

### 3. Oh, Puh-leeeeeze!

**JUST THE FACTS:** The purpose of this activity is to help youth gain a better understanding of how non-verbal communication (both intended and unintended) can be interpreted by others...and the impact and effect of this form of communication.



#### Time

20 minutes



#### Materials

- Activity 3 (words and/or pictures cut out)



#### Directions

Ask participants if they have ever gotten caught rolling their eyes at a teacher, parent, co-worker, or supervisor? Ask for a show of hands. Whether you rolled your eyes intentionally or didn't even realize you did it, how do you think your action was interpreted? Answers will vary but might include: I'm bored, you are really annoying, yeah right, I'm sooooo not interested in what you are saying or doing.

There are all types of communication. Believe it or not, the type that uses no words is the kind that is the most important. When it comes to communication, what people SEE is often more memorable than what they read or hear. This is often referred to as body language. Body language includes facial expressions, eye behavior, gestures, posture, and more. Body language can express your emotions, feelings, and attitudes. It can even contradict what you say verbally! People in different cultures may understand some global non-verbal expressions, while other expressions may be culture specific.

If the participants are from many different cultures, ask if they can give an example of non-verbal communication cues specific to their culture.

Cut out the words in Activity 3, fold each and place in a hat, bowl, or bag. Ask each person in the group to take one piece of paper. Using body language and facial expressions only, ask each person to demonstrate this emotion, while others try to guess it. As an alternative, you can download "emoticons" and have participants match or identify what each picture describes. Continue until all words or pictures have been used/guessed.



## Conclusion

Read the following statement to the group: ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

Then ask:

- How many have heard this expression? When/where?
- What does it mean?
- How is this possible when actions do not “speak”?



## Journaling Activity

Many people dream of being successful, but their actions can sometimes hold them back.

What are some ways you can be sure that your actions help you to achieve your goals in life?



## Extension Activity

Consider the following seven types of non-verbal signals and cues we often use to communicate our interest in and to others. Create a list of Do's and Don'ts for avoiding common body language mistakes on the job.

1. **Facial expressions:** The human face is extremely expressive, able to convey countless emotions without saying a word. And unlike some forms of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures.
2. **Body movements and posture:** Consider how your perceptions of people are affected by the way they sit, walk, stand up, or hold their head. The way you move and carry yourself communicates a lot of information to the world. This type of non-verbal communication includes your posture, bearing, stance, and subtle movements.
3. **Gestures:** We wave, point, plead, and often use our hands when we are arguing or speaking in an animated way. However, the meaning of gestures can be very different across cultures and regions, so it's important to be careful to avoid misinterpretation.
4. **Eye contact:** Since the visual sense is dominant for most people, eye contact is an especially important type of non-verbal communication. The way you look at someone can communicate many things, including interest, affection, hostility, or attraction. Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for assessing another person's response.
5. **Touch:** We communicate a great deal through touch. Think about the messages given by the following: a firm handshake, a timid tap on the shoulder, a warm bear hug, a reassuring pat on the back, a patronizing pat on the head, or a controlling grip on your arm.

6. **Space:** Have you ever felt uncomfortable during a conversation because the other person was standing too close and invading your space? We all have a need for physical space, although that need differs depending on the culture, situation, and closeness of the relationship. You can use physical space to communicate many different non-verbal messages, including signals of intimacy, aggression, dominance, or affection.
7. **Voice:** We communicate with our voices, even when we are not using words. Non-verbal speech sounds such as tone, pitch, volume, inflection, rhythm, and rate are important communication elements. When we speak, other people “read” our voices in addition to listening to our words. These non-verbal speech sounds provide subtle but powerful clues into our true feelings and what we really mean. Think about how tone of voice, for example, can indicate sarcasm, anger, affection, or confidence.

### Activity 3. Oh Puh-leeeeeze! (Words)

**Directions:** There are many creative ways to complete this activity. A few suggestions include:

- Write each of the following words on an index card (or print and cut out words). Fold each card and place into a bowl, hat, or bag. Students can pick a word and attempt to act it out for the group. For students who read Braille, use a Braille printer to be sure the word can be read and understood by all.
- Write words on sticky notes or sentence strips and place around the room. Act out the emotion and see if participants can guess and move to the right one.
- Say the word out loud and have participants draw what this emotion looks like to them. Share with the group.
- Download "emoticons" (or find pictures) that represent each emotion. Participants can match picture to word.

AFRAID

ANGRY

ANXIOUS

BORED

CONFUSED

CONTENT

CURIOUS

EXCITED

FRUSTRATED

HAPPY

INTERESTED

JEALOUS

LONELY

OFFENDED

OVERWHELMED

PROUD

SAD

SCARED

SHOCKED

SHY

STRESSED

SURPRISED

THANKFUL

WORRIED