

Example of what  
every body is saying  
an ex-fbi agents  
guide to speed  
reading peop...

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



## **Joe Navarro and Marvin Karlins**

Navarro, Joe, and Karlins, Marvin. What Every BODY is Saying: An Ex-FBI Agent's

Guide to Speed Reading People. New York: HarperCollins, 2008, 250 pages.

Joe Navarro was a counterintelligence special agent with the FBI for 25 years. Now, he consults with the FBI, the U. S. State Department and other intelligence institutions. He also appears regularly as an expert on such programs as the CBS Early Show. He also wrote Phil Hellmuth Presents Read 'Em and Reap, and he is a popular lecturer for Fortune 500 companies as well. His co-writer, Marvin Karlins, has a Ph. D. in psychology from Princeton, and has written 23 books and more than 200 articles. He has also served as a worldwide consultant for major aviation companies. His areas of focus are time management, personal motivation, the psychology behind gambling, aging, and managing crew resources in aviation. He is also Senior Full Professor of Management at the University of South Florida's College of Business.

The main idea behind this book is that the words that people say are frequently much less significant than the way that people say those words. Factors such as dress, mien and body language can influence the way that people perceive and comprehend us. This book seeks to teach the reader to change these nonverbal behaviors so that the words we say receive the highest levels of subconscious support from our bodies. Not only will the reader be able to come across more effectively, but the reader will also be

able to identify what other people mean and say, by reading their nonverbal language.

In general, this book tells the reader all of the clues that Joe Navarro has amassed during his years in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These clues were not acknowledged by the scientific community until the advent of new technology in brain scanning and neural imaging in the past decade - before that, all of these clues were simply anecdotal in nature. This book combines his anecdotal experience with the last decade's technology in neurobiology and research in such fields as criminology, sociology and anthropology to provide a state-of-the-art analysis of nonverbal communication.

The book begins with a general overview of the secrets of nonverbal language, starting with a basic primer on what nonverbal language is, and how we use it - whether we know it or not. Then, he moves to a listing of the "ten commandments" of nonverbal language. The first is that one should "keenly" observe one's environment. Knowing what is going on around you will keep you from saying things that are unwise or offering information that is either unnecessary or may actually be detrimental to your situation. The second is that the context of any social behavior is crucial - in other words, the situation surrounding any behavior may be just as important as the behavior itself. Third is the notion that most people can observe "universal tells." Most people, for example, know that liars will look off to their left right after telling an untruth. As a result, if you do this in a job interview, you will be taking a jackhammer to your own credibility with the interviewer. Refusal to make or maintain eye contact is also seen universally as a lack of

confidence - or perhaps even a lack of integrity. If you do this in an interview, you are not as likely to get the job. However, the fourth commandment is a bit tougher to read, discussing the individual patterns of behavior that are difficult to pick up unless you know the speaker. The fifth commandment tells how to get around this problem; if you can identify some common patterns, or "baseline behaviors," in a person, you can predict what later cues will mean.

The sixth commandment is that if you can pick up a group of body signals that have a common meaning, you will have an easier time determining what the speaker actually means. The seventh dovetails with this one; if you notice a quick shift in behavior, you can record a change in emotional or affective state; seeing this sort of change will help you determine the veracity of the person you are talking to. You can use this to follow the eighth commandment, which is to figure out which cues are real - and which are facades used by the speaker to cover up his or her actual state. The ninth commandment reminds the reader that behaviors either express comfort or discomfort, and you can use that indicator to tell how the speaker feels about the situation. Finally, the tenth commandment is to watch without being noticed.

Moving on to more specificity, the book discusses tells from the hands and the feet - particularly those pacifying behaviors that indicate discomfort on the part of the speaker. Discomfort is a powerful ally for the interpreter, because it indicates that you are talking about something that the speaker wishes to change - but cannot. Moving to a topic outside the speaker's

power will often frustrate the speaker; maneuvering the conversation to figure out the source of the power, either directly or covertly, is a key task for an FBI interrogator.

These pacifying behaviors can include playing with a necklace, rubbing the forehead or contacting any part of the face or throat. Breathing out with a puffed-out mouth is also an example. Waving air toward the neck or ventilating it in some other way is another sure sign of pacifying behavior.

Noting the positioning and use of the feet appears in a later chapter.

Generally, people will turn and face people and things that they like.

However, shifting weight from one foot to the other indicates a desire to leave. Feet that are dancing and moving around without shifting are a sign that the speaker is having fun - as well as mirrored legs and crossed legs. If a seated speaker points his knees toward you, she wants a barrier between the two of you for some reason. Similarly, feet that kick out show a desire to leave.

Other parts of the body that the observer should watch include the pupils (dilation shows a problem). Tilting the head and leaning the torso can also indicate discomfort, especially if they accompany one of the symptoms listed earlier.

I was generally unaware of most of the specifics of nonverbal language that I read in this book. Some of the basic ones had been with me since childhood, but all of the discomfort cues were new to me.

Specifically, I learned that nonverbal language can do significant harm to me if I do not use it appropriately in professional situations. The words that I say can easily be overshadowed by poor nonverbal communication strategies. I intend to learn these cues so that I can maximize my performance in group meetings and other settings.

I also learned how moving hands around the neck area, whether fiddling with a tie or necklace, waving air toward the neck, or just covering up skin there, can be a major tell for falsehood. While I don't want to make lying a practice, I find myself putting my hands there when I talk - and it happens when I'm telling the truth. I've decided to actively monitor my talking on a more regular basis, so that it does not detrimentally affect my work environment.

Finally, I learned that reading other people's body language is an important skill to master, in a wide variety of contexts. I must admit that I do not make note of body language most of the time, and I have decided to be more observant about the people with whom I'm talking, particularly when the conversation will have personal and/or professional ramifications for me. I'm going to start by journaling significant nonverbal movements or other cues in conversations that I have in the workplace, and go back and see if the nonverbal cues I noticed match up with what I perceived to be the demeanor, attitude and purpose of the conversation itself. This book is a valuable tool for either those looking to improve their own communication or those who want to be able to interpret the communication of others more effectively.