PERSONAL IMPACT

Part 1: Emotional Intelligence

Course Notes
In interactions, the person with the greatest flexibility will influence the outcome.

Here are 15 competencies for an emotionally intelligent working life…
Personnal Impact
Part 1: Emotional Intelligence

Introduction

What is personal impact? Why can some people walk into a room and immediately build rapport and positive vibes with those around them?

Confidence is what lies at the heart of personal attributes such as: justified self-belief, having an easy manner with other people, being listened to, being taken seriously, getting the message across, making a pitch and closing a sale.

But how do you become more confident? This two-part course shows you how to acquire these, and other essential personal impact techniques.

Part 1 covers the foundation of your personal impact. Your emotional intelligence. This is all about how you react to people and situations. This is important because:

- People with little understanding of the origins of their own behaviour are much more prone to being erratic, and are harder to work with. These people are the ones who struggle to achieve positive personal impact.

- By understanding why you act as you do, you can adapt your response to people and situations, putting you in control and ultimately building greater rapport with those around you.

Throughout both parts of the course you’ll receive hints and tips that will increase your self-awareness and help you hone your emotional intelligence skills. You’ll become more considered and controlled in your behaviour, leading to greater personal impact.

Part 2 of the Personal Impact course explores how to build on this strong emotional intelligence foundation with the physical impact techniques of speech, sound and body language.
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Self-Regard

Concerns how you feel about yourself; specifically how confident you feel in your role, especially when challenged. It’s the ability to have confidence in yourself at work and to be able to offer opinion and challenge others, without fear of heavy criticism.

- Your internal voice is not always your most objective critic or biggest fan.

- Sometimes it tells us we are better than we are, more often, it tells us we are worse than we are.

- When do you do your best work? When you’re feeling authentically confident in your abilities.

- What do you tend to dwell on? Rather than your achievements, you tend to replay things that have not gone so well.

- Often when our trainers ask people what they have done well in a task, they will start to describe what they need to improve.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is about your ability to recognise and understand why certain situations, people and tasks create positive and negative emotions within you.

Is there a task you particularly dread or dislike doing? If so, how do you deal with that task? Do you have a strategy – for example ensuring it’s the first thing you do each day or rewarding yourself when it’s done? Or do you leave it to the last minute, knowing for the rest of the day you have to do it at some point?

- Do you talk and try to build rapport with people you don’t know or understand, or do you prefer to send them emails and keep the relationship remote?

- Self-awareness is also about the effect your words and actions have on clients and colleagues. How well you recognise how you respond at an emotional level helps you to monitor your responses and their effects

Remember to try the Look at yourself from a shelf in the corner of the room exercise in the Get to Know Yourself video in the Self-Awareness module.
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Independence

Is the ability to be self-reliant and self-directed in your thinking and actions; to be free of emotional dependency.

Everyone at every level in a business needs direction, but people who have a high level of independence may ask for and consider the advice of others; but they rarely depend on others to make important decisions or to do things for them.

Everyone needs support, but there is a difference between checking in to make sure you’re on track with your work, and the emotional dependency that is born from a need to constantly refer to others.

Independence may be linked to self-regard and levels of confidence. How do you assess your own level of independence? If this competency is harder for you to assess, then look to those around you. How independent do others appear to you? Benchmark yourself against them and try to identify when you feel at your most independent and why that is.

Socrates said, "To find yourself, think for yourself.” Unfortunately, stress, lack of knowledge, or negative emotions can make Independence a difficult competency to master. So, as suggested in the To Find Yourself, Think for Yourself video, try and hold a regular meeting with yourself once a week.

Memory

To remember important details about other people requires you to have:

Desire – you must really want to remember those details!

Imagination – the ability to create extraordinary associations.

Knowledge – wide general knowledge supports memorable connections.

Strategy – to discover and practise the techniques that work best for you.

Re-watch the Memory Palaces video to learn a great memory technique.
The most important skill in life is communication and the quality of your communication will dictate the quality of your life.

There’s a huge difference between hearing what someone has said and understanding their meaning. By far the most important communication skill is empathic listening where you try to fully, truly and deeply understand the other person. Good listening is a learned skill.

Listening is the most powerful communication tool at your disposal. But most people don’t listen to understand, they listen so they know when to reply. What do you do?

Remember: We listen to learn, but also to build relationships. These are the different types of listening:

- **Ignoring** – When you make a choice not to listen.
- **Pretending** – This is patronising and damaging to relationships.
- **Selective** – When you hear what you want to hear.
- **Attentive** – Listening to every bit of information and trying to compute it all.
- **Empathic** – Listening so the other person feels heard and understood.

You are listening if you:

- **Give them time** – even if they’re not making sense.
- **Refrain from judgment** – even if their point of view differs from yours.
- **Reflect back what they say** – summarise back without judging or adding your own comments.
- **Refrain from giving advice** – until you really understand what the issue is, or whether they’re asking for advice at all.
Responsibility

Responsibility may not necessarily appear to be about emotional intelligence, but in fact it's all about how you demonstrate taking responsibility.

People who arrive when they say they will arrive or do things when they say they will do them have a positive impact on us; they are viewed as reliable; that's obvious, but on a more subtle level they will be viewed as trustworthy and as good as their word. In many cultures they will be viewed as respectful.

Responsibility is also about what people say. Those with great impact say what they think and are clear, they don't constantly defer to others or sit on the fence, they understand they are responsible for the information they give, for the contribution they make.

And of course responsibility is about doing the job they are there to do and learning how to do it better. In fact, the word ‘Responsibility’ is made up of two words – response and ability.

You have the ability to respond to situations however you wish. So when someone in a position of trust asks you to do something you're not completely sure about, or in your heart you know it’s wrong or immoral, do you do it?

The answer is, it's up to you. It's your responsibility.

Relationships

This competency is about the ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying working relationships. Relationships that are often characterised by openness and trust.

And the key word here is mutually. Fostering relationships just for your own needs may help in the short term, but supporting the needs of others is what will help you in the long term.

Sometimes we have disagreements with people. But the emotionally intelligent heal and re-build relationships and understand the value of that long-term investment.
Steps to Building a New Relationship

Is there someone new at work you’re finding hard to get to know? Here are some things you can do to help:

Try and find out what interests them. Get to know a little about the subject, so you can talk about it, or more importantly ask about it. People are happy to talk about things they like and know about. **Show a genuine interest.**

Be generous of spirit by offering to make them a coffee when you’re going, or bring back a sandwich from the café, or share your magazine, and so on.

Arrange to meet up socially and be committed to any arrangement you make. Don’t let them down and if you do have to, apologise profusely. Go out of your way to include them and make them feel valued and liked.

Having good relationships with your work colleagues is a crucial part of 21st Century business. Good relationships allow you to trust, relax, enjoy and enhance your work, everyday. So keep in mind these key points:

- **A work relationship is not a friendship,** but if it happens to blossom and grow into one then great, but it shouldn’t necessarily be your first aim. Your first aim is to **create a situation where you can communicate with one another easily**; this means being free to agree, or disagree if that is what is called for, because the interaction in a healthy relationship should always be objective.

- **Relationships need to be nurtured:** like the new shoots of a plant they are fragile and need to be given due attention to allow for growth. This means making the time to do it and that requires effort. But just as a strong mature plant takes less up-keep, so an established relationship requires less effort to maintain.

We often underestimate the importance of relationships in furthering our careers and in helping the working day run smoothly.

Investing a few minutes of your time every day in fostering your authentic working relationships will enhance your efficiency because people are more likely to co-operate with, and promote someone they have a good relationship with. **Everyone you encounter in your working life is potentially someone who will say good or bad things about you.**
Assertiveness

Assertiveness is something many people find difficult to achieve, especially when upset. Often they come across as inappropriately direct or aggressive.

In fact, **assertiveness is the ability to express feelings, beliefs and thoughts and to defend one’s rights, but in a non-destructive way.**

Non-assertive or passive behaviour can be personally destructive and can lead to low self-esteem. It can also contribute to unhelpful patterns of behaviour in others. So being constantly passive will degrade your personal impact.

At the other end of the scale, aggressive behaviour is unreasonable, un-necessarily confrontational and can contribute to feelings of resentment and wariness in colleagues.

And of course there is the combination of the two, otherwise known as passive aggressive, which is a form of manipulation.

Assertive behaviour is reasonable, balanced and easy to understand and can help an individual feel in control. It will also lead to colleagues trusting and respecting you more. It can give you gravitas and a greater ability to influence others.

If you have successfully asserted yourself, both you and the other party should be OK with the outcome and no-one should feel upset or negatively emotional.

Here’s a good definition of Assertiveness: **The capacity to state your needs clearly to the rest of the World and to forgive the rest of the World for not being psychic if you haven’t been able to state those needs clearly.**

The reason you need to be able to do the above is because everyone sees the world from their own point of view and their own concerns. Unless you clearly express your wants, needs, fears or desires, the rest of the world will never know about them.

State your needs and be clear. The rest of the world is not psychic, and for a successful outcome, remember to say ‘I feel ignored’, not ‘you ignore me’.
Reality Testing

Reality testing is the ability to assess the difference between what you think is happening, the subjective, and what’s really happening, the objective.

It’s an easy trap to fall into; to read into a situation all kinds of possible scenarios, agendas, dangers and outcomes before having taken stock of what the reality might actually be.

For example, reality testing is often challenged when it comes to what we believe other people think of us. We often react emotionally and make snap judgements about how we think we’re being perceived rather than looking at the evidence for what we know about what people actually think about us.

This is often a result of our own anxieties overriding the small amount of hard evidence we have. People don’t generally tell us what they think of us, but our imagination knows no boundaries when it comes to making up the facts.

So how well do you reality test? It’s a competency that seems almost too simple to mention and is about knowing the difference between what we think and believe and what is actually, factually true.

More than knowing the difference, though, we’re talking about just taking a moment to consider the difference, especially in an emotionally challenging situation.

Certain self-help and recovery programs are famous for saying that “feelings aren’t facts”. This is true. Our worries and fears, suspicions about what others think of us, paranoia’s about likely failure and anxieties about our basic effectiveness, are often, demonstrably, simply not true. We need to get better at taking a moment to actually look and see what’s what, and what’s just in our imagination.

Reality testing, checking in on observable data, helps us stay on course without psyching ourselves out, and letting our suspicions and biases cloud our rational decision-making.
Flexibility

In relation to emotional intelligence, flexibility is all about how you adjust your thoughts and behaviours in the face of change.

Flexibility is an important competency to master, particularly in the modern business environment, because if you have difficulty dealing with change then you are more likely to respond in a negatively emotional and subjective manner.

It is said that in interactions, the person with the most flexible behaviour will influence the outcome. One way to practise this is to find ways to say “yes, and” in conversations. This is a tool that improv comedians use to remind themselves that everything is made up and that anything can happen at any moment.

When you find yourself in a conversation and someone says something, try to start your response with the words “Yes, and” or “Yes [I heard what you’ve just said], and [I want to build on that idea in some way]”. Try to avoid correcting them, disagreeing or saying “but” instead of “and”.

If someone says something like “I can’t possibly work with this client any longer”, you might respond with, “yes, they’re very demanding, and I think we can come up with a way to service them differently.”

Or for example, if they’re coming at you hard with, “we’ve got to talk about your numbers, they don’t make sense to me.” Simply reply with, “yes, I’m sorry to hear that there’s some confusion. Let’s sit down so I can provide some clarity.”

Of course there’s no template that works in every situation, but the more you practise the idea of being flexible, the easier it will become.
Holistic Thinking

Holistic Thinking is not about seeing the bigger picture but about seeing the whole picture. This may seem to be a subtle distinction but it’s an important and fundamental one.

Seeing the bigger picture is good. It makes us think about goals, aspirations and destinations, but this can sometimes be to the detriment of the journey; at what’s happening around us at the moment and what needs to get done today.

If you focus just on your role it may mean you are less likely to be involved in decisions that affect your team or the business. If you constantly focus on concepts and activities outside your role, then the day to day work may suffer.

By seeing the whole picture you will be more informed, more sensitive to the experiences of those around you, and ultimately more impactful.

By focusing solely on the task at hand it’s easy to lose sight of the original purpose of the task, and how it impacts the team you’re working in. For example, some people pursue and argue small facts that no-one but them cares about. This happens because they’ve lost sight of the bigger picture.

Effective leaders think broadly, creatively and holistically. They consider how they fit in to their role, how their role fits in to the team, how their team fits in to the division, how their division fits into their region or country, and how that region or country fits in to the Global Business.

Assuming you drive, you will know you can adjust the beam of your headlamps up or down. At work, metaphorically, many people go round with their headlamps down. They just get on with their tasks and in effect, operate in a bit of a silo.

A more emotionally intelligent way of being at work is to ‘keep your lamps up’. To raise your level of self-awareness and look to the horizon and perceive what is really going on around you and the impact you are or aren’t having.

So be aware of what is taking your focus. Effective leaders think broadly, creatively and holistically.
Stress Tolerance

Pressure, stress and the need to get things done yesterday are common concerns. It’s easy to see things that way; to become overwhelmed. How is your stress tolerance? Knowing when you start to enter a state of stress is not only important to maintaining your performance, it’s also important to maintaining your health.

Being able to admit to yourself you’re under stress is not a form of weakness. Recognising what triggers stress, and developing coping strategies, is in fact the emotionally intelligent solution.

It may simply mean stopping to re-work and prioritise your to do list. Often this results not only in a realisation that it’s not as bad as it seems, but also in a renewed sense of control and capability.

And in regards to personal impact, calm, considered and controlled people have a more positive impact than those who are panicked, reactionary and anxious.

Notice that as the work piles up, so do your stress levels. Take action. You may be unable to re-prioritise your work, but you can learn to say ‘no’, to take time out and to keep sight of your work/life balance.

A great deal of stress comes from within. It can be defined as the feeling of not having the resources you need in the moment, to deal with the situation you have in front of you. Two great techniques can be used when the heat gets turned up:

One is called time boxing where you simply assign a time, say 20 minutes to clearly map out what you need to do in that time, then do it. Then stop, re-evaluate what you can do in the next 20 minutes and so on, until you’re feeling more on top of things.

The second is to quiet the voice that so often gives you unhelpful advice in stressful situations and distracts you. It’s helpful to quiet that voice and focus on your strengths. To help you to do this, revisit ‘the Square Breath’ video in the Stress Tolerance Module. If you actually do the Square Breath technique, your anxiety and jitters will resolve themselves.
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Impulse Control

Impulse Control can be described as the ability to defer instant gratification; to avoid the ‘quick fix’ of reacting emotionally.

We all have situations where an emotional nerve has been hit and we feel like reacting immediately. But the quick fix of a snap response usually only makes us feel a bit better temporarily and demonstrates a lack of control and even volatility.

Blame cycles are often created this way: ‘I’m right, you’re wrong’. Feeling blamed, you make an excuse to justify your position and demonstrate that you’re right and the other person is wrong. That person now feels blamed, and so the cycle continues.

The emotionally intelligent person controls the quick fix impulse, avoids the blame cycle and focuses instead on finding solutions.

If you don’t do this you may find yourself carrying the negative feelings of one meeting into the next meeting or phone call. To counter this, take 1 minute before the next call or meeting, to:

• Take responsibility for your attitude and behaviour
• Remind yourself it’s a different call or meeting, and to be open-minded
• Remind yourself of the questions or key points of the next meeting or call
• Check your facial expression and body language and SMILE
• The people you’ll be talking to want you present, on time and in a positive mood.

Looking back on your day have you ever internally cringed with horror at something you said or did, but wish you hadn’t? Often it’s a behaviour you’ll have repeated in the past. But how can you relearn these instincts?

Impulse Control means understanding the difference between feelings and actions and then relearning and rehearsing them based on that information, to make a better emotional decision next time.

Step 1: Identify the action you want to change
Step 2: Notice what triggered your reaction
Step 3: Now re-run the impulse in your head replacing your negative emotions with a better behaviour or belief. Now let this hindsight develop into foresight.
Optimism

Optimism is an attitude that when mixed with a healthy dose of realism, can keep you motivated when your work life becomes challenging.

If everything you do is done with an element of optimism you’re more likely to complete tasks and foster positive feelings among your colleagues. Beware of blind optimism though. Optimism has to be grounded in reality.

Optimism is an emotional driver that helps you to stay on track. It’s a trait that all good leaders and entrepreneurs share because they understand its importance. It’s a catalyst for a successful career.

Optimism is about the level of ‘happiness’ you generally project and the ability to feel satisfied at work and to enjoy yourself and others, and to have fun.

Both positive and negative forms of energy are tangible and have a definite effect on those around you. The first leads to ‘engagement’, the second to ‘disengagement’. The first group of people are like radiators, constantly emitting warmth. The second are like drains, sucking the life force from you!

Your ultimate personal impact is the mood you set. It’s never a bad thing to model and inspire a general mood of optimism. But it’s crucial to also be pragmatic. Is it possible to be both optimistic and realistic?

Yes! Here’s one way to be. It’s called Vision Journaling. Write the words: ‘Imagine if…’ For example, ‘Imagine if we hit all our numbers for the year by September’.

Now follow through on this statement without judging or holding back. Detail the specific consequences. How would it feel? What specific images would we see? What words would we hear? How would the stock share price move? What brand of champagne would we drink that night in the office?

Now return and reality test what you’ve written. How realistic or unrealistic is it really? Could the pessimists actually buy into some of this as a reasonable prospect? This kind of harmless optimism is where change and innovation begin. An optimistic mood is contagious and highly energising to others.
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Actions

Here are some day-to-day actions you can undertake to support your learning from Part One of this course. If you’re really serious about improving your Emotional Intelligence, it’s a good idea to keep a journal and note down the times when you used any of the 15 competencies. What happened? What could you have done differently to improve the situation?

One of the first competencies we explored was self-awareness. This is critical to your ability to develop strong emotional intelligence.

So the first action is to become aware of situations in which you react emotionally rather than with consideration. The next time this happens write down the answers to these four questions:

• First of all, what was the situation?
• Second, how were you feeling at the time the situation occurred?
• Third, how did you react to the situation?
• And the fourth and most difficult question, why did you react that way?

Learn from this situation and see if you can become more self-aware when the next situation arises. This will help you gain greater control over your emotional triggers.

Start focusing more on trying to understand those around you. There are plenty of exercises in the course videos. They’re all designed to make you more self-aware and to build stronger relationships.

By understanding people better, you’ll become more considered in how you act towards them and also, less emotionally reactive.

Finally, put a date in your diary three months from today. On that day set aside fifteen minutes to revisit all fifteen emotional intelligence competencies and give yourself a score from one to ten. One being low and ten being high.

This will help you gauge the progress you’ve made since taking this course. Focus on the competencies you scored lower and do the scoring exercise again in another three months. By doing this you’ll develop the key skills you need to focus on, and keep personal impact at the forefront of your mind.
Introduction

Part 1 covered the foundations of Personal Impact. It explained the importance of having Emotional intelligence (EQ) and how its lack affects a person’s reactions to people and situations.

This understanding is fundamental, because those with little insight into the origins of their own behaviour are more prone to being erratic, and are much harder to work with.

Part 2 examines the mechanics of delivering great impact; namely speech, tone of voice and body language.

Confident and engaging people are the individuals people gravitate towards. We like being around people who exude those traits. A big part of that is how they look and sound.

Research into human communication shows how, before we start assessing what someone is saying, we first assess how they look and what they sound like. Get these things wrong and an audience will be less inclined to listen, or even remember what’s been actually said.

This part of the course explores how to avoid low status language, space fillers and redundant self-expression that can dilute the point of what is being said. It also looks at tone, energy, emphasis and clarity and their vital contribution to putting any message across forcefully and coherently.

The section on body language will reveal the key indicators that determine whether what your body language is transmitting will come across as open and positive, or closed and negative.

Combining the elements of great language choices and vocal quality with confident, open body language, and a solid foundation of emotional intelligence, will help you to achieve great personal impact.
Avoid Low Impact Language

Being aware of the impact language choices can have will make you a better communicator; notice the small words and phrases you use to support or undermine your speech:

- **Space fillers** – like ‘er’, ‘um’, ‘basically’, ‘at the end of the day’ are all meaningless and make it seem you lack confidence or don’t know your subject. Silence is a better option if you want to make an impact.

- **How to Stop** — if you usually say ‘um’ at moments of hesitation, open your mouth slightly; you can’t make the ‘m’ sound with an open mouth. To stop yourself saying ‘er’ close your mouth; you can’t make the ‘er’ sound with a closed mouth.

- **Low Status Language** — such as: ‘you know’, ‘sorry’, ‘only’, ‘kind of’, ‘sort of’; e.g. “sorry but do you have a moment to discuss the project?” How does that sound? Meek, uncomfortable and lacking in confidence; instead, be positive and definite!

- **‘Just’, ‘only’, ‘basically’** — removing these low status words raises your status.

Include High Status Language

- **Honestly, sincerely, frankly** — you have more impact when you actually commit to your ideas. But beware of using them insincerely.

- **‘Of course’** – introduce an assumption you want the listener to make.

- **‘Don’t you think, don’t you feel, isn’t it true that’?** – all these are asking for a ‘yes’. Get them agreeing with you.

Employ your vocal range to sound interesting and convey your meaning with impact.

- **Head Voice** – The higher pitches of your voice cut through ambient noise and highlight key ideas. (Overuse can sound insincere).

- **Throat Voice** – This voice calms people down or conveys understanding in a sensitive or delicate situation. (Overuse will sound monotonous).

- **Chest Voice** – The ultimate presentation voice with which to persuade, motivate, explain, highlight and sell. This voice will stimulate your audience.

- **Gut Voice** – Straight, real, truthful, honest, and direct communication happens in the lower pitches of your voice. (Overuse can sound menacing).

The key to good communication and great impact is the speaker’s ability to consistently stimulate his or her audience. Do this by changing tone effectively.
Energy helps deliver your message by stimulating the people around you. Communication is about an exchange of energy; if you run out of it, your audience will lose the will to stay with you. Try to leave the people you’re speaking to on a high.

- **Attitude** – Show you care about your audience by putting a lot of energy and passion into what you’re telling them.

- **Focus** – talking to people, not at them, energises both you and your audience.

- **Intensity** – Look and sound like you care about what you’re saying by maintaining appropriate energy levels for maximum impact.

- **Matching exercise** — You can try a useful exercise where you ask your colleagues to guess, on a scale of 1 to 10, what level of energy you’re projecting. You convey this energy by using many things including hands, face, body movement, gestures, voice strength, speed, power and clarity.

- **Using the right level** — Using too much energy with a low energy group will make them tired. However using lots of energy with a high level group will impress them.
The emphasis you use will dictate how well your words are remembered and interpreted.

Have you ever finished a conversation with someone and found the experience quite boring? What was boring about it? Sometimes we blame the subject matter but often the fault lies with the speaker.

Listen to the Emphasis module again and compare the two renditions of the request to support the sponsored 5k run. You will get an instant insight into the effect of using emphasis or what happens when it’s missing.

For greatest impact, speak with clarity. This raises the perception of you to someone who will be viewed as knowledgeable, credible and expert.

- **Pace** – Speak at a pace your audience can follow. Controlling the pace helps you to articulate clearly and signals that you have confidence in your message.

- **Articulation** – Formulate each word carefully, using your tongue, palate, lips and teeth. People with excellent articulation are seen as subject matter experts. Remember that English may not be the first language of some in the audience.

- **Projection** – Good breath control and support will help you sound convincing and assured. Good projection can help you create great physical presence. A voice that sounds resonant creates the impression of gravitas for its user.

Every day words you use, such as job titles, are often difficult to say; but don’t be tempted to mumble or reduce them to acronyms as this won’t get your message across. Instead commit to them and remember you represent the department or company in question, every time you say them. Finally, when it comes to your own name, *never* mumble, always state it clearly.
**PERSONAL IMPACT**  
Part 2: Creating the Right Impact

**SPEAKING WITH PRECISION**

In businesses, when people are speaking, they sometimes use bad habits and slip into jargon such as: ‘reach out to’ ‘going forward’ ‘take it offline’ ‘at the end of the day’ ‘touch base’.

The problem with these phrases, clichés and other ‘tribal’ language is that they have an assumed meaning that not everyone knows. If used in front of an audience, it may irritate or confuse them.

So be conscious of the impact you want to make. Say what you mean and mean what you say.

**BODY LANGUAGE**

Congruence occurs when what we’re thinking, what we’re saying and how we’re moving all agree. You must always aim to be congruent when you speak, and look for the same in others. Non-congruence is when gestures contradict what is being said and could suggest that someone may not be trustworthy.

However, it’s important to be aware of the situation someone is in. For example, a listener who positions their arm across the body like a barrier (see later) may not be feeling negative, but could just be cold.

When reading body language, base your analysis on more than one gesture. For example, wandering eyes may not necessarily indicate boredom but if this gesture is joined by drumming fingers, collapsed posture and a hand supporting the chin, the signs strongly suggest an engagement problem.

Being conscious about our own body language is often more easily achieved when the spotlight is on us rather than when it’s not. But it’s often in the latter situation that a person shows how they truly feel.
Start to really watch people, and their body language will reveal itself. We are all experts at unconsciously reading body language, so remember to be genuine and authentic yourself.

**What to Look for:**

**CONGRUENCE**

When what we’re thinking and saying, and how we’re moving, all make sense. When one element is out of sync, impact and trust are degraded.

**SITUATION**

Always consider the wider picture. A typical ‘arm barrier’ might be a negative indication — but is the listener really being defensive, or just feeling cold?

**SET**

Look for a set of several gestures for confirmation of what is actually being communicated. Wandering eyes may not indicate boredom, unless accompanied by drumming fingers, a hand supporting the chin and a collapsed posture.

**SELF**

Being conscious about our own body language is often more easily achieved when the spotlight is on us rather than when it’s not. But it’s often in the latter situation that a person shows how they truly feel.
PERSONAL IMPACT
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Positive

So much of how we feel is communicated through our facial features. Our face is therefore a great tool for engaging and building rapport.

- Good eye contact fosters credibility and, in most countries, builds rapport.
- Smiling conveys confidence, openness and promotes trust.
- A smile must be genuine. You can tell a genuine smile as both the mouth and the eyes are engaged.
- An ‘Eyebrow Flash’ is universally positive and welcoming.
- When pupils get bigger it shows excitement or interest.

Negative

- Narrowed eyes show uncertainty or disagreement.
- Eyes darting from side to side can suggest insecurity.
- Extended, rapid blinking can indicate a build-up of emotional pressure.
- A fake smile will not reach the eyes.
- Touching the face can indicate dishonesty, doubt or discomfort.
- Nose scrunching and flaring nostrils have historically had negative connotations.
PERSONAL IMPACT
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HANDS

Often called the barometer of our emotions, hands are enormously important when we speak. As they lie closer to our brain than our legs, they're used most frequently by us to register mood and to convey intention. There are literally hundreds of hand gestures and we use them all the time in our everyday lives.

Positive

• Visible hands show confidence and an open mind.

• Soft and relaxed hands will tend to ‘join in the conversation’ and help to express your meaning.

• Palms-up equals trust and palms-down signals authority.

• Using hands to stroke the chin or holding the chin with index finger pointing upwards indicates thought and evaluation.

• Shake hands with good eye contact, moderate pressure, body focus and a positive facial expression. The essential thing is to make sure each other’s thumbs cross and web together as this builds trust. Receiving a nervous handshake makes us feel wary. A confident handshake makes us feel welcomed. Remember: how you greet people is culturally specific and differs across the world.

Negative

• Hidden hands create worries about what else might be concealed

• Chin supported in the owner’s hand may denote boredom

• Rapid drumming or tapping of fingers, pen or feet equals impatience

• A person may be stalling if they put an object in their mouth (such as a pen)
Arms can indicate our level of comfort. A well-known phrase is to welcome someone with open arms.

If worried or concerned we automatically protect major organs such as the heart and lungs by folding the arms across ourselves. A person so doing will usually be seen as sending a specific message that they are not quite comfortable (even when they are just feeling cold) It can indicate also disagreement and if the fists are clenched, active hostility.

In the modern world we now fold our arms to show unhappiness, indifference or withdrawal and so they can act as a barrier to suggestions and ideas.

Hands in pockets or behind the back can be perceived as a lack of openness or comfort with a situation.

Of course with your arms folded or your hands in your pockets, you can’t use them to gesture, emphasise and convey your enthusiasm. This will disadvantage you.

Positive
- Open arms with no barriers indicate an open mind and an invitation.
- Relaxed and open arms indicate confidence and comfort.
- Elbows slightly outside the torso increases physical presence.

Negative
- Holding the hands in the ‘fig-leaf’ position creates a barrier.
- Folded arms indicate a person may be blocked to suggestions and ideas.
- Touching cuffs or cufflinks, adjusting a tie or scratching your shoulder or neck with the opposite hand can create subtle barriers.
GESTURES

In Personal Impact, how you look is just as important as how you sound and what you’re saying. If you’ve had feedback along the lines you have low energy or are not impactful, you might consider using gestures to increase the impact you make. Here’s a way to help you get started using gestures.

When you’re alone, stand in a doorway where the door would normally be. Take your hands and press the backs of them against the doorframe with your palms facing your body. Now press as hard as you can for 90 seconds. Now step away and start talking on any subject. Your hands will magically float up and you’ll find yourself talking with much more energy and impact.

When talking, gesturing helps you to emphasise and animate your words. It’s a natural way to express what you’re saying. You communicate mostly with your hands, your face and your eyes. A great tip is to use your hands outside of the rectangle of your body’s torso. This will make your gestures more wide reaching and make you look much more confident. Don’t go crazy with this, but more variety will really add to your presence.

Using wider gestures is especially recommended for people of a smaller stature. This is explained in the video Arms, Hand Gestures.

Positive

- Open arms with no barriers indicate an open mind and an invitation.
- Using gestures helps emphasise and animate your words.
- Elbows slightly outside the torso increases physical presence.

Negative

- Over use of incongruent gestures will detract from your impact.
- Some gestures have different meanings in different cultures.
- Pointing at people for emphasis, can be seen as aggressive.
PERSONAL IMPACT
Part 2: Creating the Right Impact

LEGS & FEET

Sitting legs convey as much as standing legs. Wide apart legs (usually men) can signal confidence or aggression. The figure of 4 leg crossing may be interpreted as competitive or even argumentative. The ankle lock indicates discomfort and is often seen in interviews.

Crossing legs pushes your torso back so you’re less likely to lean in when someone is speaking. This matters as leaning in is a sign of interest and engagement whereas leaning back can be viewed as the opposite.

Crossing ankles is slightly better and will help you to sit upright. Also, if your feet are not directed to the person you’re talking to, you likely have little interest in talking to them. Facing the person you’re conversing with more directly improves your impact and engagement.

Legs and feet are furthest away from our brain so often convey truthful desires that may be out of our awareness. For example, someone may look entirely in control but their foot may be furiously tapping, showing impatience to get on with it.

- Standing to attention - neutral; as in, "no comment"
- Legs apart - at ease, no intention to leave; meaning “I’m stable & confident”
- Front foot forward, weight on hip, indicates the person wants to take the lead
- Standing with legs or ankles crossed appears defensive, submissive or unsure

Positive

- Create body focus by pointing feet towards your audience.
- Uncrossed legs indicate openness.
- Feet planted solidly on the ground aid posture.
- Weight forward, inclining towards the audience displays interest and confidence.

Negative

- Crossed legs create a barrier and indicate worry, concern or lack of interest.
- Arms behind head and figure-of-4 crossed legs, may indicate aggression.
- Feet pointing away from the audience suggests a lack of interest.
- Weight backwards indicates discomfort and retreat.
Be sensitive to the space your audience prefers; too far and we appear distant and uninterested, too close and we create discomfort and can appear threatening. Comfort levels depend on circumstance, intimacy and culture.

When meeting someone for the first time, if they lean in or step towards you and offer to shake hands while their arm is not very extended, then that person may be comfortable with a smaller personal space. Someone who leans back or extends their arm before shaking hands may prefer more distance between you.

Cultural Differences

The distance you stand or sit away from someone is driven to a large extent by the culture you were brought up in. But it could be affected by whether you come from a large or small family, or whether you were raised in a rural or urban environment.

You will notice this most on public transport. In an empty carriage or bus people will be happy to chat. As it gets fuller they will feel more self-conscious as personal space is invaded.

In so called multi-active cultures such as South America, the Middle East, Southern Europe and West Asia, people tolerate a much closer space and will touch more often and stand and sit closer.

In American, Northern European and Australasian cultures, personal space tends to be the length of your arm.
### How to Build Rapport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPEN UP</th>
<th>Show visual transparency by removing barriers and focusing your physicality on the audience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMILE</td>
<td>The most disarming gesture known to man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REMEMBER</td>
<td>When you recall someone’s name you help them to feel important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LISTEN</td>
<td>Listening is the most important aspect of building rapport. Find out about the other person and immerse yourself in what interests them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEM</td>
<td>Use “you” and “we” more than “I”. “I” is the most popular word in conversations. Make a difference by talking about the other person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIRROR</td>
<td>Create physical harmony by observing their body language and copying it subtly when appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACE</td>
<td>Be sensitive to someone else’s rhythm and match it for positive effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPECIAL</td>
<td>Make those you wish to engage with feel special by talking about how they, and their opinions are valuable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Actions

Here are some practical actions you can take to embed your learning from Part 2 of this course.

With a strong foundation of emotional intelligence, start working on your language choices, vocal quality and body language.

Create a personal impact journal. Whether with pad and pen or digitally. The purpose of the journal is to attune your observations skills. Create three columns headed language choices, voice and body language.

At the next most opportune moment observe a couple of people interacting. If this can be a situation where two people are meeting for the first time, even better.

Listen to the language they use, the quality of their voice and the body language in play. Then, as soon as you can, take a few moments to write your observations down in the three columns of the journal.

This activity will help you notice how all the mechanics of Personal Impact play out in real situations. Do this as many times as you need to in order to hone your observation techniques.

Take all the positive things you see and start building them into your own interactions.

Pick a topic you might speak about at work. Record yourself speaking about it for a couple of minutes. Listen back to the recording and assess the language choices you made and the sound of your voice. Did you use space fillers or qualifiers? Did you use repetitive words such as “like” and “basically”? Did you sound interested in what you were talking about and did you emphasise the key points?

Undertake the exercise again and see how you can adjust your style to best effect.

Finally, find a confidante, a colleague you can be open with, and ask them to give you feedback on what they think of your Personal Impact. Ask them to be honest. If it helps, give them the three topic headings of: words & tone, voice and body language. Or present the talk you perhaps recorded, as suggested above.
In order to learn a new skill it has to be part of your everyday life. There also needs to be a strong decision to change for the better. The following advice will help you to become an excellent communicator.

**PRACTISE**

Practise as often as possible, 2 minutes of focused practise can be extremely beneficial.

**LISTEN**

Listen to the language colleagues use, notice the quality of their voice and the body language employed.

**GET FEEDBACK**

Either present a talk to a trusted colleague or ask them to give you honest feedback on your language choices, voice tone and body language.

“There is no failure — only feedback & renewed opportunity for learning.”

John Grinder & Richard Bandler