

Body Language 74

Pondering

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The body language gestures of a person who is pondering are rather easy to spot and there is not much confusion in interpreting this emotion.

Pondering is closely associated with puzzling, and the body language of one versus the other may be difficult to sort out. In reality, the mental activity for puzzling and pondering are virtually the same.

Gaze

A pondering person is usually looking upward. You see a kind of “far away” look in the eyes as the person contemplates something. The person is looking off into space with no particular energy given to focusing visually on anything.

If the person is actually trying to visualize something, then sometimes you can detect a slight squinting of the eyelids along with a lowering of the eyebrows.

Upper nose and eyebrows

There is often a slight wrinkle at the bridge of the nose as the person is contemplating what to make of the situation. The nose itself is not wrinkled but the eyebrows are pulled in slightly causing a vertical wrinkle

Head

The head will be slightly tilted as the person is deep in thought. Also associated with an upward gaze, the person’s head may be tilted backward. We see no indication that the person is getting ready to speak, rather the mind is completely occupied trying to figure out what is happening.

Hands and arms

Often one hand will be in contact with the facial region. Most commonly, as in the attached picture, the one hand is connected to the chin with one bent forefinger and

thumb pinching the tip of the chin lightly. When making this gesture, it is common to see the other arm in support of the arm propping the chin.

Sometimes a finger may be extended to cover the mouth region as if to prevent the person from speaking too soon.

Alternatively, the one hand may be holding the head or even scratching the head in puzzlement.

Mouth



The mouth may be in a neutral position as in this picture or it may be pulled slightly to the side. If the issue being contemplated is a serious or dangerous matter, the mouth may be pulled further to the side as a signal of stress.

People who are pondering rarely show their teeth at the same time. The mouth is generally closed, but it is a relaxed closure and not pursed lips or grinding of teeth. If the subject matter has a tinge of danger associated with it, you may see the person bite the side of his lower lip in anxiety as he ponders.

What to do

The advice when you see a person showing signs of this gesture is to leave him alone. Do not interrupt his mental process unless there is a fire in the building. Let him work on the problem until he emerges from his trance with some clarity of thought. If you would interrupt the process, it would likely be highly irritating.

If the person appears to be just day-dreaming or procrastinating from something that he should be doing, then a gentle word to bring him back to reality may be helpful. Just be gentle and kind if you do have to interrupt a person who is pondering.

This is a part in a series of articles on “Body Language” by Bob Whipple “The Trust Ambassador.”