

BODY LANGUAGE TIPS

(Adapted from *The Journal of the National Academic Advising Association*, Volume 26, Number 1, Spring 2006)

Use gestures that are natural and culturally appropriate:

- Hands behind your head, hand on your cheek, or clenching objects tightly indicate uncertainty and stress.
- Shrugging of shoulders indicates “I give up”.
- Rubbing the nose or breaking eye contact indicates dishonesty.
- Pigeon-toed posture (toes touching or pointed towards each other) or touching one’s throat indicates submission.
- Expansive gestures (spreading arms) indicate dominance.
- Finger wagging will indicate scolding.

Face Squarely

You are looking squarely in the Mentee’s face and communicating “I am here with you” and “I am listening to you”. Turn away and lessen the degree of contact. If facing squarely feels threatening or too intimate for any reason, assume an angled position while turning your head towards the speaker.

Open Posture

This is non-defensive, giving the sign that you are open to the Mentee. Crossed arms and legs are signs of lessened involvement.

Lean Forward

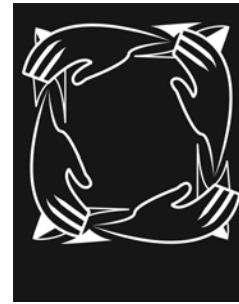
Leaning slightly towards your Mentee during a face-to-face conversation is interpreted as “I am interested in what you have to say”. Leaning back (slouching) is interpreted as “I am bored”. Leaning too far forward can be frightening and interpreted as too demanding or intimate.

Make Eye Contact

Steady eye contact (but not staring) says “I want to hear what you have to say”. If you look away too frequently, the Mentee can perceive that you are reluctant to be there or are uncomfortable in her/his presence.

Relax

Be comfortable. Your body is a vehicle of contact and expression. Do not fidget nervously or make distracting facial expressions. For example, disagreement expressed by turning one’s body away or compressing one’s lips into a thin line may discourage a Mentee from continuing.



Interpersonal Skills, Commandments for Good Listening & Body Language Tips

Student Mentor Program OCAD University

Brent Everett James
Student Life Coordinator, Campus Life

Student Centre, 51 McCaul Street, Level 1
416-977-6000, Ext. 275
bjames@ocad.ca

OCAD University
100 McCaul Street
Toronto, ON M5T 1W1



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Interpersonal skills are how people relate to one another. A successful Peer Mentor and leader will have good interpersonal skills:

- the ability to balance one's own emotions and opinions while relating to others, and a genuine interest in developing a shared understanding where each of you has accurate information about the other's ideas and suggestions, feelings, intentions, emotional responses and assumptions.

Effective interpersonal and communication include the following skills:

Reception Skills (active listening)

A structured way of listening and responding to others by focusing attention on the speaker:

- Listen, be encouraging, and clarify (check that you understand by restating or paraphrasing). Show concern for the person and her/his feelings, summarize and validate. (see *Active Listening Techniques: Statements that Help the Other Person Talk* flyer.

Transmission Skills (speaking/information sharing)

Transmit information without restraining attributes such as accusation or judgement. Suspend your own frame of reference, and suspend judgment in order to fully attend to the speaker:

- Describe actions/details without generalizing about motives or attitudes. E.g. "Bob has done most of the talking and the rest of us have said very little", rather than "Bob likes to hog the spotlight".
- Identify feelings by conveying information about your inner state and not as an accusation. E.g. "I felt hurt when you ignored my comment", rather than "You're rude". "I am disappointed that you forgot", rather than "You don't care about me".

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR GOOD LISTENING

(Adapted from "Human Resources in Business")

1. **Stop talking**
You can't listen if you are talking.
"Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice". ~ *Polonius, from Hamlet*
2. **Put the talker at ease**
Help her/him feel that they are free to talk. This is often called permissive environment.
3. **Show her/him that you want to listen**
Look and act interested. Do not read, or do anything else while she/he talks. Listen to understand, rather than respond.
4. **Remove distractions**
Don't doodle, tap or shuffle papers. Would it be quieter if you shut the door? Give full attention.
5. **Empathize**
Try to put yourself in her/his shoes so you can see their point of view.
6. **Be patient**
Don't start for the door or walk away. Allow plenty of time and don't interrupt.
7. **Hold your temper**
An angry person gets the wrong meaning from words.
8. **Go easy on argument and criticism**
This puts the talker on the defensive. Do not argue; even if you win, you lose.
9. **Ask questions**
This encourages her/him to talk and shows you are listening.
10. **Stop talking!**
This is the first and last Commandment for Good Listening because all other commandments depend on it. It is not possible to do a good job listening while you are talking. Nature gives us two ears, but only one tongue—a gentle reminder that we should listen more than we talk.