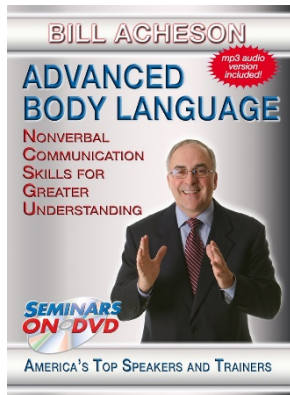


Body Language 94

Head Nodding

by **Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD**



I sized this series on body language to be 100 chapters long. I am reaching the end of the line and hope the information that I have shared over the past 2 years has been helpful and useful to you.

For the final chapters, I want to highlight some information I learned from a wonderful program entitled [“Advanced Body Language”](#) by Bill Acheson: a researcher from University of Pittsburgh. Here is a [five-minute promo](#) for the entire program, which runs a total of 74 minutes.

If you are serious about knowing as much as you can about body language, I recommending investing in this program. Not only is it entertaining, it contains numerous tips that you will not find elsewhere.

In this article, I will highlight some content that Bill shared about head nodding.

Bill draws distinction between men and women in a number of content areas. In doing so, he always is careful to not imply that all men do something and all women to something else. He is speaking from research that identifies general patterns within groups of people. Recognize there will always be some people who are outliers and do not follow any specific trend.

The idea here is that head nodding is the number one source of misunderstanding between women and men. Bill’s research shows that, for a man who is listening, head nodding almost always implies agreement. We nod to indicate that we agree.

For women, head nodding does not necessarily correlate with agreement. So, the advice he has is to not assume agreement when a woman as a listener is nodding her head.

His research shows that when he shows a video of a conversation between a woman and a man where the woman is nodding her head, over 80% of the males in the audience assume she is in agreement and only 25% of the time are they right.

Actually, one in three women will head nod before you begin to speak. What is she agreeing with? Bill suggest that the head nod before a male starts to speak is actually giving him permission to speak.

The second reason she nods is to indicate that she is listening.

The third reason she nods is to show attentiveness.

The fourth reason she nods is to show understanding.

Here is the important distinction. Bill points out that for a male, understanding and agreement are almost the same thing. But for most women, understanding is not an indication of agreement. In fact, Bill quips, “if you draw a map of the average female mind, understanding is in the upper left corner and agreement is in Boca Raton, Florida; there is no connection.”

We need to take these trends into account as we interface with the opposite sex. Again, these trends do not hold in every case or for every pair of people, so don't be fooled. Just realize that there is a lot of statistical research behind some of the directional observations Bill Acheson has measured.

I will share some more observations he makes in the final six chapters of this series.

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