

## Reading Between the Lines

By Paul J. Meyer



*"Actions speak louder than words."*

**T**his saying is so often repeated that people tend to forget that it is literally true. Communication, to a large extent, relies upon the wise selection of words, but actions and attitudes also provide powerful elements of the total message. In fact, some studies conclude that as little as five to 10 percent of the total message depends on actual words while the rest of the message depends upon nonverbal communication like timing, tone of voice, and body language.

While there are some general guidelines to interpreting body language, they are not hard and fast laws. **Here are a few of the factors to consider as you strive to "read between the lines" of nonverbal signals:**

- *Who displays the behavior.* A certain type of behavior from one person may mean something quite different from the same behavior in another person. Keep in mind the person's usual personality traits and characteristic interactions with others.
- *Who observes the behavior.* Attitudes at a particular moment influence the interpretation of another person's nonverbal behavior. A friendly, confident person in any interaction places a different interpretation on nonverbal signals than a person who has hostile feelings.
- *The purpose of the interaction.* Interpret nonverbal cues in context with what the person is trying to accomplish. Intentions color nonverbal behavior.
- *Where the interaction takes place.* Nonverbal actions may take on one meaning in one location or an entirely different one in another setting. Yawning in someone's office, for instance, indicates something distinctly different from yawning in one's own home.
- *When the interaction takes place.* Different times of the day can influence nonverbal behavior. Impatient squirming may merely indicate hunger right before lunch or anxiousness if the meeting is stretching past the end of the work day.

If you take these factors into account when you are trying to understand others, you can communicate more purposefully and productively. Learn to use your ears, eyes, and heart when communicating with others.

*Paul J. Meyer is a successful entrepreneur and author of personal and professional improvement programs, courses, and books, including his latest book, Fortune, Family and Faith. For more information, visit his website at [www.pauljmeyer.com](http://www.pauljmeyer.com).*

## Look for the High Point of the Day

There's bad news, and there's good news. The bad news is that, in spite of your best efforts, not every day will be a great one. But you already know that, don't you? You already know that in spite of an optimistic attitude, positive partners, music, smiles, friends, faith, and even chocolate, you're going to have some bad days along the way. That's the reality of life.

The good news is that even bad days can have moments that are better than others. And you have to take comfort in that.

A woman once told me a story about her aunt. Her aunt was in her nineties when she died. When the family was sorting through her things, they found a journal that she had kept the last years of her life when she lived alone and her health was poor. And yet at the end of each day's entry in her journal, she had written "high point of the day." For her, the "high point" was sometimes a call from a friend or a visit from a neighbor. Sometimes it was that her arthritis was less painful than it was the day before or the sight of a cardinal in her backyard. The message here is that every day, even in a limited world, a "high point" can be found.



Let me encourage you to look for the "high point" of the day. Instead of focusing on the negatives, look for the positives – the things you're grateful for and the little things that add joy to your life. Not every day is going to be a great one, but even the bad days have some small moment that's an expression of joy, hope, or love if you only look for it. Look for the "high point" of each day, and think about how your presence, attitude, smile, laughter, and kindness can become a "high point" for someone else.

*Julie Alexander is a professional speaker who works with organizations that want to boost morale and people who want great days on and off the job. She is the author of Great Days: 50 Ways to Add Energy, Enthusiasm, & Enjoyment to Your Life and Make Life Count! – 50 Ways to Great Days. For more information, visit [www.JulieAlexander.com](http://www.JulieAlexander.com).*



## InSync® Moment #82 – Goof Off to Rejuvenate

When was the last time you goofed off on purpose? Goofing off can generate important benefits. The brain, body, and spirit occasionally need a change of pace. Doing nothing on your day off allows you to rest and rejuvenate.



Idling regenerates your enthusiasm. Goofing off is vital to productivity, so forfeit the guilt. Schedule time now to goof off and rejuvenate!

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