

THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

Worksheet for Vanessa Van Edwards | Pumping up the Volume of Nonverbal Communication (Episode 81)

When you interact with others, mere words only convey part of the message. Nonverbal communication goes beyond simple body language and accounts for a significant part of the signal -- whether you're sitting across the table from someone or talking to them on the telephone.

At nine months pregnant, [*Captivate: The Science of Succeeding with People*](#) author Vanessa Van Edwards and her baby-to-be joined us for [episode 82](#) to dig further than we ever have before into the mysterious world of nonverbal communication, how we can decode what others are trying to tell us, and effortlessly make our own intentions clear to others. Listen, learn, and enjoy!

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Nonverbal First Impressions

Dr. Albert Mehrabian's famous, but often misinterpreted [7-38-55 rule](#) seems to imply that only seven percent of any communication is verbal, 38 percent is through vocal tone, and 55 percent is with body language. But if you've ever tried to watch a movie in a language you don't speak without relying on subtitles, you know you're missing more than seven percent of what's going on. So what gives?

Vanessa clarifies that subjects in Mehrabian's study recorded their first impression when just one word was spoken to them: "Hello" -- so of course verbal is only going to account for seven percent of the communication in *that particular* study. So while the results don't hold true for all communication, they do support the idea that the first few words of a conversation are not as important as their nonverbal components.

Have you ever paused to focus on the first few words that either you say or are said to you at the beginning of a conversation? What percentage would you estimate to be verbal compared to nonverbal in your experience? Of the nonverbal, what did you notice? Did you infer or understand what the nonverbal was communicating?

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Communication Is a Balancing Act

Sometimes we focus so fully on one aspect of communication that we completely neglect the others at play -- and this even happens to the experts. While being interviewed for a podcast, Vanessa channeled all of her vocal power and charisma into the microphone, but didn't make much eye contact with the host or provide him with much feedback in the way of facial expressions. As a result, he felt snubbed.

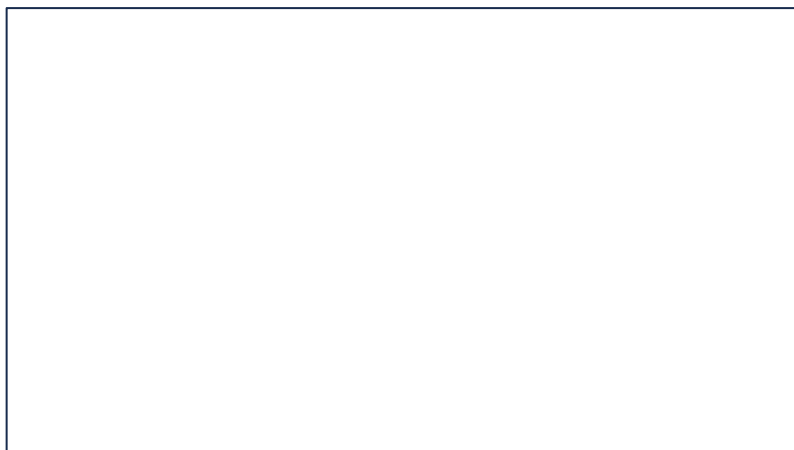
Have you ever been so focused on one component of communication that you neglected elements the recipient of your message was expecting -- resulting in an embarrassing misunderstanding? How did they react and what did you do? Name the three elements of communication you can emphasize to ensure that your intended message is received.

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Facial Punctuators

When people are completely focused on something, they tend to emphasize their words with their face -- this is called a facial punctuator. These facial punctuators vary from person to person; Vanessa's happens to be what some might read as surprise -- eyebrows up, accompanied by vertical lines. Some might punctuate with an expression more closely associated with anger, and it's easy to see how this could lead to unfortunate misunderstandings.

Have you considered what your go-to facial punctuator is? Does the way you feel always match the appearance of your facial punctuator? Record yourself during a conversation and pay attention to what you are doing by default. Pay special attention what you do to emphasize your own words. Being aware of your facial punctuator allows you to consciously course correct if it often gets you in trouble.

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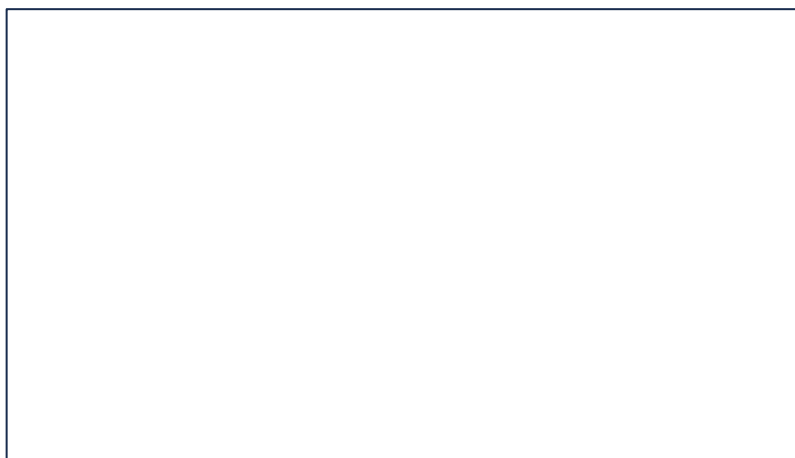
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Eye Patterns

It's natural to make eye contact with someone across from us in conversation. But what does the path our eyes take when we momentarily break that contact say about us?

Vanessa says that higher status individuals -- like VIPs and bosses -- tend to focus on the area between the eyes and the forehead, but rarely drop their gaze to the bottom half of their conversation partner's face. Knowing this allows you to adopt the pattern if you want to be perceived as powerful, and it allows you observe how others perceive you by the path of their telltale eye patterns.

During your next three conversations, pay deliberate attention not only to the patterns that your eyes make, but also the patterns exhibited by your conversation partner. Jot down your observations here.

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Ornaments

As an often overlooked aspect of nonverbal communication, ornaments are how we decorate our bodies -- with makeup, hair, jewelry, and even the use of color psychology. They can affect how others perceive us, and even detour the eye patterns of someone accustomed to exhibiting the power gaze discussed above.

What are your go-to ornaments? What do they say about you? How can they shift your verbal and nonverbal communication of those with whom you engage?

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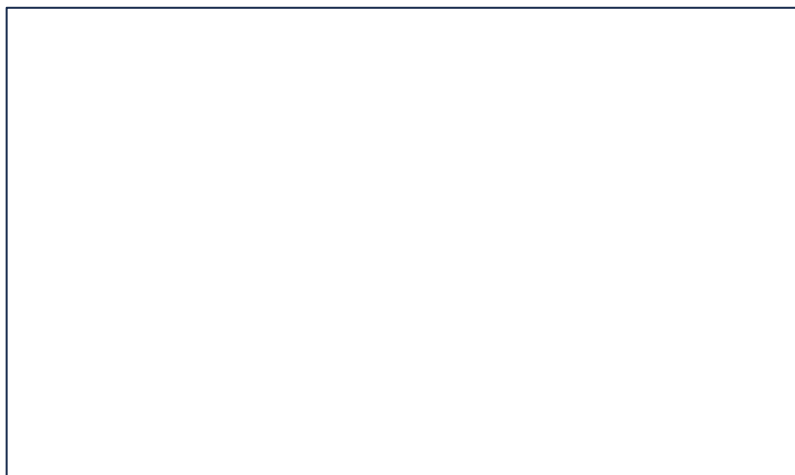
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Your Nonverbal Brand

I don't wear too many ornaments aside from maybe a watch and my wedding ring. What *are* common ornaments for men? Sunglasses, ties, watches, rings, cuffs or bracelets, and necklaces are the big ones. Vanessa reminds me that there is no right or wrong, no bad or good here. What they really are are assets of your nonverbal brand.

Vanessa says that every single one of us has a personal brand. And when you add ornaments to it, you are adding different assets or variables for someone to pick up on, read you, or decode you.

What do you perceive as your nonverbal brand, and how can this affect the way people communicate with you verbally and nonverbally?

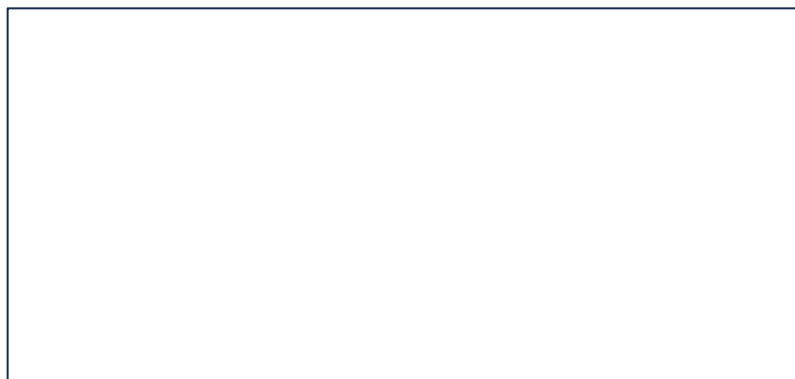
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Counteracting Involuntary Brand Variables

What can you do about involuntary, unchangeable parts of your personal brand? The first step is being aware of what you can't change about yourself so you can use ornaments to counterbalance it. If you're a woman with ample cleavage aiming to be taken seriously at the office, for instance, Vanessa might recommend wearing a competence cue ornament like glasses rather than contact lenses.

Take a moment to recognize and consider your own unchangeable brand variables; how might you counterbalance them?

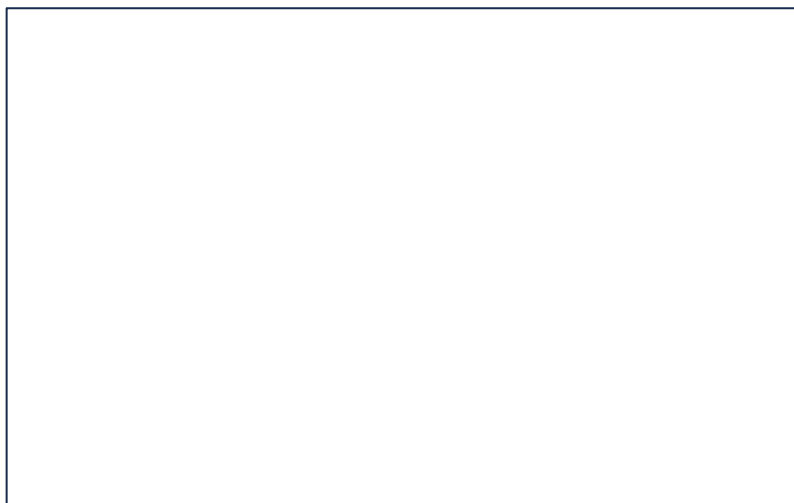


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Proxemics

Simply put, proxemics is how we use space -- not just in how we move through it with our bodies, but how we act in relation to our surroundings. We tend to see people who claim objects in their space as dominant. If someone were to walk up to a cocktail table and lean on it, it actually expands their body. It all comes down to the context of your nonverbal brand and how you relate to your environment.

How do you naturally use proxemics? Do you claim objects in your space? How does this affect your actions? Your behavior? Your feelings? What does that say about your nonverbal brand? Would you change anything? If so, what?

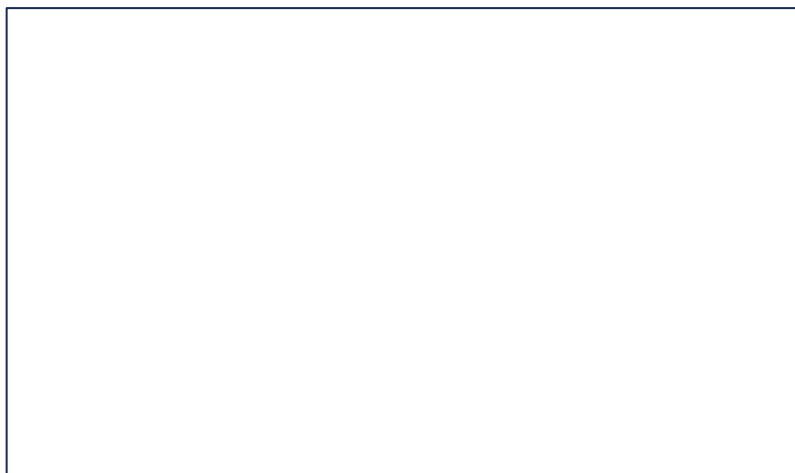
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Purposeful Gesturing

If someone is expressing a big idea, they might hold their arms skyward as far as they can stretch them. Or if they're talking about three things, they might hold up three fingers. This kind of purposeful gesturing can be useful for anchoring information, but we want to avoid going into interpretive dance mode if we want to retain control of how we're perceived and be taken seriously.

Do you talk with your hands? Do you find yourself flailing your arms around, or are you conscious enough about it to consider what you do as purposeful gesturing? Can you think of a time that your gesturing did send the wrong signal? If so, what message did it send and why? Did context play into it?

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Close Talkers

The only person who likes a close talker is another close talker. When Vanessa has engaged with a close talker and matched them (even though she doesn't like to), she says they soar and love it when she meets them in their space.

What do you do when a close talker is trying to communicate with you? Do you meet them where they are? Do you back away? How do you engage with them?



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Haptics

Haptics involves any kind of touch -- this can be handshakes, hugs, a cheek kiss, or a touch on the shoulder or forearm. It is the study of bodies meeting.

In what ways can you work on haptics through individual elements? In what ways can you work on haptics as a whole?

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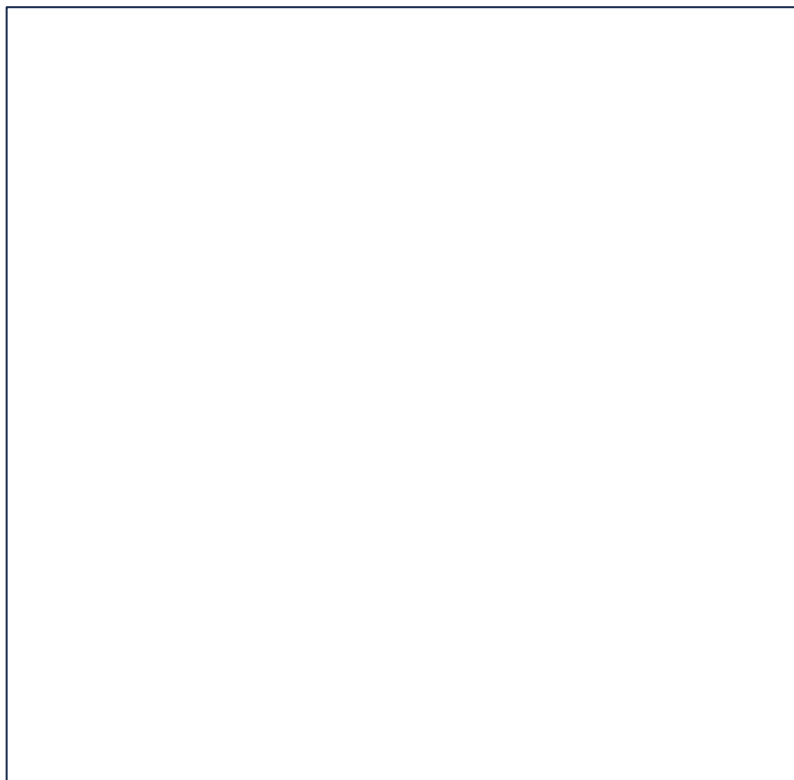
Decoding vs. Encoding

One of the biggest challenges Vanessa faces is that individuals will come to her assuming that they are good at *encoding*, meaning they know how they interact with others and only want to know how to *decode* other people's nonverbal communication. Or they'll come to her with the opposite, acknowledging they have poor interpersonal skills, don't communicate well, and plead for her help to work on their own presence -- in other words, *learn how to encode*.

Vanessa points out that it's not just your signals or the recipient's signals that matter, but also the bounceback and interplay between you and the recipient. For example, if you show happiness, the recipient will generally show happiness back. The same goes for anger. However, Vanessa warns against simply mirroring someone to manipulate their behavior into a desired outcome. You've got to pay attention to the signals you're encoding, the signals you're decoding, and the bounceback that occurs. It's worth investing in both, as we witness in the [Still Face Experiment](#).

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Putting yourself in this position, do you find yourself doing more decoding or encoding? Do you rise to the level of emotion as the person with whom you're communicating? Thinking of your last three conversations, what was your emotional level compared to the person with whom you were communicating? How did this play into the dynamic of the conversation?

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Confidence and Engagement

What exactly are we encoding and decoding? Vanessa boils it down to two things: confidence and engagement. When we meet people, the first thing we tend to try to figure out is who they are. Are they confident or meek? Are they in a good or bad mood? What is their confidence in this relationship? These are the very first things we're trying to decode, and this changes our encoding.

The second thing we try to figure out is engagement. We are trying to figure out how attentive this person will be to our needs, our feelings and our wants. Really, whether you are confident or not, you want to know if the person you're talking to will engage you. This leads to the next thing you're trying to decode: is this person on your side, are they on your team, and can you count on them? It goes to loyalty, trust, and rapport.

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As confidence and engagement are the two things you need to be constantly thinking about as you communicate with others, where do you come in on each? How confident are you in decoding and encoding? How engaging are you at decoding and encoding? In what ways can you be more cognizant of what you want out of each?



Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here](#).

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About



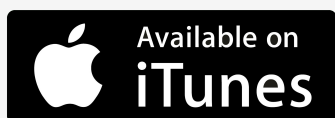
Join Jordan Harbinger (critically acclaimed host, formerly of The Art of Charm) as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers -- from legendary musicians to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth -- and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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