

Body Language 90

Blinking Rate

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Earlier in this series, I discussed blinking rate briefly in an article about the eyes. In this article I will go into a more thorough analysis of the topic and share some helpful theories.

The first observation is that it is much easier to observe the blinking rate of another person than to monitor your own. Since the rate of blinking offers clues to what is going on with a person, the person doing the observing is usually at an advantage.

This difference in consciousness of blinking rate, can and often does, provide the astute observer significant insights that become important in many ways. Let's take a look (no pun intended).

Normally, relaxed adult humans blink at a rate between 15 to 20 times a minute. There are some situations where a person's habitual blink rate will be different from the standard rate. These would include wearing contact lenses, allergies, some foreign particle in the eye, and diseases such as schizophrenia (faster blink rate) or Parkinson's disease (slower blink rate).

Curiously, babies have a much longer rate and only blink a couple times a minute. An article by [Bahar Gholipoar in Lifescience](#) suggests that the longer blink rate correlates with a less developed dopamine system in infants. Dopamine is one of the neurotransmitters that allows brain cells to communicate.

The most significant factor for blink rate in adults who are not suffering from a disease is the amount of mental tension they are feeling at the moment.

What is of interest in body language is whether there is a marked change in the blinking rate just after some situation or conversation. When a person is under stress, the blinking rate will start to increase without the person being aware of it.

If you observe someone going from a normal 15 per minute rate to 30 to 40 blinks a minute, that person is likely under a great deal of stress, but is often trying to hide that fact.

I learned that lesson years ago in a business negotiation with a vendor over price for some product. He tried the famous “Silent Treatment” with me in order to get a concession.

Since I was aware of his ploy, I just stared back at him and watched his blink rate. I saw it double then double again as his forehead began to perspire. I just watched and waited until he finally caved in.

I doubt that he even knew I was reading the stress level that was going on as observed in his blink rate, and I didn’t let him know I was doing it. If you would share that another person’s blinking rate just shot up, it would likely annoy the other person. Observe, but be discrete.

Next time you are negotiating for a new car, recognize that the sales person is trained to watch your blink rate. If you are clever, you can reverse the logic and determine when the sales person is feeling the heat. Because you know this trick, you will be less likely to give away your own stress level inadvertently.

Recognize that you are rarely aware of your own blink rate unless you are fully concentrating on it, yet the number of blinks is visible for any observer who has been trained to look for this variable.

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