

“The life which is unexamined is not worth living.” Socrates

How Can Your Body Language Hold You Back?



One of the pillars of a successful sporting career is communication. As a member of a team, how you interact with your teammates is essential to building the atmosphere around the team. A positive feeling between teammates who are able to express themselves to each other in situations, both good and bad, can go a long way towards success, while toxic interactions* are usually a significant reason why talented teams fall apart. In both individual and team sports, the communication between player(s) and coaches is also important in achievement.

One only needs to look at the relationships between all the pieces of the Warriors team that recently won the NBA Championship to see the effects of communication on display. Unlike many teams with multiple stars who have been put together before, this team was able to reach its goal because of the communication culture it had.



Nonverbal Communication

One often overlooked aspect of communication is body language. Nonverbal communication* between teammates on the field of play is essential, as it can help them to sync their movements. Knowing when and where to make passes or understanding where your teammate will be or will move to are things that can make a difference in the team's results. This nonverbal communication is difficult for the opposing team to decipher so it can give you an advantage.

Body Language and Confidence



Your body language can also tell the story of how you are feeling. It is said that ***body language doesn't talk; it screams***, and this sentiment is displayed in every sporting competition. Usain Bolt for example, shows his confidence in his ability to win races against any competitor when he lines up for a race. The smiles and poses he displays tell the story of how confident he is that he will emerge the victor, and it can do real damage to the mental state of his opponents, who can succumb to doubt at this sight. All successful

athletes display a certain level of swagger and looseness that boost their confidence and the confidence of those around them (teammates, coaches, their fans).

On the other hand, an athlete or team that is not confident shows it. This message is sent to the spectators, coaches, and teammates and can also serve as a major boost for the opposing team. The concept of the “dagger” in basketball, where a player scores a basket that seemingly puts the game out of reach for their opponent, is the perfect example of this. The shoulders of the players on the team who were on the receiving end of the shot collectively slump, along with sulking faces, as the shot goes through the basket. Their confidence in their ability to come back has been extinguished and it shows to everyone in the building and those watching at home.



Body Language and Coaches

For many coaches, body language is something that is taken **very seriously**. They are aware of the importance of body language in dictating the actions that an athlete takes and the outcomes that stem from that, which is why it is a point of emphasis.

Legendary UConn women’s basketball coach [Geno Auriemma](#) was praised in March for speaking on the matter in a post-game press conference during the NCAA Tournament. In the video, he expressed the



importance of body language to his coaching staff and the difficulty in finding recruits who displayed the right attitudes. Auriemma, like many other coaches at all levels from high school to the pros, knows that bad body language and the telegraphing of negativity can be cancerous to their teams, spreading throughout the locker room and disrupting any sense of cohesion or togetherness that can be built.

Players who telegraph bad body language can not only disrupt the balance of the entire team by affecting the mood of their teammates, but it can also indicate a selfishness that will affect their usefulness to the cause. Good coaches are constantly watching their players in every situation and making mental notes of reactions and expressions as they evaluate the members of their team.

Players who are not engaged in huddles or who seem disconnected because they are not playing are weakening the team and themselves. These players might have a hard time summoning the necessary motivation, effort, and energy to make the improvements needed to get them off the bench and into the game, keeping them even more rooted [to the bench](#). Players who hang their heads after making mistakes and give off signals of uncertainty can be equally worrying for coaches, as it shows a need to

increase their [mental toughness](#) and confidence. For others that react negatively towards teammates or coaches when things go wrong, there can be concerns that the player has issues accepting responsibility.

All of these signals can taint a coach's view of you and your fit for their program or team. It can also rub teammates the wrong way. Your body language is an undervalued part of both your appeal and your performance as an athlete. It is important to pay constant attention to what you are projecting because it does affect how you are viewed by those who are important to your success.



*Definitions:

Toxic interactions are interactions between teammates or players and coaches that hurt the team and discourage them from making forward progress. Examples of toxic interactions can be a teammate disrespecting another player by making a hurtful comment towards them, criticizing one another instead of providing constructive criticism, or negative attitudes and behaviors that affect the team culture.

Nonverbal communication involves the communication of information without words. This includes facial expressions, touching, posture, tone of voice, gestures displayed through body language, and the physical distance between two or more people.