. It denotes interests, wealth, family status, age and sometimes region. It can also reflect a person’s ego and superficiality. For instance, if someone has a truck in Whitefish, Montana, it is extremely likely that the person uses that truck on a ranch or for work purposes. But if someone in Dallas, Texas has the same make and model of truck, it is likely that the person only uses the truck for travel. Trucks are common in both states, but they are common for different reasons. It is much more normal in Texas cities to have a truck, Suburban or SUV only for the look and not the function. This is not to say that certain Texans don’t use their work vehicles for work purposes, but many have them only for appearance.

When you evaluate a person’s car, pay attention to what kind of car it is and whether it has a practical use. Much like a Montana truck, convertibles can be more practical and common in some states than others. Be sure to ask particular questions when you are analyzing the vehicle:

Is the car a work car, a minivan or suburban, an SUV, a station wagon, a sports car, a classic car or a truck? Is it a practical vehicle for this person to have, given several factors in his life? How much would it cost to maintain such a car? Is gas more expensive for this car? If so, is the extra cost serving a purpose for work or is it being spent only to project a certain image? How is the mileage?
If you still aren't getting a clear idea of what the person's car means, then ask him more about it. If you see a man driving an Oldsmobile Sedan and it just doesn't seem to fit his personality, think some more about why he could have that car. Perhaps he was in a wreck and bought or borrowed his mother's used car until he was ready to get a new one. People in their teens and 20s may drive cars that their parents bought for them or that they purchased used or cheap to get around in until their finances stabilized and they could afford to buy something more fitting.

Special Additions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alarm</th>
<th>Mud flaps</th>
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<tr>
<td>Antenna ornaments</td>
<td>Paint job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bumper stickers</td>
<td>Racks (luggage, bikes, ski, gun)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Car phone</td>
<td>Radar detector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Rearview mirror ornaments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dashboard decoration</td>
<td>Roll bars</td>
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<td>Floor mats</td>
<td>Seat covers/Cushions</td>
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<td>Ground effects</td>
<td>Steering wheel cover</td>
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<td>Height</td>
<td>Stereo</td>
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<td>Hubcaps</td>
<td>Tinted windows</td>
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<td>License plate holders</td>
<td>Tires/Wheels</td>
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<td>Lights</td>
<td>Trailer hitches</td>
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<td>Moon/Sun roof</td>
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The addition of features like this distinguishes certain drivers from others. If you meet a person who drives a Honda Civic hatchback with the normal fabric-covered seats, automatic locks, standard transmission, AM/FM radio, the driver is probably fairly practical and frugal. However, if you meet someone who drives a Honda Civic hatchback with ground effects, blue lights beneath the car, moon roof, expensive stereo system, leather interior, tinted windows, a personalized license plate, and a
club racing sticker across the back windshield, you would get a very different impression even though it's the same basic car.

**Car Condition**
The condition of a person’s car can say just as much about her as the car itself. Take note of dents, scrapes, cracked windows, and the overall interior of the car. This is most effective when a person isn’t expecting you to see her vehicle. Even the scrapes on a car indicate a conscious choice. If a person’s car gets hit and she decides that the damage is only superficial and doesn't affect the car's function, then you would probably be right to assume that appearance isn't particularly important to this person.

But if someone is particularly uncomfortable with you looking at his car when there is a scrape on it, and apologizes and explains to you what happened without you asking, he might not have the money or time to get it fixed at the moment, but he obviously feels that the car’s appearance is very important and is somewhat ashamed of driving it in less than peak condition.

The interior of a car is likely to say a lot about the driver’s priorities. If it is extremely messy, covered with dust and papers scattered all over, chances are that this person has a pretty hectic life. He could also be extremely disorganized, lazy or just unconcerned with neatness. If a car is particularly messy, it could also mean that the driver has children or animals that spend a great deal of time in the vehicle and it is difficult to keep the car clean with them constantly in and out. If a person with kids and/or animals is able to keep the vehicle spotless, she is probably very much in control of her family or home situation.

When someone's car is in immaculate condition, this can indicate several things about his personality. He may be fastidious, left-brained or concerned with how others perceive him. As always, the degree of attention is what really indicates the
most. A person can make a good impression without removing every item not attached to the vehicle. How a person keeps his or her car is probably a good predictor of what the condition of his or her home will be.

**Social Environment**

People are often distraught that they never meet any new people or they don't meet the right kinds of people. If you meet a man at a bar and begin dating, you shouldn't be surprised when you find out that he drinks several times a week. While it generally takes seeing someone in a place more than once to really establish that it is his type of social environment, where a person goes usually says a lot about who he is.

Generally, the easiest way to meet someone who shares common interests with you is to go to your favorite places more frequently. If you like seeing interesting films, join a local film organization or attend special screenings. If you are very literary, go to your local used bookstore and attend book signings or readings.

This isn't to say that meeting someone in a particular kind of place will necessarily reveal the kind of person he or she is. We are creatures of habit in what we like, what we do and where we go. Before you judge people based on where they are, make sure that they have chosen to be there, that they aren't under any obligation to be in this particular place.

If you see a man picking his child up from school, you may automatically assume that he does this regularly. In actuality, the man could be filling in for his wife while she is home sick. He may never pick up his child unless his wife can't do it. This doesn't necessarily mean that he wouldn't like to pick his child up more often, only that, for whatever reason, he usually isn't able to.
Before you jump to conclusions about a person's environment, find out how much time he or she spends there. If you meet a couple who goes to church, you may think that religion is a very important part of their lives. However, you soon learn that the husband only goes to church on Sundays with his wife, while she is active in the choir, bible study, and outreach program. It is likely, then, that she views church as a more important component of her life than he does.

She may think that the other people in her church provide an important support system and means to clarify her thoughts on her faith. Perhaps he is also spiritual, but feels that organized religion is foolish; he may only go to church because he knows it is important to his wife. In this situation, the amount of time that each spends in the same place indicates how important this place is to their respective lives. The more time that people spend somewhere of their own accord, the more the place will indicate what their beliefs and values are.

You may assume that a man you meet while volunteering for Habitat for Humanity is someone who truly enjoys and values volunteer work. You may even see him there every couple of weeks and think that this means he is very dedicated to this work. While he may enjoy what he is doing and make the best of it, it could be possible that he is only doing volunteer work in order to serve required community service hours assigned to him after getting a DWI. The fact that he goes so consistently could mean no more than that he wants to get them over with as soon as possible.

There are certain times when someone's environment on a single occasion can indicate his or her thoughts or lifestyle. If you choose to interview a potential employee in a coffee shop, rather than at your office, you may be trying to make the person more comfortable by providing a casual environment. This, in turn, will show that you are an approachable person who does not feel it is important to appear in an office environment or in a clearly authoritative situation.
The same choice of location can be a good indicator of what a person wants on a date. If you go out with a man and he insists on meeting at a dance club or noisy bar, he may not feel it is that important to talk to you. However, if a man chooses to meet at a quiet, intimate restaurant or airy café, he probably places higher value on conversation and establishing a common ground from the beginning. If the intimate restaurant is rather expensive, then the man is probably trying to impress you. The café, which is probably less pricey, indicates that he is more comfortable with himself and doesn’t feel the need to put on a show for you. For him, what you see is what you get.

Keep in mind, as always, that a person’s choice may not specifically reflect something that he does regularly or values. If you meet this man at a noisy bar, he may have asked around and found out that it was a new place with very intimate seating areas and great drinks. It may be a fluke that the night you meet, it is packed with people. So, remember that while the place may be important or indicative of values, you shouldn’t draw major conclusions about lifestyle unless you know that it is somewhere a person goes regularly.

**Life Environment**

Have you ever met people who you thought were very interesting and then ended up in a social situation where many of their friends were present and you felt that you must have been completely wrong about them?

As children, we may have been baffled by our parents’ interest in who we were hanging out with and how much time we were spending with them. They knew, just as we now know, that “birds of a feather flock together” and that a child’s friends say much more about who he is than most other things in his life.

The people in our life environment include virtually anyone we socialize with and choose to spend time with. You may think that co-workers don’t say anything about
who you are as a person, but if you meet these co-workers for poker once a week, you probably enjoy their company enough to warrant spending non-office time with them. In this case, your co-workers do say something about you. Other people include spouses or significant others, close friends, wider circles of friends, and even family that you choose to spend time with.

If you know someone whose entire circle of friends includes only people she has known since high school, you may wonder why this is. Perhaps she has trouble making new friends or perhaps they were with her through the most difficult times of her life and she feels it is important to maintain those relationships. If you accept recommendations regarding a home contractor from a casual acquaintance, you should find out how well your acquaintance knows this person. If you believe your acquaintance is a good person and the man he is recommending is someone he knows well, chances are that the job will be done well.

However, if your friend recommends someone whom he just met at a conference and with whom he has no first-hand experience, you have no way of knowing what to expect because there isn't an established relationship between the two. In the same way, if you are in a new relationship with someone and find that all of his friends are particularly sleazy, then you probably haven't seen all sides of him yet. You should be cautious if he seems different when he’s around them.

If his friends are really just people that he hangs out with every now and then because he used to be in the same circle but no longer has the same values, then they probably won’t indicate that much about him. Like the social environment, the human environment reveals more about a person depending on how much time he spends with particular people.
Temporal Environment

When you meet someone often greatly determines what you think of this person and also how he or she acts. It is important to pay attention to the time, the day of the week, and the season when you evaluate a person. If you hire a new employee who was bounding with energy at your 3 p.m. interview but has no enthusiasm on her first day at 7:30 a.m., you shouldn’t assume that the interview was a fluke until you’ve seen her throughout the day.

Perhaps she was so nervous the night before that she was unable to sleep at all, or perhaps she is just not a morning person. There are many people out there who are not fully functional until they've had a morning boost of caffeine or coffee. Another reason could be something as meaningless as taking Benadryl for bad allergies. However, if she is still groggy and slow when 2 or 3 p.m. rolls around, there may be cause for concern.

The season could also affect what you read about a person. If you meet a woman who is very tan in January, she has probably been tanning regularly into the winter or has just returned from a long trip in a tropical place. If the former is true, then this probably indicates a certain vanity. However, if you see the same woman in August, she may just spend her weekends on the lake or by the pool because she enjoys the water and sun.

Another thing you should take into account is what day of the week it is. If someone is particularly down on a Monday, it could be for no reason other than the fact that he wishes his weekend had been longer. Feeling the same way in the middle of the week may be greater cause for concern. Also, if someone goes out during the week and comes in to work tired, he may not put a very high value on working as hard and as well as he can.
Circumstantial Environment

Earlier in this course, we talked about defense mechanisms and how they affect the way a person behaves. When someone is in an environment where he does not feel comfortable, for whatever reason, he will probably not act like his normal self. If a man is in an unfamiliar or unpleasant situation, he may appear anti-social, nervous, anxious, or even dishonest.

In a courtroom, you can't always judge if a witness is telling the truth based on body language without context. People may appear dishonest when they are really only nervous. We are like this at other times as well. Normally outgoing people may seem shy if they are in unfamiliar territory. Keep this in mind when meeting people at parties or other events. The more comfortable a person is in an environment, the more he will feel that he can be himself. If you can accurately judge a person's comfort level, then you can accurately judge him.

Geographic Environment

Geography can often be a very important part of how you view someone. It can influence how a person dresses, speaks, and expresses himself. A girl with pink hair may not get a second look in San Francisco; in fact, it may be a quite common and accepted fashion statement. Perhaps all of her friends have varying shades of dyed hair and are up on the latest styles and this is her way of fitting in with them. But the same color of hair in Minnesota will probably be viewed as a sign of nonconformity or discontent.

While appearance is an important thing to consider with both of these people, it may say more about the individuality and values of the girl in Minnesota than the girl in California. People can seem very different in different locations and actually have the same values and cultural or family background. The only difference could be the region where they are brought up and their values and desires could be manifest in totally different ways.
Lesson Summary

There are many aspects to every kind of environment—these include the interior, exterior, surrounding area, type of building or car, etc. Their condition, quality, and placement will all help you draw conclusions about the person responsible for them. Be sure to find out if the person actually chose the space that you are evaluating; if he didn’t, then the environment will still indicate certain things about him, but not as many. If there are discrepancies between someone’s environments, you can usually tell more about who a person really is from her home environment and more about the image she wants to project from her work environment.

How and with whom a person spends his leisure time can say much about his character, values, and interests. Most of all, remember that our environments are about choice and the more say a person has in his environment, the more it says about him. If someone is in an environment that he didn’t choose or in which he is uncomfortable, he may respond differently and exhibit characteristics that aren’t necessarily indicative of his true nature.
Lesson 4: Vocal Traits, Hidden Communications, and Real Estate Practice

Lesson Topics

This lesson focuses on the following topics:

- Introduction
- Speed
- Volume
- Pitch and Intonation
- Other Vocal Qualities and Affectations
- Disrupting the Conversation Flow
- Word Choices
- Conversational Habits
- Case Studies
Lesson Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Recognize behaviors in both familiar and unfamiliar acquaintances from verbal and nonverbal cues, including vocal traits, habits, and physical traits.
- Recognize other speech affectations and what they mean.
- Recognize when and how the other person is disrupting the conversation and why.
- Recognize hidden communications in conversation.
- Effectively manage a conversation when the other person uses disruptors.

Introduction

There are many ways that a person can speak that add meaning to his spoken words. The intonation, volume, and speed of speech can all convey different messages. Be sure that you consider the environment that a person is in, determining if he is under stress or relaxed, for example, or perhaps trying to impress someone. If a person is comfortable in his environment, you will probably be able to tell much from the tone of his voice. As always, search for patterns that link the person's speech to his or her body language and the actual words being spoken.

Also, there are many common behaviors that emerge when people are trying to obscure or compensate for certain feelings. We are usually raised to avoid certain subjects of conversation and also told to avoid behaviors like bragging or just being too forthright.
Speed

Fast
Many people think that fast-talkers are constantly telling lies. While this is the case sometimes, you shouldn’t assume so unless there is additional evidence of deception. People in different parts of the country may speak at different speeds. If you were from the South and met someone from New York, you wouldn’t want to assume that she was lying to you just because she spoke very quickly.

The speed of someone’s speech can signify many different things besides the region that he or she is from. People who are nervous or anxious often speak particularly quickly. This can be because there is something they are trying to cover up or just because they are worried that the other person is passing judgment or won’t approve of what they are saying. If this is the case, they may speak more quickly because they are insecure or because they are trying to persuade someone of their viewpoint and may become increasingly impatient or angry if they are unsuccessful.

People may also talk quickly when they have a lot of energy or adrenaline, when they are excited about something or when they have been drinking a caffeinated beverage. Drugs and alcohol can have the same effect. One of the best ways to know if a person is speaking quickly because he is lying is to listen to the content of the speech. He may be speaking quickly, but is what he’s saying consistent? Does he also seem nervous and avoid eye contact? And, of course, remember that some people just speak more quickly than others. It may not indicate anything out of the ordinary.
**Slow**

Slow speech can actually indicate some of the same things that fast speech does. If someone is trying to convince someone else of a point that he feels is important, he may take the approach of speaking more slowly to encourage understanding. If someone is a more practiced liar, he may know that people commonly interpret rapid speech as the sign of a liar and he may have learned to counter that by altering his speed. In this case, he might be more cautious when he says something.

A person may also speak more slowly when he is confused by what is happening or being discussed. He may be deep in thought over the matter or perhaps slow intellectually and in both cases, this will affect his response time. On the other hand, if a person is talking to someone, perhaps a child or someone whose first language is not English, the person may affect a slower manner of speaking to help the other individual understand better.

Drugs and alcohol can also be a cause of slow speech. Depending on personal reaction and whether the person is under the influence of a stimulant or a depressant, this can affect speech in different ways. For example, it would be more common for a person to speak slowly if he were under the influence of marijuana than if he were taking amphetamines.

**Volume**

The volume of a person's voice is often one of the most effective means of communicating. If you meet someone who speaks at an abnormal volume level consistently, this is probably something that has developed over time as a natural response to his social or family environment. There are many reasons that a person speaks at a certain level of modulation at any given time and determining what this means can clue you in to a person's motivations, what she wants to convey to others and how confident she is in any given situation.
Control

If a person is trying to maintain control over those around him, he will often speak loudly. Over time, this need for domination can become an integral part of his voice. To determine how important the volume of someone's voice is, you should note when and how he uses it and what he gains from this use. Many people with loud voices also have a tendency to talk over others. Though some loud people are considerate, the raised vocal volume often goes hand in hand with a rude tendency to drown out others.

People with loud voices often intimidate others, which can make other people go along with them even when they don't necessarily agree. Because loudness is so often equated with confidence, others may presume that a louder person knows what he is talking about and will then be more likely to trust what he is saying. This gives people with louder speaking voices great persuasive power and often lends them credibility or respect without having done anything to earn it.

People sometimes use a soft voice to control others as well. If you are speaking to someone so quietly that she has to come nearer to you in order to hear what you are saying, you have used your power to force her to move while you remain where you are. A person can also lower his voice to keep others around him from hearing it, which becomes a power play when what he is saying could be important to those beyond hearing range.

Soft and loud voices can both indicate self-confidence. When a person is courteous to those to whom he is talking, the volume matters less than when and how he speaks. Often, a courteous person with a quiet voice will exhibit his self-confidence in his lack of need to speak over people. Interpretation depends largely on how courteous and appropriate a person's voice seems in different situations.
Compensation
People adjust their voices to compensate for many different things. If someone lacks confidence, he may speak more loudly to appear more comfortable with himself and his opinion. Often, body size affects the way a person speaks. Many shorter people may develop louder voices to make up for their smaller stature. In the same way, it is possible that someone who is larger may speak in a quieter voice to deflect attention.

Intoxication
Many people get louder when they are drinking. This may have to do with lowered inhibitions or a lack of awareness of appropriate speaking volume when they are under the influence of alcohol. Because of this, people who are drunk may likely not speak as loudly when they are sober. You should probably refrain from making a quick judgment if it is the first time for you to meet someone and you have no way to compare his intoxicated voice to his sober voice.

Distress
Oftentimes, a particularly quiet or loud voice will indicate that the speaker is going through a period of distress in his or her life. If you meet a man who speaks very quietly and you can't determine why, look for signs of grief or illness.

People often become quieter when they aren't feeling well physically or emotionally. If someone is speaking very loudly, he may be distressed about something else to the point of anger, which can result in an elevated volume.

If someone has been in a long period of distress, then he or she may have affected a louder or quieter voice permanently. This relates to compensation. Often people who are abused may have developed quieter speaking voices as a result of that trauma. In the same way, a man may speak loudly because he was raised in a family where he had to increase his volume to compete for attention.
Another form of distress that can affect a person’s voice is lying. Someone may change the volume of his or her voice to appear more confident in what he is saying. He may also speak more quietly if he doesn't have confidence in his words and is unable to adopt that attitude. On the other hand, people tend to speak more quietly when they are reluctantly admitting to the truth of something. Because so many factors can affect the volume of someone’s voice, the content of her speech will help cast light on how we should interpret her volume.

**Pitch and Intonation**

**Vocal Pitch**

For the most part, you can do very little about your vocal pitch. When you are born, your vocal cords develop to a certain thickness and there you have what most people know as your voice—the actual sound and tone that comes out when you speak. It is doubtful that the comedians Carrot Top or Gilbert Gottfried would have chosen their particular voices if they had the chance. But, they capitalized on them and probably became comics partly as a result of developing the humor necessary to deal with such peculiarly-pitched voices.

Of course, people’s voices can become lower or higher as they become agitated, excited, seductive or grave. If you are particularly upset or happy about something, your voice will often raise in pitch. But if you are tired or depressed, the pitch of your voice will probably be lower than usual. Many people lower their voices when they are trying to convey a sultry side or seduce someone. If you take vocal pitch in context with other available body language clues, you can probably discern a person’s mood or disposition quite easily.
**Intonation**

Intonation is the act of varying your pitch to convey syntactical information. If you think about a child who is being forced to apologize, you will probably have a very good idea of how significant intonation can be. Perhaps he did something like take a toy that wasn’t his and he doesn’t feel that he should apologize. As a result, his insincerity will generally be conveyed by the intonation of his voice. The tone may be flat throughout the apology or maybe the apology will be delivered in a mocking, sing-song voice.

In general, intonation is an excellent way to judge a person’s level of sincerity. Though other languages rely much more on intonation to convey meaning than English does, it can be still be a very important component of communication in English. If you’re really paying attention to not just what a person is saying, but how he is saying it, you can usually tell if he means it. In some cases, you can even tell what is going to come next in conversation.

For instance, if you ask someone to help you move into a new house, she may say “I’m really busy this weekend.” From just the intonation, you will probably be able to discern whether that’s all she’s going to say or if there is further explanation coming. Not only will you know if she’s going to say something else, but you’ll probably be able to tell if the next words out of her mouth will be “but I’m sure I could find the time” or “so I’m sorry but I can’t help you.” Combined with other body language indicators, a person’s more significant vocal clues can be easier to recognize.
Other Vocal Qualities and Affectations

Mumbling
Mumbling often indicates some kind of exhaustion or insecurity. If the person who is mumbling doesn’t usually speak that way, then he is probably tired, ill, preoccupied with something or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If you know someone who mumbles regularly, this can say a lot about his self-esteem and general mind state. He may be anxious, insecure, self-conscious or depressed. Mumblers tend to be people who aren’t in positions of leadership and probably don’t have the desire to be.

Broken Speech
Broken speech can sometimes indicate the same things about the speaker as mumbling. It can be a sign of insecurity, anxiety or confusion. A lot of the time, though, it indicates that the speaker is searching for the right words and that it is very important for him to say exactly what he means. Occasionally, broken or halting speech can be a sign of untruthfulness, where someone feels she may be caught in a lie or she is trying to figure out what to say that will be most believable.

The best way to know whether a person who continually breaks her speech flow is lying is to look for other indicators of deception. These include an unsteady gaze, fidgeting, nervousness, and covering of the mouth or other facial parts. If a person speaks hesitantly, but also maintains a direct gaze, doesn’t fidget a lot, and her voice remains even, chances are that she is telling the truth and is just trying to sort things out as she says them.

If a person isn’t just speaking hesitantly, but is also stuttering in his speech, this is probably due to nervousness. Occasionally, this stammering is an actual physical condition.
Take note of whether the stuttering occurs consistently at different times and when the person has no reason to be nervous, or if it only occurs in a particularly uncomfortable or stressful situation. If this doesn't seem to be the case, then the person could have a chronic stuttering problem, the causes of which are unknown.

**Whining**

Whining is generally a pretty straightforward vocal affectation. If a person is whining, it is because he wants you to agree with him or give in to what he wants. It is sometimes the case that people who whine are less likely than others to do something to change their situations. Whiners can sometimes be manipulative in many of their personal and professional relationships. Perhaps you've met someone who complains about the quality of the coffee at a restaurant but refuses to find a new place. The same person may take advantage of others or use guilt to gain advantage.

Not all people are constant whiners, of course. In fact, it is probably more common that we all whine occasionally. If you meet someone who is whining about something, find out whether she's had a bad day, if what she's talking about is a particularly bad situation that she would genuinely like to change and whether or not she's willing to do something about it and has ideas to move in that direction. This will generally separate the chronic whiners from the occasional ones.

**Breathy/Raspy Voice**

You generally don't hear someone's breathing unless you are near him. If you can hear it from further away, there are many reasons that this could be:

- Anger
- Disbelief
- Excitement
- Fatigue
When a person is unintentionally breathing audibly, it is usually due to emotional or physical factors. People who have lung diseases or other serious illness may breathe heavily, which is only a symptom of the illness. Other reasons that someone will unintentionally breathe loudly usually have to do with some form of stress, whether it is a stressed mental state, including anger, fatigue, frustration or more general stress. This will typically be evident in other ways, including making pronounced body movements that indicate a stressed disposition.

If a person is making his voice breathy voluntarily, it is probably because he is trying to attract someone romantically. This could be why people play jazz music for dates or why late night deejays have those sultry voices. This often goes hand in hand with affecting a low voice. Next time you’re listening to the radio, make note of how many singers have breathy voices and how people tend to react to them. Breathiness has long been used as a means of attraction.

Raspy voices are almost always due to some form of stress on the throat or vocal cords. This stress can include years of smoking, illness, hoarseness from shouting, singing too much or even doing a lot of public speaking, as a lecturer may have to do. If it is due to an overuse of the voice somehow, then this may indicate that the person is confident enough to be in front of many people. It’s possible that someone could get hoarse from singing alone in her room but it’s more likely that it’s from performance or some kind of participation in public activities.
Sidestepping Questions
As a result of our socialization and the presence of societal mores, many people develop certain verbal or behavioral maneuvers to avoid giving away too much information about themselves or to sidestep conversations they don’t want to—or feel they shouldn't—engage in. If you are having a conversation with someone, there are many ways that person can avoid giving you a straight answer; this can reveal both what she wants to avoid discussing and key points to her personality.

Unresponsive
People refrain from answering questions directly for many reasons, namely to avoid:

- Embarrassment
- Revealing the truth
- Creating conflict
- Becoming emotional

While you don't want to rush into thinking that someone is intentionally avoiding your questions or pursuit of a certain subject, it is also not a good idea to assume that the person definitely heard and understood your question. Before you make any judgments about a person's reaction, you may want to inquire again or make sure that he understood what you were asking. If this is the case, you will be able to get your answer in no time.

Try to ask open-ended questions when someone is being particularly unresponsive, as it is more difficult to answer questions that inherently require a longer response than just “yes” or “no.” If this doesn't work, and the person isn’t reacting negatively to your inquiries, try asking pointed questions. If you are still unsuccessful, you may need to give up or find another way of acquiring the desired information.
If a person consistently avoids questions that are open-ended, or even yes/no questions that would usually come with some kind of embellishment, then he is probably trying to hide something. You should also note whether the person is clamming up completely, or if there are certain things that he is very willing to talk about. Perhaps he just has something on his mind that he wants to discuss and wants to talk about this before he goes into anything else. If you think this is the case, just let him have his say and then he will probably be completely willing to discuss other matters with you.

There is another dimension to unresponsiveness that may be more revealing than the previous points. If someone is asked a question or accused of something and chooses not to respond, this is usually viewed as an acceptance or admission. Because it is so important for us to be understood, making a conscious choice to deny this understanding is usually viewed as an affront to the person you’re talking to. Of course, refraining from sharing particular information may be meant to prevent harm to the other person, but it often makes the other person insecure concerning the confidence he has in your relationship.

If you were speaking to a co-worker and friend who was upset that he had not gotten a raise after his quarterly review, you might hope that he wouldn’t ask if you had received one. But if the question came up and you wanted to spare his feelings and not rub his face in the information, you might choose to stay quiet and not say anything. Your co-worker would probably interpret this as an acknowledgment that you had received a raise. From there, he might either get upset that you had gotten one, offended that you wouldn’t tell him or perhaps he would just acknowledge that you didn’t want to gloat.

Another reason that people might not respond to a question is their belief that they are being baited. Someone might think that you will ridicule her if she gives you an honest answer, so she may choose not to answer at all and provide fuel for the fire.
It is also possible for the roles to be reversed where the person being asked a question could be the one ridiculing the inquirer by refusing to answer. He may only want to make you uncomfortable or insecure. In both of these cases, the person isn't necessarily hiding something, he is just engaging in a particular strategy.

**Responding to a Question with a Question**

When someone answers a question with a question, he is usually hoping to find out what the questioner wants to hear before he commits himself to an answer. He may not be sure what the socially acceptable answer is and may not be opinionated enough about the matter to feel that it warrants giving a definite answer. Either way, the person is trying to avoid discomfort by ensuring that his answer will be received positively.

This method of answering a question with a question occurs for many of the same reasons that people choose not to respond to questions at all. The person may not understand and is seeking to clarify what is being asked before she responds. She may also be insecure or embarrassed about answering the question. If it's something she doesn't want to talk about, answering questions with questions is an often effective way of getting the questioner to give up his pursuit of an answer.

In some cases, people may answer with a question because they genuinely want to learn more about you and view that as more interesting than talking about themselves. However, there is a chance that they are particularly insecure or private and hate talking about themselves. Pay attention to whether they respond warmly or somewhat defensively to determine which one it could be.

So, to determine the most likely motive for a person's answering a question with a question, you should focus on several things. First, compare the question the other person asked with the question that you asked and decide if the information that
he gained from his question was necessary to answer yours. If this is not the case, then he probably didn't want to commit to an answer that would be incongruous with yours or would make him look like a fool.

Second, ask yourself if the second question was an attempt to steer the conversation elsewhere. If this is so, the person was probably avoiding the question or didn't hear what you asked. If you are intent on getting an answer to your question, you should carefully ask a follow-up question. If he continues to avoid answering your questions, then he is most likely hiding something and may have an ulterior motive.

**Short Answers**
Perhaps you have heard the story (possibly an urban legend) of the college philosophy professor whose entire final exam consisted of the question “Why?” The story goes that the student who received the highest grade on the exam was the one who simply answered “Why not?” Most of us would not be this clever, or brave enough to entrust an entire grade to only a two-word answer, but, as the philosophy professor must have thought, it is often quite refreshing to receive such a confident and direct response.

A very short answer doesn't inherently indicate avoidance of a question. If your question only called for a small amount of information and the respondent is that sure of his position, he is answering in the most logical way possible. However, if someone consistently answers in very curt and clipped responses, when embellishment would make more sense, there is probably more to his method of answering than meets the eye.
A person who is giving short answers will probably reveal some of his motivation in his body language. If someone is not answering questions because she is embarrassed or nervous, she may look down or fidget when she answers. Blushing is also a possible accompaniment to uncomfortable answers. If someone is giving short answers because she thinks it’s none of your business, she may exhibit signs of defensiveness, frustration or anger, including holding you in a challenging gaze, raising her voice or answering in a very flat tone and markedly gesturing.

**Long Answers**

A particularly long answer can indicate many things about a person; he may want to dominate a conversation and be the center of attention or he may simply be having trouble articulating what he wants to say. The body language that accompanies the long answer can indicate whether this is the case or if he is trying to obscure something within a long string of babble. When people do this, they often believe that as long as the truth is in there somewhere, in some fashion, then what they’re doing isn’t the same as telling a lie.

If the answer seems rushed or disjointed, the person could likely be nervous, confused or even frightened. Some long answers are barely coherent and this can come from insecurity or a lack of confidence in self or the answer. If the answer is coherent but irrelevant, this usually indicates that someone is trying to control the conversation, whether it is because he wants to talk about a specific subject, avoid a subject or impress his listeners.

Long answers may indicate that the person speaking really doesn’t know the answer to a question but doesn’t want to admit as much. This is the same type of rambling you might encounter if you were a teacher grading essay tests. Rather than look inept, the person attempts to distract from the question with smoke and mirrors that may not have anything to do with the desired information. By observing other elements of people’s body language, you should be able to tell if
they are knowingly clouding the truth by rambling or if they are earnestly trying to find a way to answer your question.

**Disrupting the Conversation Flow**

**Rambling**

Ramblers are much like people who give particularly long answers, though they usually have less focus on their subject matter. Like extended answers, this can often indicate anxiety and insecurity or a desire for attention. If you are around someone who usually speaks very coherently at a normal pace and length but he is rambling, try to determine if he seems nervous about something. If he doesn't, note his body language and eyes, because rambling often occurs with fatigue or intoxication. If he does seem nervous, he will probably exhibit other signs of nervousness like fidgeting or shifting eyes.

**Changing the Subject**

Like unresponsiveness, changing the subject can often be due to a preoccupation with a matter that someone wants to discuss. It doesn’t necessarily mean that he doesn’t want to talk about what you’re talking about; instead it only shows that he wants to raise an issue he feels is important and won’t be able to focus on anything else until it’s been discussed.

If you don't think that this is the case and the person changes direction in the middle of a conversation quite abruptly, try to determine what the subject was that could have caused this reaction. One of the best ways to see if a person is very intentionally avoiding the subject is to see if the subject change was progressive or abrupt. If the subject still has something to do with the original one, then it probably isn't so much intentional as it is a natural progression of thought.
If this is the case, the best thing to do is to go along with the conversation and see where it goes. He may reveal something in the process. There is also the chance that he will return to the subject on his own. Sometimes people just need time to work things out in their heads to clarify their thoughts on a matter.

**Word Choices**

Within our vocabularies we all have idiosyncrasies and selections of words that can reveal much about who we are and what we value. It can indicate respect, awareness of others and trends.

**Themes**

You've surely encountered people who use sports words in their everyday language. Oftentimes, relationships are referred to by people in sports terms. The use of bases, strikes, going to bat, etc. all help to describe different aspects of relationships, both personal and business. This also frequently happens with military terminology. You may find other themes in someone’s speech that are especially revealing. When someone prefaces most of her comments with “honestly” or “frankly,” this theme of truth may mean something. This doesn’t necessarily mean that she is lying the rest of the time, but you should be on alert for the possibility that not everything she’s saying is true.

While it may be normal for adolescents or teenagers to giggle at a hint of sexuality, adults who do the same thing and are always finding a sexual meaning to things and include much sexual innuendo in their conversations may still be quite uncomfortable with their sexuality. Though they might be eager to protest that their comments are innocent, the things that people say usually reflect their mind states; if someone is constantly putting a sexual spin on things, chances are their intentions and thoughts are right in line with what they’re saying.
Name Dropping
Most of us have known someone who seems always to be bringing up celebrities or important people with whom he has worked or had some contact in his life. The person usually feels that this name dropping will impress other people, and in many cases this is true. This need to impress is usually the result of insecurity, so pay attention to whether this is something that happens often or whether the person you’re speaking with is only using this brush with fame as a one-time funny anecdote. If this is the case, then the person probably isn't trying to draw attention to himself, but is only providing interesting conversation.

Slang
Slang can reveal much about our upbringing, culture, and socioeconomic background. It reflects where we've lived, when we were there, and who we were there with. It can originate in very small groups (like clubs) or in very large groups (like nations). Colloquialisms are a very common part of slang. These are common expressions that are a part of everyday speech and informal conversation.

Another aspect of slang that can be very revealing is grammar. Grammar usually tells us a lot about how a person was raised and how educated he is. This doesn't necessarily reflect intelligence, only how much education a person has received. If you meet someone who has bad grammar, there is a good chance that he was not raised in a place where grammar was thought to be particularly important and his family is probably not very educated.

Because grammar and speech are so affected by the people around us, you can often discern a person’s environment by paying attention to how he speaks. When someone is able to change the way he speaks at will, then he is probably affecting a manner of speaking to convey a particular image or to fit in with those around him. This often happens with teenagers who want to be accepted into a certain crowd.
Besides dressing similarly, one of the easiest ways to fit in with a group is to affect their slang and manner of speaking.

When a person isn't in full control of his wits, whether he is excited or upset, he can easily slide back into his normal way of speaking. This tends to happen with accent as well. It often becomes stronger when emotions are heightened or the person's guard is down, which may occur more frequently around close friends and family.

**Profanity**

Profanity is considered most common among people of a lower socioeconomic background. Usually, the amount a person curses depends on how much the people around her curse. If someone you meet uses profanity to a significantly different degree than those she spends time with, this can show that she can resist pressure to conform and is perhaps quite independent.

Though profanity can indicate that someone is less educated, it has become much more common, partly due to increased inclusion in media sources. This said, it is still commonly viewed as uncouth or disrespectful if used frequently. This view is much more likely if, for instance, a student uses profanity in a class, or an adult curses in a public place with small children around. In the first case, the student is probably being intentionally rebellious, but in the second case, the adult may well be socially inept.

Excessive profanity that is mixed with anger can often indicate that a person is particularly volatile and intentionally threatening or aggressive. He probably relishes having power over others, especially if the pattern of body language and behavior points to the role of intimidator. The best way to judge how much someone's use of profanity says about him is to observe the circumstances in which he uses it and how often that happens.
A man who lets a curse word fly every once in a while under extreme stress probably can't be judged for that as much as someone who curses excessively in an array of situations.

**Titles**

Like colloquialisms, how people use titles can say much about how and where they were raised and what their life experiences have been. In the South, it is much more common for people to address people as “sir” and “ma’am” as a sign of respect. In fact, it can be considered disrespectful not to use these titles for elders. If you are not in the South and you hear someone address someone else in this way, it is possible that this person has done military service or that his parents were even born in the South and brought him up with this method of exhibiting respect elsewhere.

The easiest way to tell whether someone is using titles because of upbringing or culture is to ask yourself whether it is something he does with most people. If he doesn't, then the use is much more conscious and can indicate respect for another or sarcasm, depending on the use. If you have an easily observable context for the usage, pay attention to that, the body language, and the tone in which the title is delivered to determine which purpose of title usage is the most likely.

**Conversational Habits**

**Hyperbole/Exaggeration**

We all know people who have a tendency to inflate the truth. People who speak in hyperbole like this are usually insecure in some way and feel it is necessary to overstate things in order to get attention and have control over conversation and people around them. Occasionally, people exaggerate because they actually see the world in extremes. Either they are truly enthusiastic about everything around them, completely negative about everything around them, or they are overcompensating for devastating disappointments.
It is generally pretty easy to identify the first two types of people. If someone is always very positive, he may have many friends and take everything in stride, putting a positive spin on events in his life. He probably won't feel that the grass is greener on the other side, but instead will be of the opinion that his life is as it should be.

If someone is particularly negative in his exaggerations, he may voice his opinion that the world is against him and want to get sympathy from everyone around him. When you come into contact with someone like this, you should try to determine why he is like this; chances are that something has happened either recently or in his past that has caused him to look at everything bitterly.

Usually you can identify those who are trying to keep up a positive persona when they are particularly stressed and let their guard down by observing their facial expressions. These are the people who think that as long as they pretend to be happy, no one will be the wiser. They may also think that pretending to be happy will actually make them happy. If they are particularly successful in their illusions, then you may not be able to tell if there is more going on, because they may have also fooled themselves. With people so practiced in keeping up a façade, you may have trouble getting through their walls.

**Bragging**

Like exaggeration, bragging is often the result of personal insecurity. Usually, self-aggrandizement happens in conversation when it is not necessarily relevant. If, for example, you are talking about a recent contest you entered or someone asks you specifically about your accomplishments, it would not be irrelevant to describe how well you had done. It is a natural part of the conversation and the information is desired by the listener.
When people are truly bragging, they are usually seeking recognition for things they may or may not have actually done. Many kinds of people can brag, people who are or aren’t successful and rich. There are many who are very successful but perhaps don’t feel they deserve it or are hoping that someone else will affirm their accomplishments. The other type of person may lie when he brags, making up fantastic things or sometimes creating a whole persona that doesn’t actually match his place in life.

Both of these people are demonstrating their unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their lives. If you are not confident enough in yourself to recognize your accomplishments, then you will probably have trouble being happy. Be careful when you come into contact with people like this, because they are often easily offended and can be resistant to other people’s viewpoints. What they most want is to be viewed as important and if they have to lie or brag to make that happen, they will.

**Self-Criticism**

At times, self-aggrandizement can exist in someone who is also self-deprecating. It is a different approach to the same problem of insecurity. When someone criticizes himself, he may be looking for someone to protest and praise him. People who are comfortable with themselves don’t typically make negative comments about their skills, intelligence, appearance or behavior. A person who doesn’t feel comfortable with these traits may draw attention to them as a way of seeking help or, at least, sympathy.

Often, a person may feel that if she is the one to cast the first stone at herself, she’ll beat others to the punch. She may also be trying to make the people around her more comfortable. If someone says these things around you but not around other people or in crowds, then she probably trusts you and is seeking your support. If
this is true, you should be careful in how you respond, because she will probably be very sensitive to your judgment.

Self-criticism doesn't always signal a deep-rooted self-esteem problem. It's one thing to recognize your own flaws and make a light joke about being absent-minded and quite another to make a biting comment about being overweight in a way that makes other people particularly uncomfortable. A good way to determine how serious a person is about it is to see how often he makes these comments. If they are relatively rare and always presented as light-hearted self-mocking, you probably don't need to read much more into them.

**Case Studies**

**Case Study 1: Relationship Assessment**

If you are involved in a relationship and aren't sure whether or not you should be in it, which of the following would be effective ways to determine what to do?

- Make a list of all the good points and bad points about the relationship.
- End it until it becomes clear whether or not it is a positive relationship.
- Try to be objective and look at the person as a friend or family member would.
- Focus on the negative aspects of the relationship first—if you can't resolve these, it's not worth being in.
- Pretend that you have met someone just like this person, with all the same qualities, habits, and communication methods and try to decide if you would want a relationship with the person if there wasn't already an emotional connection.
- Do not talk to the person until you have decided what to do.
- Be as honest as possible and consider discussing your confusion with the person.
Answer
You should:

- Make a list of all the good points and bad points about the relationship.
- Try to be objective and look at the person as a friend or family member would.
- Pretend that you have met someone just like this person, with all the same qualities, habits, and communication methods and try to decide if you would want a relationship with the person if there wasn't already an emotional connection.
- Be as honest as possible and consider discussing your confusion with the person.

The best way to be objective about a relationship is to concentrate on both the negative and positive aspects of it. Making a list of these and trying to look at the person as if he were someone else or as if you were someone else can be an effective way of judging a person's qualities and worth in a relationship. Being honest about this would be more helpful than restricting your communication from the person completely.

Case Study 2: Clues of Dishonesty
If you are having a conversation with a potential buyer client and aren't sure if she is being honest, which of the following actions could she perform that would indicate that she is lying?

- Sitting very still
- Shifting weight
- Leaning forward
- Leaning backward
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Smiling
Blinking
Scratching head
Licking lips
Speaking quickly
Speaking slowly
Direct eye contact
Invading personal space
Tilting head
Crossing arms
Doodling

Answer:
Signs that a person may be lying include shifting weight, leaning forward, shaking, sweating, blinking, licking lips, speaking quickly, and invading personal space.

Most indicators of dishonesty involve a lack of steadiness. This can include someone shifting her feet or eyes, shaking, blinking, and speaking quickly. It also includes other signs that can resemble nervousness, including sweating and licking lips. Leaning forward and invading personal space are other ways that someone will try to convince you that they are being honest, though the effect is just the opposite.

Case Study 3: Reading Choices
If a real estate business owner decides to move his office into a historical house that is a fair distance from downtown, which of the following might be true?

- It is important for him to be close to his family.
- He may be saving money by living away from downtown.
- He may be saving money by purchasing a space rather than renting.
- He may be more creative and unconventional than other businessmen.
**Answer**

All of these assumptions could be true of the owner. Choosing to operate a business from a house can indicate that someone is capable of thinking outside of the box and that it's more important for him to be nearer to family than downtown. He could be saving money by renting or buying the house because of the unconventional location.

**Case Study 4: The Job Interview**

You are scheduled to conduct a job interview for a closing coordinator at your real estate office at 9 a.m. The person that you are meeting with does not arrive until 9:20. When he enters, he keeps his eyes down and mumbles an apology, glancing up and then away for a moment to tell you he'd been stuck in traffic. You say that's OK and then proceed to ask him questions about his resume and work experience. He stares off into space and has trouble finishing his answers. Which of the following could be indicated by the various behaviors displayed here?

- He is lying about being stuck in traffic and did not sleep well last night.
- He is telling the truth about being stuck in traffic and is just insecure.
- He is depressed and insecure.
- He is on drugs.
- He is distracted or preoccupied.
- He is trying to appear bored so you won't hire him.

**Answer**

It is possible that he is:

- Lying about being stuck in traffic and did not sleep well last night
- Depressed and insecure
- On drugs
- Distracted or preoccupied
If he didn't sleep well last night, that would explain why he is unfocused. However, his shifty eyes probably indicate not exhaustion, but dishonesty. While mumbling is often a sign of insecurity, his glance up and then down more likely indicates that he is lying about the traffic. Depression and insecurity can often be manifested in poor concentration and unconcern about the events around him. This may explain his tardiness, mumbling, and lack of focus. Drugs can cause someone to appear tired and unfocused. This could account for his behavior. If he is thinking about something else, this could explain why he is having trouble finishing his statements. When someone is focused on something else, he may not hear what someone is saying, even if there is no other activity to distract him. While staring off into space can indicate boredom and being late can indicate a lack of desire to be there, boredom alone wouldn't explain his mumbling or difficulty finishing statements.

**Lesson Summary**

You now have the knowledge to hear beyond the actual content of a conversation. There are many reasons that people talk the way they do, whether it is intentional or unintentional. Remember to do these things to help you hear through the words:

Look for patterns that are consistent with or deviate from a person’s regular voice and body language.

Consider the environment that a person is in and how that might affect his vocal reaction. Pay attention to which vocal traits are intentional and which are unintentional. At times, listen to the voice, not the words, to hear what someone is saying.

People obscure what they're thinking or feeling for many reasons. There are many methods they might use to achieve this end, like giving short answers or changing the subject. However, these ways of inhibiting communication actually
communicates something in themselves: that there is something here that someone doesn't want to discuss for some reason or another. Looking for certain indicators and behavior can help you to determine what a person isn't saying and also how comfortable someone is with herself in relation to the people around her.

There are many conversational habits in which people engage, like bragging or being defensive, that can reveal otherwise hidden aspects of their character. The most important thing to do is to question why a person indulges in certain conversational behavior and what effect it has on others. By tuning into these behaviors, along with their body language, speech, and surroundings, you will be able to gain much greater insight into the people around you.

*Please return to the course player to take the Module Quiz.*