



## Body Language

This handout is intended to be used as a support for parents to discuss the importance of body language with their child. We can use our bodies to send a message with or without words when we are communicating with someone. We use eye contact, hand signals, posture, facial expression and personal space. We use clues from the interaction to understand what these might mean.

**Hand signals:** Hand signals are what we do with our hands and our fingers to send messages. Practice these hand signals and ask your child what they mean. Encourage your child to copy them after you.

Thumbs up/Thumbs down	Point up/down/left/right	Okay	High 5
Clapping	Waving	Raise your hand	Finger on lips
Pinch your nose	Cover your ears	Holding up your index finger to someone while on the phone.	Cross 2 fingers

**Posture:** Posture is about how you hold your body. You will only be able to see some of your posture when you are talking to someone. It can tell someone how you are feeling and give some information about your level of energy. If you want to show that you are interested and enjoying a conversation, here are some tips:

- Sit/stand upright. Slouching can show that you are not interested.
- Keep your feet on the floor. Try not to swing or move them around.
- Lean inwards to show you are listening.
- Keep your head upright or slightly tilted to show you are listening
- Nod your head a few times while you are listening. You can act out different postures together to demonstrate this and record them to watch them back.

<b>Feeling/Energy</b>	You are tired	You are not confident	You are confident	You are nervous
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<b>Posture</b>	Rest your head on your hand, start closing your eyes, stretch	Make yourself small. Hunch your shoulders, bring your head down, cross your arms and slouch forward.	Make yourself tall. Stand/sit up, shoulders back, raise your head up, take up as much space as possible	Tap your fingers, tap your feet, pace up and down, lightly shake your body
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**Facial Expression:** This is the way we show how we are feeling on our face. If we stare, we are feeling strongly about something. When we scrunch our eyes, we are feeling very happy or very angry. We can move our eyebrows and our mouth to show different emotions on our face, and use eye contact to direct this at someone. You could mute the television and pause it on different facial expressions to show examples. Here are some examples to practice also:

<b>Feeling</b>	I'm very angry with you	I'm happy to see you	I'm surprised
<b>Facial Expression</b>	Make eye contact, stare, scrunch eyes and frown	Make eye contact, smile	Open eyes wide, raise eyebrows, smile or open mouth

**Personal space:** As the Covid-19 guidelines on distance are changing regularly, please consult with the latest advice and talk about it in a child friendly way. Specifically mention the places where you are expecting your child to stay with you and keep 2 metres distance from others (e.g. the shop) and where this is not required (e.g. at home). If prior to Covid-19, your child typically stood too close to people during interactions, you can demonstrate more appropriate personal space by you/your child wearing a hoola hoop when discussing the amount of space. Talk about the people where this level of space is appropriate. Discuss how you can notice if someone needs more personal space and adjust the space; if someone starts moving away, and act this out.

**Cultural variations:** Different cultures have different rules about social communication. Please discuss these individual differences with your child as appropriate along with this handout.

References:

Kelly, Alex (1996). Talkabout: A Social Communication Skills Package.

Feinburg, Regina (2009). Spotlight on Social Skills, Elementary Nonverbal Language Skills.

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/common-challenges/picking-up-on-social-cues/at-a-glance-helping-your-child-understand-body-language> Viewed on 30.06.20