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Babies

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP



In previous postings I have dealt with numerous aspects of adult body language, body language in children, and even the body language of animals. It is time to deal with the only remaining category of creatures: babies!

When we think of babies and their limited ability to move, ambulate, articulate, and communicate, it seems like there would be not much to report in terms of body language for babies. The exact opposite is true.

Babies have an amazing ability to let others know what is happening in their brain as well as all other parts of their bodies. This realization underscores that most of body language is instinctive and we do it unconsciously. For example, the baby in the above picture is puzzled about something. We can tell that by the shape of the mouth and the wide-eyed expression with the eyebrows held high.

The baby has no cognition of these signals, and is not doing them intentionally; they are just there.



Here is another typical baby expression that is pretty hard to misinterpret. The baby was not trained to make these expressions. The expressions in the two pictures are both unmistakable, and even though some things are the same, the messages we get are completely different.

Here is an interesting question to ponder. They say that a high percentage of body language is culturally specific. A person living in Eastern Europe will have different body language signals than a person from Canada. Do babies from different cultures have different body language patterns? If so, how did they come by these habits?

A more plausible explanation is that all humans are born with the same set of body language regardless of location and are conditioned as they grow to emulate the patterns of the specific culture in which they live.

The bond between a mother and the baby is particularly strong. The mother will know long before another person if the baby is hungry or wet. She will be able to interpret a runny nose far before things start to get messy. I suspect that the baby has a very good idea of the emotions of the mother without the ability to understand any words.

If the mother is sad or tired, the baby will know about that, at least to some extent.

I have no way to verify that and am reminded of the joke made by Steven Wright. He said that when he is with an infant, he writes down all the noises the baby makes so he can go back years later and ask the child what she meant.

Did you ever watch an infant communicating with a dog or cat? There is so much information being transmitted in both directions it is astounding. As adults, we have learned long ago to just absorb these signals and not think about them consciously. But the signals are still there throughout our lives, and we are constantly interpreting them in our subconscious.

This is a part in a series of articles on "Body Language." The entire series can be viewed on <https://www.leadergrow.com/articles/categories/35-body-language> or on this blog.