

The power of eye contact

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



Eye contact and eye expressions are arguably one of the strongest and most intimate forms of non-verbal communication through reading a person's body language during face-to-face interaction. Eye contact can make or break a job interview or presentation, romantic dates, casual conversations and many other situations. It can show whether a person is feeling sad, happy, confident, excited or scared and so on.

Experts say it is unclear whether it is a person's eyeballs directly portraying the look of certain emotions or if it is the muscles surrounding the eyeball that creates the expression. "When we make eye contact with another person, we are in some sense giving that person keys to our emotional world" (Ellsberg 6). Research explains that the most distinct expression is the glistening expression of rage in a person's eyes. It can cause the eyes to become bright, bloodshot and even protruding from the sockets, which Darwin calls an example of serviceable expression (Ellsberg 15).

Serviceable expression is one of the types of principles that Charles Darwin believes is the majority of human body language, the other one being the principle of anti-thesis, which he wrote about in his book *The Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals* in 1872. Serviceable expression is natural instinct like reaction that the eyes make to a certain situation. For example, if it is bright or someone is having trouble seeing something, they will squint or if a person is surprised their eyes will widen, making their emotions obvious to others.

The other principle is the principle of antithesis which is described by the "shrug". This principle is done voluntarily and used to express opposing attitudes. In chapter one of *The Power of Eye Contact* by Michael Ellsberg, <https://assignbuster.com/the-power-of-eye-contact/>

the author explain how many of his friends had a deep, emotional and almost very personal hatred against Bill Clinton, even though they had all never met him. At an event one night, some of these friends ended up face-to-face with Clinton and their views of him changed immediately all because of his powerful eye contact.

Many say that Bill Clinton not only seduces woman, but everyone he makes eye contact with. He starts off with a handshake and looks deep into the eyes of that person, and when moving on to the next person, he looks back at the previous person " sealing the deal". His eye contact is so powerful it can make whoever he is speaking to make them feel as if they are the only two in a room full of people. He can make a person feel that they are almost special to him. Many woman go home afterwards expecting a message r e-mail from Bill because they felt so connected after locking eyes in such a seductive manner. Eye contact is a natural occurrence, though, it is also a skill that can be learned to be improved on in just two weeks, illustrates chapter two. Many people have a fear of eye contact. My own personal experiences proves that some people out there are terrified of eye contact with strangers. A few months ago I had been getting work done on my car when the mechanic called me over to speak of some issues and that was when I realized he could not look me in the eyes.

He looked everywhere else but at my eyes. When he did make the slightest eye contact with me he immediately looked in the opposite direction like it was an accident or he had did something wrong. It was so bad I could not even focus on what he was saying because I was so confused that maybe something was wrong with him or even the possibility that he might have

been blind, that was how bad it was. People may be petrified by eye contact because it makes them feel vulnerable. If they make eye contact with a person then that person maybe be able to tell how they really feel.

Some people just want to keep their feelings and emotions to themselves because of the possible risks of being laughed at or embarrassed. Second, others may be afraid of eye contact because they have social phobias or anxieties (Ellsberg 36). Psychologists have come up with steps for people to overcome their fear of eye contact. Step one consists of “ eye gazing” with a friend orfamilymember. It consists of sitting a foot or two in front of them and staring them in the eyes in intervals, helping eye contact become more comfortable for you.

Next is to walk down a street and look strangers that pass in the eye just long enough to determine their eye color. If the person notices you making eye contact with them, when looking away do not look up or down, but either left or right. If you look down it is perceived as a look of shame or that you are portraying yourself to be a lesser to the other person and that they are better (Ellsberg 40). Step three requires you to hold longer periods of eye contact with strangers like waiters/waitresses or cashiers and clerks to practice making eye contact. Doing this can actually help you and others brighten up your day!

Furthermore, the fourth step asks that you make substantial eye contact with family members, friends, co-workers or anyone else you may know. Showing the correct amount of eye contact during conversation shows that the person is actually paying attention to what is being said. Last but not least, take all the skills you have learned and apply them to making
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substantial eye contact with people you have just met. This can help you develop new experiences with people and a sense of trust with strangers just by making eye contact and reading their expressions.

Eye contact is very important when it comes to determining and establishing relationships either with friends or new acquaintances, but it becomes an even more crucial skill when it comes to business, specifically in sales as it is discussed in chapter 5. "Body language is 80 percent of sales" remarks Victor Cheng, a successful business coach who has been featured on Fox News, MSNBC and even in the Wall Street Journal (Ellsberg 105). During a business meeting Cheng was excellent at getting answers because he could read the answers to his questions because everyone's eye and facial expressions were so obvious.

He could read easily whether Jena hated an idea or loved it because her eyes lit right up and posture completely changed. When people say the saying "I can see it, it's written all over your face", this is what they mean. Reading the person is like reading a book because their expressions are so clear. Cheng further explains that eye contact in business helps you understand if the client is trusting and listening to you on the advice or input that's being given. If eye contact is not made it may be assumed that something may be wrong with the person or that there might be some issues.

If a person is trying to sell a product, even if they don't like it or believe in it, if they act enthusiastic the customer may take that as it's a good product and buy, though it is hard to fake if it's a bad product or service. On the other hand, true enthusiasm and belief in a product or service that is being sold will make it so much easier to sell compared to something that is not of good

quality. People can see the difference in the salesperson's expressions and help complete making the overall sale. When selling something the salesperson also has to be aware of the customer's expressions as well.

If they are not happy and it is definitely obvious the sale won't happen, the customer will show overt signs of disinterest such as keeping their arms folded or they are not making eye contact. When making eye contact with a customer you do not want too little eye contact but not too much eye contact. The perfect amount is intermittent. Also, to fully be paying attention, you need to be listening in addition to the eye contact. In a job interview, the person being interviewed is like the product being sold.

Good eye contact and expressions must be portrayed along with true interest in the person to be sold. Seeing expressions of confidence, comfort and trust are some of the greatest expressions in a job interview and workplace situation. Chapter 6, How to Wow a Crowd with Eye Contact discusses eye contact in public speaking and presentations. Toastmasters is an organization devoted to helping people learn to perfect public speaking, presentations and communication skills and consists of 250,000 members and 11,000 chapters all throughout the world (Ellsberg 131).

Toastmaster holds the Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking yearly where there are many competitions and tests that weeds out the weakest to come to one final winner at the end. For some people, I know myself as well, something like Toastmaster is horrifying, having to perfect public speaking in front of large crowds purely for gruesome competition. Many previous champions stress that eye contact is an extremely important aspect of the competition and a key to becoming the best.

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The secret to creating the best first impression on the audience through eye contact is when the speaker comes on stage, to stand there for a bit and not begin speaking right away. The speaker gives the audience a chance to get a feel for his or her self and look them in the eyes to make each person there feel that they are “ one” with the speaker when direct eye contact is made. This is called “ relational presence”. It allows the audience to judge and connect with the speaker personally. When you begin to speak, share with the audience how you feel. If you are horribly sick, let them know.

They will feel closer with you and understand if your speech isn't the greatest while having even more respect in the end. If feeling overwhelmed in front of a large crowd, Author and Speaker Lee Glickstein recommends breaking down the crowd into smaller groups mentally. This was something he decided to do out of fear and then later learned that many skilled speakers use this technique as well. Furthermore, nowadays many people use multimedia tactics to give presentations such as powerpoint presentations. It is a common habit to read straight off the slides which tends to put the audience to sleep, which is the biggest mistake when it comes to visual presentations. To counteract this problem try using eye contact to keep the audience awake by constantly choosing on people rather than just reading. After learning many different techniques and skills to creating strong and powerful eye contact and avoiding finding fear in those situations, it is not even the lessons we learned that really matter, it is inside you that matters. Making eye contact with people lets them see inside you, read you, and understand your emotions.

As hard as someone tries, hiding emotions through their facial and eye expressions is nearly impossible. If a person is sad or uncomfortable with themselves, then they will not feel comfortable creating eye contact and allowing other people in to understand if they cannot understand themselves. A person must be comfortable and confident with themselves to create the distinct power in the glares that melts people like Bill Clinton has the capability to do. With a look deep into the eyes of Clinton can seduce even men, who had absolute hatred for him beforehand.

One ten second glance and a handshake from Clinton emits enough charisma and strength to change a person's view on someone they have previously strongly disliked. To have the upmost confidence to give a speech or presentation with strong eye contact, whether being close friends, co-workers or even family, it is most important to have practiced and be comfortable with yourself first. It takes belief and trust in yourself to use the skills and techniques to their maximum. Reference: Ellsberg, Michael. The Power of Eye Contact. New York: HarperCollins. 2010. Print.