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Reading the Tells – Learning How to Read Body Language for the HR Profession

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Non-Verbal Communication Professional Uses

Are you good at “reading” people?

When in a meeting can you tell who is bored, nervous, or wants to leave?



Non-Verbal Communication Professional Uses

Can you tell if someone is lying or being deceptive?

Koko & All Ball



Non-Verbal Communication Professional Uses

Can you read an interview applicant?

Can you tell if a client is displeased when negotiating a contract?

Can you tell if someone is genuinely interested in what you have to say?

Non-Verbal Communication Personal Uses

Do you know what to look for if a date is going well?



Non-Verbal Communication Personal Uses

**You come home after curfew time and Mom is there to greet you.
Can you tell her mood even before she speaks?**



Non-Verbal Communication Personal Uses

Would you like to know if a person you're about to hire to come into your home to clean, care for an elderly parent, or child is deceptive?



Non-Verbal Communication Personal Uses

Would you like to know the next time the car repairman says you need to replace an expensive part?



OBJECTIVES

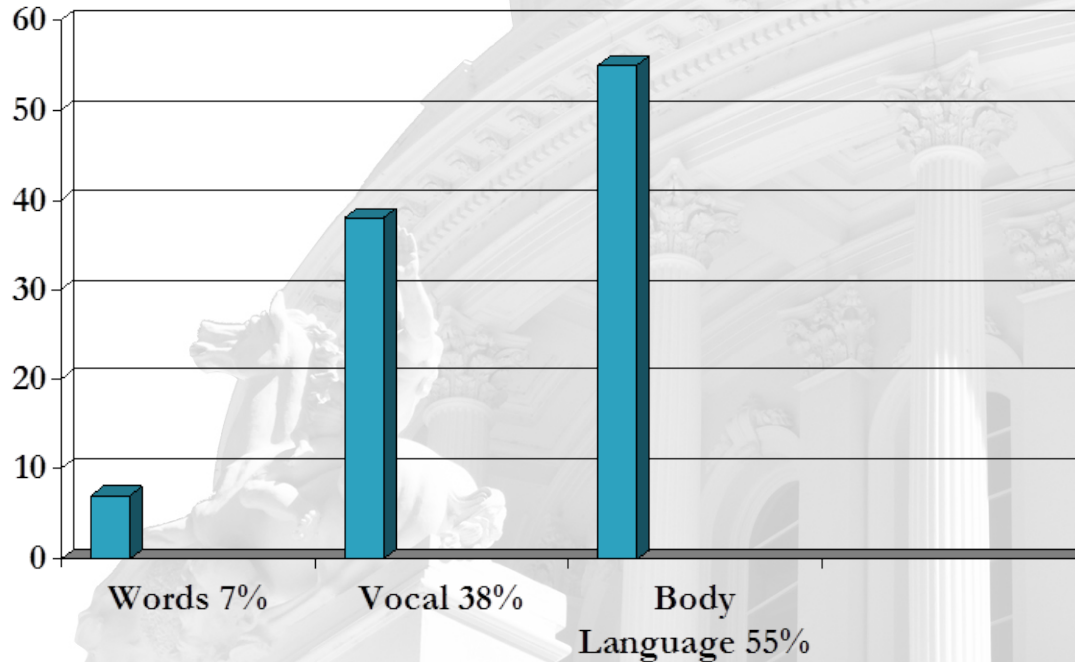
- **Develop skills in reading non-verbal “tells”.**
- **Understand the limbic system and its role in non-verbal communication.**
- **Dispel the myth of “fight or flight”.**
- **Identify the most honest part of the body.**
- **Know how to detect deception.**

My Goal

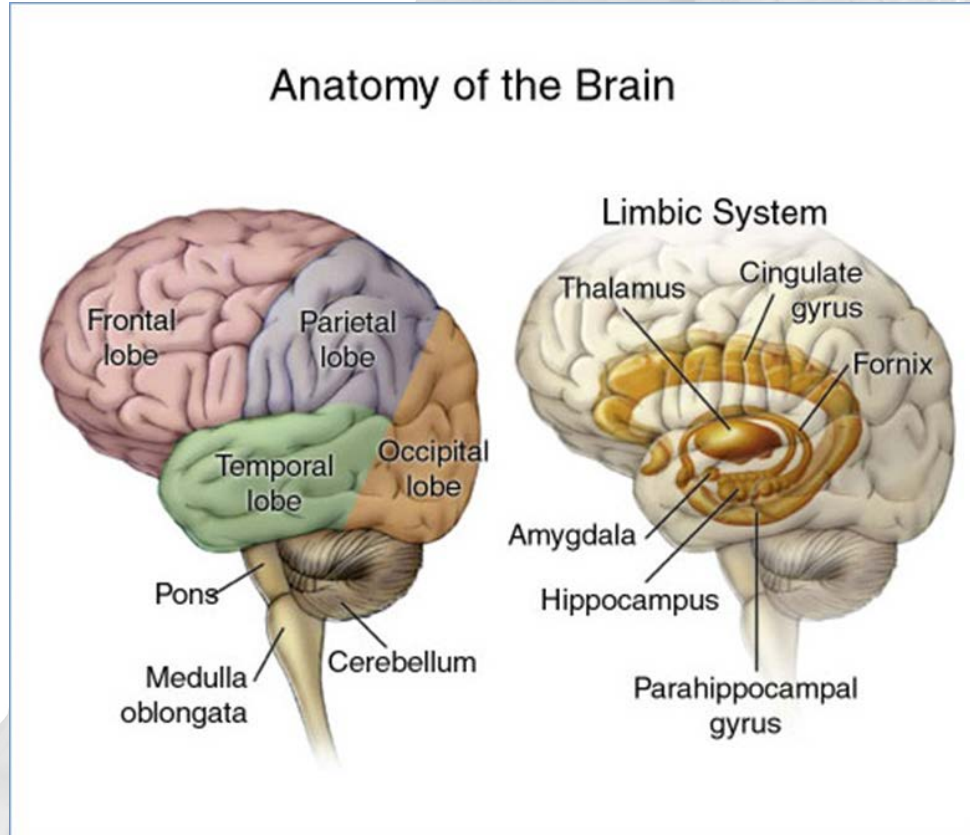
What Part of the Message ...

Mehrabian, Albert (1971) Silent Message,

Wadsworth Publishing Co.



The Limbic System



Limbic System Continued

- **It is considered to be the “honest brain” in the non-verbal world (Goleman, 1995, 13-29).**
- **Consequently it gives off a *true* response to information in the immediate environment.**
- **Why? It reacts instantaneously, real time, and without thought.**
- **In the non-verbal world, the limbic brain is where the “action” is. Many, but not all, non-verbal responses come from here.**
- **The remaining parts of the brain are the thinking and creative parts. These are the non-honest parts of the brain. The brain that can deceive and deceives often (Vrij, 2003, 1-17).**

Limbic System

The Three F's

- The limbic brain has assured our survival as a species because of how it regulates our behavior during times of threat and danger (Navarro, 2008, 25-34).
- The “fight or flight” response to threats and danger is a myth.
- Correct number and sequence is freeze, flight, or fight (Goleman, 1995, 27, 204-207).
- Movement attracts attention. Freezing means survival, it is our first line of defense when threatened. (Columbine, Virginia Tech. & Paducah, KY shootings)
- If the threat is perceived as too close, our second defense is to get out of harms way, or flight. It is distance that gives us comfort.
- The final response, fight, is a last resort tactic. It is survival through aggression. It is a final response as we realize it may bring harm to our own body.

Freeze & Flight



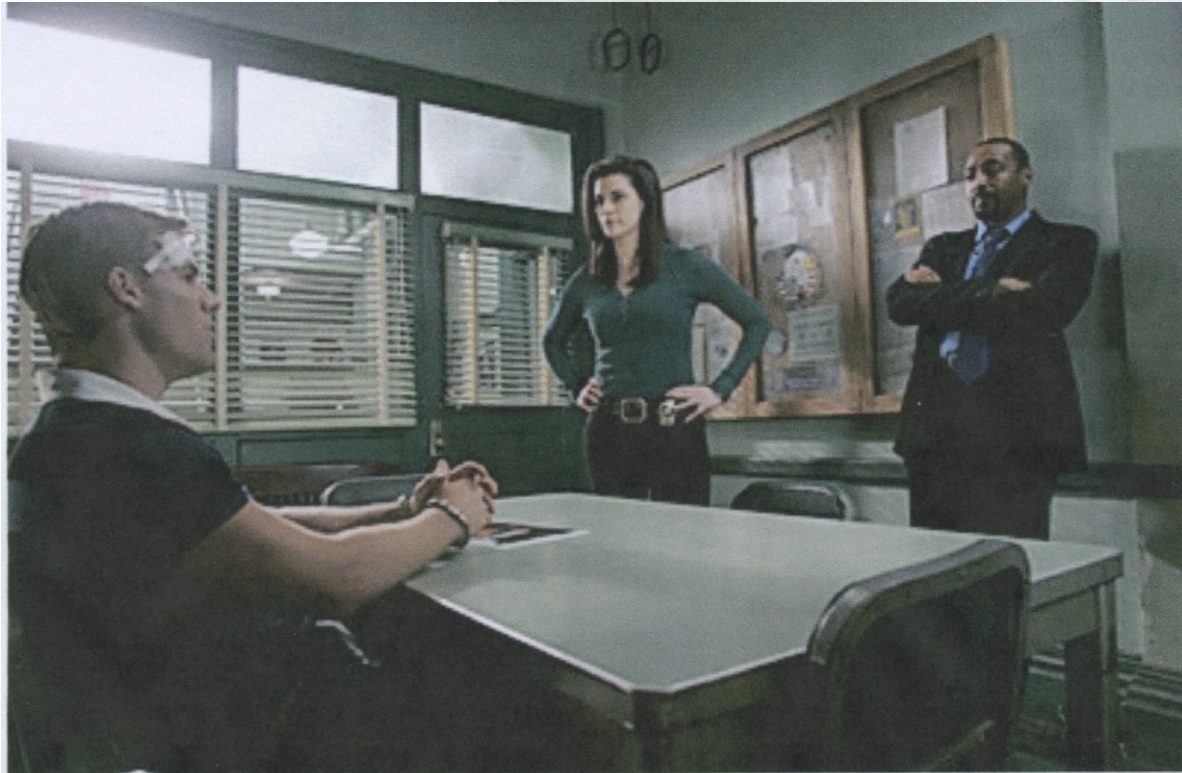
Fight



Areas to Look for “Tells”

- **Face**
- **Hands & Fingers**
- **Arms**
- **Upper Body (chest, shoulders, etc.)**
- **Lower Body (feet & legs)**

How TV Makes It Look



Reid Interrogation Method





The Real Deal





Leg & Feet Non-Verbals

- **Top down versus bottom up (scanning)**
- **When it comes to honesty, it decreases as we move up the body from the feet to the head.**
- **Why?**
- **Identifying the most honest part of the body.**
- **The feet! (Morris, 1985, 244)**



Leg & Feet Non-Verbals

Bouncing feet – High confidence, happy, elated.





Leg & Feet Non-Verbals

Bouncing feet – nervous, anxious, stressed.





Leg & Feet Non-Verbals

- **Pointing feet – direction of intention**
- **Toe point – happy, elated (gravity defying)**
- **Starter position – ready to leave, disengaged**
- **Leg/foot splay – control, intimidation, threaten, territorial**
- **Leg crossing (standing) – high comfort**
- **Leg crossing (seated) – leg direction dictates emotions**
- **Foot lock w chair – freeze behavior due to nervousness**

Upper Body Non-Verbals (chest, shoulders, trunk)

- **Torso lean (away) – avoidance, dislike, disagreement**



- **Torso lean (in) – interest, comfort, agreement**



Upper Body Non-Verbals

- **Torso bare parts – notice me, make statement, affiliation (tattoos, muscles, etc.)**



Upper Body Non-Verbals

- **Torso embellishments – affiliations, denotes purpose, attitude (clothing, badges, emblems, gang dress, etc.)**
- **Shoulder rise – weakness, insecurity**
- **Mirroring – comfort**



Arm Non-Verbals

- Arms up – happiness, positive, joy, excitement, praise (gravity defying)
- Withdrawn arms – worried, stressed
- Arms behind back – higher status, not approachable, superiority





Arm Non-Verbals

- Hooding – territorial, in charge
- Arm/finger splay on table – territorial, confidence, authority
- Folded arms – disapproving, anger, defensive, protecting





Hand & Finger Non-Verbals

- **Covering of the mouth – disbelief, extreme excitement, nervousness**





Hand & Finger Non-Verbals

- Resting face in hands – genuine interest or extreme boredom
- Wringing hands – nervous, anxious, stressed
- Finger point/snapping fingers – negative, rude, offensive
- Tapping fingers – nervousness, tension, boredom
- Hand shake – strength of character
- Clenched fist – determination, hostility, anger
- Thumbs in/out of pocket – low confidence, weakness vs. high confidence, high status
- Stroking and rubbing hands – concern, anxiety, nervousness



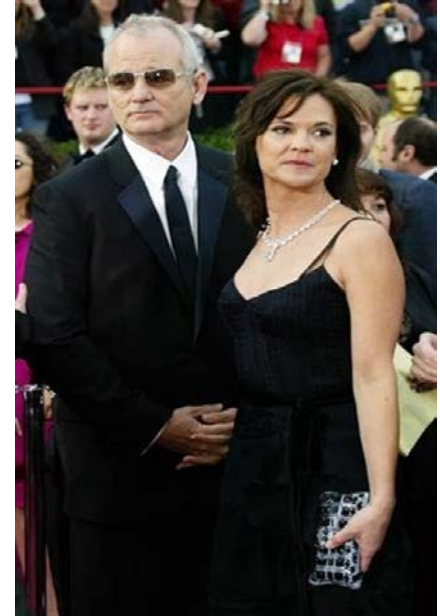
Hand & Finger Non-Verbals

- Suprasternal notch – low confidence, stress reliever, nervousness (women)
- Neck/collar/face touching – low confidence, stress reliever, nervousness (men)



Face Non-Verbals

- **Jaw tightening – tension**
- **Furrowed forehead (frown) – disagreement, resentful, angry**
- **Lips tight together – hesitancy, secrecy**





Face Non-Verbals

- Smile – content, understanding, acceptance, encouraging (fake vs real)
- Direct eye contact – positive messages
- Avoiding direct eye contact – you and your message are no longer important
- Head nod – positive messages (not always agreement)
- Eye squinting – dislike, object to loud noise, sounds, anger
- Biting the lip – nervous, fearful, anxious
- Eye blink increase – troubled, nervousness, suspicious
- Lip licking – nervous, stressed, anxious, looking to pacify

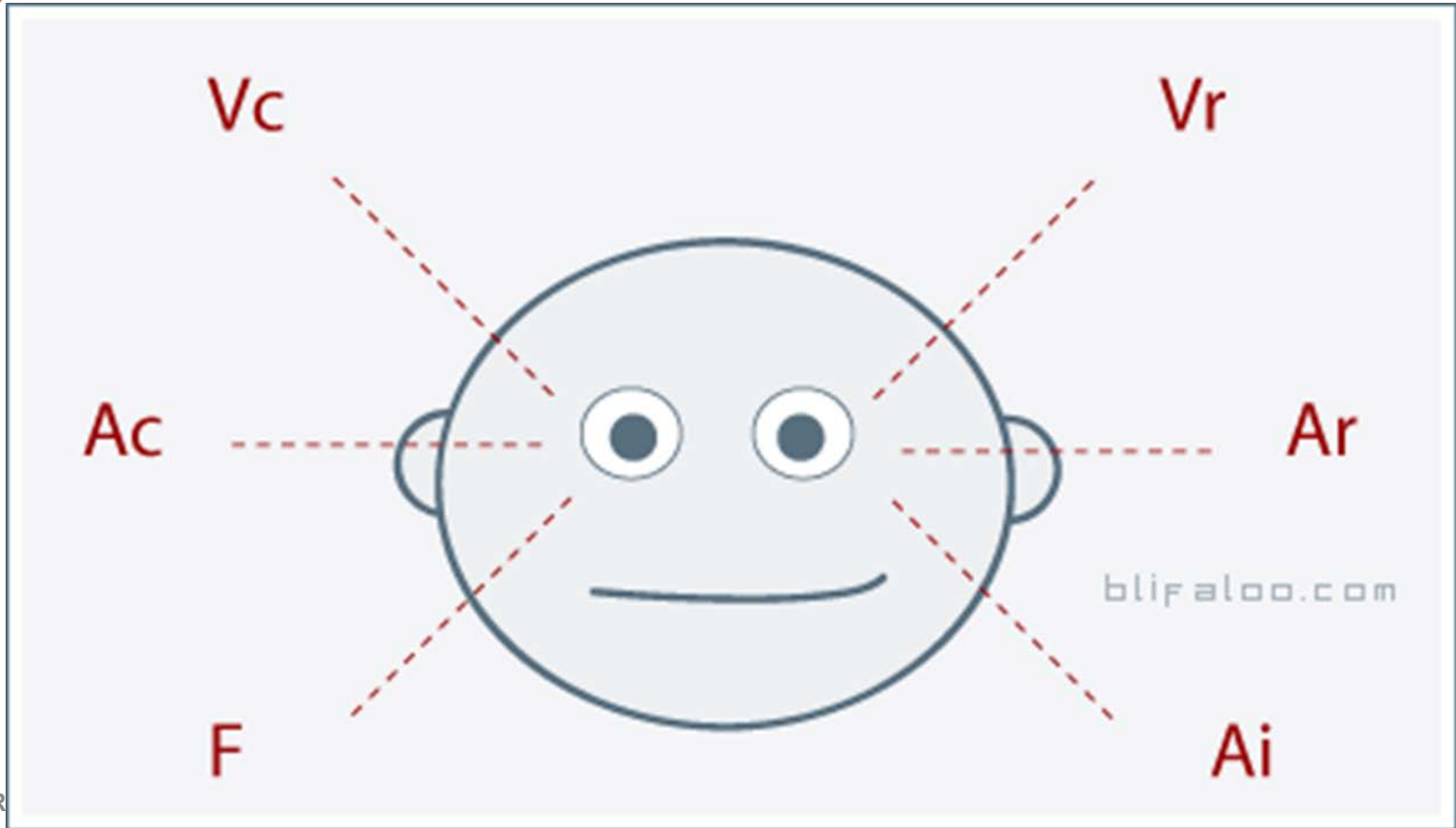


Detecting Deception

- Deception and/or lying initiates a stress reaction in most people. The stress is fear of being detected or caught.
- Stress can be further induced via guilt.
- Nervous fingers
- Eye contact shifting
- Rigid and/or defensive posture
- Sweaty palms and/or face
- Variations in pitch, amplitude, and rate of speech
- Abnormal speech hesitation and speech errors (thinking)
- Increased embellishments of story or parts of the story
- Inconsistency in story



Deception & Eye Direction





Deception Continued





Deception Mastered





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I hope we learned something today?