

Body Language: Key to Professional Success
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Lecture - 13
Hand Movements



Welcome dear participants to the 3rd module of the 3rd week. Today we would look at the interpretations associated with the movement of hands as well as fingers.

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Body Language & Hand Movements

- Most of us have a broad understanding of hand movements : enhancing, reinforcing, even negating the verbal messages, not necessarily separate from language
- Hand movements are a ubiquitous feature of everyday life : voluntary, as well as involuntary
- Perform social functions
 - the most common hand movements are 'come and go' or 'stop and go' (Dehghan p. 10)
- Might reflect emotional state
- Cultural variations



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All of us have a broad understanding of the meanings and interpretations of our movement of hands as well as the way our fingers act in different situations. There are situations when the movement of hand can reinforce our meaning or negated at moments. Sometimes we can use our hand gestures independent of words and sometimes they may modify the meaning of words.

They are in ubiquitous feature of our everyday life. Most of the time we find that hand movements like the rest of the body language aspect are involuntary, but at the same time there may be certain voluntary gestures which we can deliberately use to communicate a particular emotion or a feeling to the onlooker.

The most common hand gestures are when we try to call somebody indicating the person to come close to us or when we ask somebody to wait or we ask somebody to go away.


These hand movements as well as similar other perform a social function. At the same time like other aspects of our body language which we have already discussed, for example, our facial expressions through the eyes as well as through our mouth, our hands also reflect the emotional state. At the same time we also have to be aware that cultural variations in the interpretation as well as in the allied usages of a particularly common hand movement are also there.

There are certain countries and certain cultures in which there is relatively more emphasis on the movement of hands. In a way we can say that hand movements have taken the place of punctuation in language, in certain situations they regulate turn taking during any conversation event. It is said that Italians and the French are the leading users of what has come to be known as hand talking, because in these cultures normally we find people gesticulating more.


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In many countries, hands have taken on the role of 'punctuation marks', to regulate turn-taking in conversation

- The Hands Raised gesture has been borrowed from the Italians and the French, who are traditionally considered to be the leading users of 'hand talking'
- Still rarely seen in England, where waving your hands about when you speak is seen as inappropriate/poor style
- In Italy, the person with his hands raised has the floor and does the talking. The listener will have his hands down or behind his back
- So, the trick is to try to get your hands in the air if you want to get a word in
- This can be done either by looking away and then raising them or by touching the other person's arm to suppress their hand as you raise yours



(Image: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/brain-wise/201209/your-hand-gestures-are-speaking-you>)



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Gesticulating with hands and other different types of hand and finger movements are relatively less seen in a country like England, where using ones hands too much during the speech is still considered to be inappropriate and rude. In a country like Italy as well as in certain other countries if a person raises the hand, it is customary to give the floor to that person so that he can speak.

At the same time we find that in almost all the cultures the listeners listen with hands by the side or hands folded politely. Therefore, raising our hand has come to be known as

seeking permission or getting once turned to his speak and normally we find that in almost all professional situations, a raised hand is often considered to be a desire to begin our speech or begin our participation.

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Rubbing the Palms together

- Rubbing our palms together signals a positive expectation
 - The dice thrower rubs the dice between his palms as a sign of his positive expectancy of winning
- The speed at which a person rubs their palms together signals different ideas
 - The slow palm rub can appear devious or crafty and may leave you feeling a little uneasy
 - The quick hand rub indicates excitement, pleasure, enthusiasm
 - A property dealer may do it when he feels that the sale is almost final
 - A friend tells you how excited she is about a holiday she's about to take, a promotion she's been given, or a fabulous idea she's just had. She may well quickly rub her palms together with a broad smile (Kuhnke p. 146)





Image: <https://www.aps-hochschule.com/blogs/teachers/2019/1/body-language-the-hands>

Image: http://www.studentmasters.com/resources/book_of_body_language/shake-hands/

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Another common gesture which is often involuntary, but can also be done in a voluntary fashion is rubbing our palms together. Normally we can understand it as a positive gesture, a gesture of expecting something positively. We can trace the social and cultural origins of this gesture in the gestures of a dice thrower. A dice thrower who rubs the dice between his palms in order to expect a positive winning streak; over the passage of time the speed with which a person rubs the palm together has come to indicate a positivity or a negativity.

A slow palm rub appears rather crafty or devious and it is related with scheming mind and one becomes uneasy in the presence of a person who has a tendency to slowly rub the hands. On the other hand a quick rub normally indicates an enthusiasm, a pleasure a happy tilting, for example, a friend might have received some good tilting and therefore, would like to pass it on with rubbing palms together. Similarly we find that in sales people this type of a quick hand rub is perceived when they feel that a deal is almost completely finalized.

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Open Palm: Asks for Trust

- An ancient sign of trustworthiness. Over the course of history in different cultures it has served as a simple signal that one does not have a weapon in hands
- A positive position and is helpful for establishing rapport with another person. Unconscious in this sense
 - One way to gauge if someone is being honest with you is to look at where her/his palms are facing
 - If one or both of the palms are facing up it is a decent sign that you're hearing the truth
- Intentional use to deceive, as a lie with an open palm is often understood as truth
 - Also possible to make ourselves more credible by practicing this gesture





Image Courtesy: http://westsidetomasters.com/resources/book_of_body_language/chap2.html



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Open palms are traditionally a gesture of trustworthiness. Over the course of history in different cultures, open palms were equated with the absence of any weapon which a person might be carrying in his hands. And this cultural aspect has come to be associated with our archetypal understanding of honesty being associated with open palms.

When a person initiates a dialogue with open palm or uses the open palm gesture during the conversations frequently, he or she is able to establish a positive rapport with the listener. The open palm gesture in this sense is unconscious; however, we have also come across people who train themselves in the use of this open palm gestures.

The normal understanding is that if during the dialogue, you are able to perceive one palm as being open as well as both palms as being open and tending towards upward, it is normally considered to be a sign of truthfulness and honesty. On the other hand those people who are able to practice this gesture and are able to use it in an intentional manner often use this gesture to receive others so that they can pass on a lie within open palm and this lie would be trusted by most of the people.

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Palm Down and Chopping Movement

- Palm down during handshake: domination
- During dialogue it suggests confidence; but it also conveys a simultaneous rigidity
- Downward palms with straightened fingers indicate a sense of authority, even dominance or defiance
 - When a person does this while talking to you, it means he is not going to budge and you might have to change your approach
- Combined with a chopping action, a downward palm indicates emphatic disagreement, usually authoritative. Easily conveys aggression
 - It can often be used as a way to make a point. For example, chopping down as to separate an idea in two categories

(Source: "13 Revealing Body Language Hand Gestures.")




Image: http://www.ewriting.pamir-visions.com/2007/12/12/open-palms/westidetoastmasters.com/resources/book_of_body_language/chap2.htm

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Palm down and chopping movements are also relatively common gestures in our professional circumstances. A downwards indication of palm is associated with the tendency to dominate others. In our discussions of handshake we have seen that a thrust downward movement of the palm, suggest the desire to dominate the other. During our dialogue, this down palm gesture also suggest a confidence and at the same time if it is slightly tilted in this fashion it also conveys a simultaneous rigidity.

A palm which is downward, however, with fingers which are straightened, indicates a sense of authority a dominance and defiance. Even in those interactants who are on an equal footing, this type of gesture indicates that the person is not willing to concede and has already made up his or her mind.

If we associate this palm down gesture with a chopping action, then it indicates as we can, obviously, understand an emphatic disagreement and this disagreement is passed on in an authoritative manner. However, the chopping movement if one is not careful enough to use it along with certain other positive and assertive gestures can often be understood as being an aggressive one.

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Analysis of
Celebrities' Palms
&
Hand Movements

[Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjth24Vvn4>]

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Here we have an interesting analysis of the palm and hand movements of certain celebrities which would further help us to understand this analysis.

First thing I want you to do with Chris Evans here is pay attention to how he reveals his palms.

Did you move into your home your family did you live?

I mean kind of I did you know I.

Growing up.

I do spend a lot of time back.

So, first thing to notice is that his palm is open and available for the audience to see from the get go on he continues to do this. Just a little bit of nuance here this is not a hard and fast rule, but if you place palm out and down, people tend to understand this as more authoritarian like you are giving a command. If you extend your palm out and up people see this more as a request like you are inviting them to do things.

In either case you are better off revealing your palms than not from an evolutionary perspective what this shows people is that you have nothing to hide you are not trying to do them harm this is a true across many many cultures. So, Jeff crossed hands on the lap. So, the first thing pay attention one for no use of like make in the palms available,

second for flimsy fingers and wrists and then third tip today is to avoid ticks you are going to see that Jonah has a tick where he constantly touches his tie.

He is moving.

Yeah he (Refer Time: 09:58).

So, this is not to say that Jonah is not telling a good story or making people laugh, we are actually talking just about hand gesticulations today. So, focus on that, but not he has not yet revealed his palms and he will do very little of that. So, pay attention to this contrast this with Chris Evans very open available palms and strong fingers to see what Jonah has going on with his wrists which it is kind of flimsy it kind of just shakes there.

But coloring the first treatment for the first one, the first thing we wrote on paper was we want the guy who the police, to play the police captain (Refer Time: 10:38) and when he says yes.

You see what is going on with his fingers he had this weird shape going on because there is not any really muscular tension going on in his finger.

And when he says yes I (Refer Time: 10:47) magic Johnson nice (Refer Time: 10:49) my childhood.

And his wrist is bent backwards here, again it's great show you palms, but if your wrist is bent you actually come across as more flimsy.

Here is.

Yeah.

This was so, cool I probably ignored him with every NWA ice cube three kings Friday.

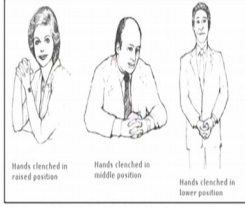
Here he actually does a little bit better he is got some tension going on in his wrist.

Often we come across a particular gesture among people, when they are sitting or sometimes standing over their hands clenched together in different positions.


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Clenched Hands

- This gesture has three main positions (Pease p. 131) :
 - hands clenched in front of the face
 - hands clenched resting on the desk or on the lap
 - and, when standing, hands clenched in front of the body
- The higher the hands are held in the clenched position, the stronger the negative mood
 - So, if someone is sitting with his/ her elbows resting on the desk, while his/ her hands are clenched in front of the face, probably that person is going to be difficult to handle (Kuhnke p. 146)
 - His body language reveals the inner anxiety, restlessness and intolerance of the concerned person



(Image: <http://www.indiabix.com/body-language/hand-and-arm-gestures/>)



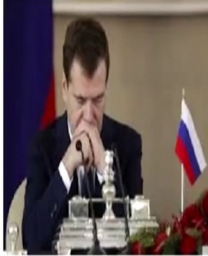
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The clenched hands may have three different positions these three positions have been listed by Allen Pease. Hence as we have seen earlier clenched in front of the face, hands clenched resting on the desk or on the lap and while standing hands clenched in front of the body. In these hand clenched movement there are a couple of things which we have to be careful about. For example, the height at which the clenched hands have been held together. If they are clenched together in a higher position then we can understand at the negativity as well as the barriers which exist between the two are higher.

Another aspect we have to be aware of is the tension which is reflected through the grip in our fingers. If the fingers are very tightly held then it suggests some type of negativity a suppressed anger or anxiety which the other person does not want to show. On the other hand if the hands are only loosely clenched and fingers do not display any unnecessary pressure, we can understand that it is either a restraint or a common courtesy to keep the other person at a certain distance.

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- Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, commits three body language faux pas in this single photograph, which a speaker or a leader should never display
 - Whenever hands are clenched, particularly in an elevated position, the emotion of frustration is present



Mr. Medvedev's down-tilted head with downcast eyes, in this context, are also highly consistent with frustration

Number three on this list is the act of covering his mouth which is indicative of possible deception or other negative emotions

It can be contrasted with that of Churchill, whose open hands and palms exhibit his openness and confidence





Image: <https://www.members.com/guests/articles/2019-02-16/Churchill-was-more-villain-than-hero-in-britain-s-colonies>

Source: "Body Language & Emotional Intelligence."



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I can highlight this aspect by using these two public figures; the photograph of the former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev as well as that of Sir Winston Churchill, the former British prime minister. Medvedev has indicated three negative aspects of body language in this single photograph and all these rates of body language are the ones we should be avoided in our formal situations.

He has clenched his hands in an elevated position, we suggest a level of frustration which he is unable to hide. His hand is also tilted downwards and his eyes are also downcast and this interpretation is consistent with the interpretation of frustration which we can understand on the basis of the clenched hands.

Another aspect is that his mouth has been covered which is indicative of a possible deception or a desire to create a certain barrier between himself and the other people. You would find that people who look at this particular photograph would not be able to have a very positive interpretation of Medvedev's body language. It can be contrasted with a body language of Winston Churchill. Winston Churchill is speaking with open hands and open palms and this openness suggests his confidence and his capability as well as his desire to establish interaction and dialogue with the other people.


In public figures the role of the body language becomes very important. For us normal professionals, we find that the role of body language is important in all face to face

exercises participation during meetings participation, for students during the group discussions, making presentations etcetera.

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The Mid Position

- This gesture is usually done when a person feels that they are failing to convince the other person or are anxious about what they saying or hearing




While talking to a person holding this gesture, you should try moving the conversation in a different direction or ask questions so that you can, if not understand, at least break the negative attitude of the person


Acts as a barrier, shows attention and critical assessment of the other speaker

Compare it with Churchill's expressions

With hands thrust into his pockets, he talks into microphones. Indicates absence of sharing



Former Argentina President Cristina Kirchner with hands Clenched In center position



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Sometimes we find that the hands can be clenched in the center position. It is usually done by a person when he or she fails to convince the other person or is too anxious about what is likely to be the reaction of the other people. In this photograph of former Argentinean president Christina Kirchner, we find that is similar mid position of clenched hands has been displayed. While talking to a person particularly when you are trying to negotiate for certain thing, it is important that we incorporate certain strategies somehow to ensure that the clenched hands position is undone.

Only if the hands are loose we can mitigate the barriers which exists in that situation as well as can be hopeful of a positive conclusion of the dialogue we can call for a tea break. We can pass on certain visuals we can pass on certain papers so, that the person is forced to open the hand grip and the hand movements can be freer. Other photograph of Winston Churchill also suggests a mood which is very different from the one displayed in the previous slide. We find that he has thrust his hands into his pockets and he is talking into microphones and this gesture alone indicates the absence of the desire to share things with other people.

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Hands Clenched in front of the Body

- A lot of people stand with their hands folded in front of their body
- This position suggests that they're comfortable standing like that or that they don't know what to do with their hands
- Not a naturally confident position. They're probably subconsciously feeling threatened and looking for a position that offers protection, it acts like a shield
- Submissive. Especially in a group





Image Courtesy:
<https://www.psychmechanics.com/2015/05/body-language-clenching-and-clasping-of.html>



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The third position of clenched hands can be when we are holding hands in this manner in front of our body. We find that a lot of people normally adopt this position while they are standing, particularly those people who are not in a position of a leader.

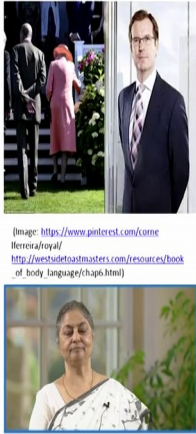
Sometimes we can also say that some people find it a comfortable posture, but in professional situations we find that this type of a posture indicates a subservience. It is not a naturally confident position people may feel subconsciously threatened or they might be aware that they do not have any say in a given moment. Particularly in a group if a couple of people have held their hands clenched in front of the body, we find that all of them are on the same footing whereas, if there is a leader in the group we would find that his hand position would be different from this.

In comparison to hands clenched in front of the body, we find that a person who displays leadership traits follows a different hand position automatically.

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Holding Hands behind the Back

- Indicates superiority, confidence and power
- This gesture is common among leaders and royalty and is used by the policemen patrolling the beat, the headmaster walking around the school playground senior military personnel and anyone in a position of authority
 - The Duke of Edinburgh and several other male members of the British Royal Family are noted for their habit of walking with head up, chin out and one hand holding the other hand behind the back
- The person exposes vulnerable body parts in a subconscious act of fearlessness (Pease p. 136)
 - In evolutionary terms, the person has no fear of attack from the front and is, therefore, displaying a fearless and superior attitude



[Image: <https://www.pinterest.com/comehereukroyal/>
http://www.studentsmasters.com/resource/book_of_body_language/chap6.html]

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We can look at this particular position where hands have been held behind the back. This position of hands indicates superiority, confidence and power. This gesture is very common among leaders, social figures, royalty. It is also used by those people who are wielding certain authority in a given position.

For example, the principal of a school taking grounds in the corridors, senior military personnel, looking at the parade policemen patrolling the beat etcetera. Allen Pease has commented that this particular position is very popular with the duke of Edinburgh as well as certain other male members of the British royal family who are noted for their habit of walking with their head up chin out and one hand holding the other hand behind the back.

In this particular photograph, we find that though the hands are held behind the back still it is not a palm to palm grip rather the hand is holding the arm. This aspect also indicates a lack of certain openness and a certain reservations about the situation. Despite this indication that a barrier may be present in the attitude of this individual we find that it suggest is certain authority is sense of superiority confidence and power. Because the person has exposed the vulnerable body parts and in evolutionary terms we can understand it as having no fear of attack in that situation and therefore, it displays a fearless and superior attitude in front of the other people.

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The Hand-Gripping-Wrist

- Different from palm-in-palm held loosely in the back: which is relaxed, in control
- It's a signal of frustration, also an attempt at self-control
 - One hand grips the other wrist or arm tightly behind the back, as if in an attempt by one arm to prevent the other from striking out. Attempt to disguise nervousness

The higher up one hand grips the opposite arm, the more frustrated or angry the person is likely to be (Pease p. 137)

-- **Wrist-and-arm-gripping** behind the back can often be observed outside a courtroom when warring parties are face to face. In sales people standing in a customer's reception area, in patients waiting for a doctor: An attempt to disguise nervousness or self-restraint

-- If you catch yourself doing it, change to the palm-in- Palm behind the back, you will feel more in control


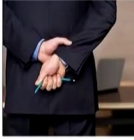



Image: http://www.slideshare.net/resources/book_of_body_language/hug6.html

Image: http://www.slideshare.net/resources/book_of_body_language/hug6.html

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In the previous slide we have referred to a hand gripping the arm. The hand may grip the wrist when we are holding our hands behind our back or it can also hold our arm. Despite the different associations one thing which is common in all these gestures is that they are an indication of a person who feels in control. A routine palm in palm gesture where hands are very loosely held behind our back, which is always an indication of not only control, but also of a relaxed attitude, the hand gripping wrist or the hand gripping arm is an indication of certain deliberate attempt at self control. It can also indicate frustration.


In the first photograph we see that one hand has gripped the other wrist tightly behind the back as if in an attempt by one arm to prevent the other from striking out. The higher the one hand moves to grip the opposite arm the more the person is frustrated or angry or disappointed in the given situation. It can often be observed in those people who have to tensely await the outcome of a particular situation.

If as a speaker in any event or as a participant you suddenly become aware that you are displaying this particular body posture, it would be advisable to change it to a relaxed palm in pump behind your back gesture and immediately you would feel that you have a better control of the situation.


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The Folded Hand

- It looks contained and controlled. But studies show that rather than demonstrating confidence, this gesture actually indicates frustration or hostility and signals that the person is holding a negative attitude
 - By folding your hands you're indicating that you're holding something that you don't want to let out (Kuhnke p.147)
 - Some people may say that they're just comfortable with their hands folded in front of their waists, resting on a table
- If a speaker refuses to give anyone else a chance to talk in a meeting, his hand position is likely to be in a folded position
- During a dialogue, try to loosen this position as a speaker and also as an interactant



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Image: (image: <https://www.canstockphoto.com/businessman-sitting-at-desk-with-folded-hands-3339906.html>) (<https://www.fotosearch.com/BLG008/0140556/>)



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Another commonly held position of hands is that of folded hands. It looks contained and controlled, but at the same time, studies show that instead of demonstrating confidence. This gesture actually indicates our frustration or hostility and signals that the person is holding a negative attitude. In fact, the person is figuratively holding the negative attitude in his hands and his unwilling to leave it aside. In those situations when we find that the speaker has opted for this hand gesture. It would be advisable to use certain strategies and tactics so that the grip can be loosened, and only then we find that a positive dialogue can ensue.

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Stepling

- Normally independent of clustering shown in the previous slide
- It indicates a confident/self-assured attitude. Very often used in superior subordinate interaction (Allen Pease)
- Superiors often use this gesture position while giving instructions or advice to subordinates




Image: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/young-businesswoman-talking-cell-phone>
Base of feet, language/feet.html





Image: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/young-businesswoman-talking-cell-phone>
language/feet, and_arm_body_language.html

Confident people often use this gesture, signaling their self-assurance
Should be avoided by those who have to be persuasive or win the other person's confidence as it can sometimes be read as a mark of smugness or arrogance
No tension in fingers



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Another commonly held hand position is that of steepling. Steepling is different from the clench of hands. Very often it is used in a superior subordinate interaction; it indicates confidence in a person a certain self assurance. At the same time we find that steepling is independent of clustering with which most of our hand movements are associated. In many situations we find that people who are at a superior position and people who are confident ensure of themselves off for this type of a hand position or some type of a variation to signal their self assurance.

We can look at certain variations, the steeple can be high or the steeple can also be low. But one thing which is common in all these steepling positions is that that the fingers do not display any tension in the grip. It should be avoided by those people who have to be persuasive or win the attention of the other person. Because sometimes we find that the steepling can also be understood as a mark of arrogance or smugness; particularly if it is not associated with positive facial expressions.

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STEEPLING



- Steeple was brought to attention by Ray Birdwhistell
- He noticed that persons who didn't engage in animated body language during interactions –and whose gestures were almost nonexistent –used the steeple (Borg p. 123)
- The Steeple has two main versions:
 - The Raised Steeple**
 - The Lowered Steeple**



The raised steeple The lowered steeple

(Image: <http://www.infodiv.com/body-language/hand-and-arm-gestures/>)




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Steepling can be raised or lowered as we can see in this diagram. The first person who brought our attention to it was Professor Ray Birsdwhistell. He noticed that people who normally do not engage in animated body language that is people who do not use lot of gestures in their conversations normally use this steeple and then he alerted us to these two different variations or versions of raised and lowered steepling. The raised steepling, as we have already seen, is an indication of the self assurance of a person.


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STEEPLING

- The raised steeple: When the fingers are raised in front of the chest, the speaker is delivering opinions
- Raised steeple position should be used judiciously. Taken to extremes it can convey an arrogant 'know-it-all' attitude, especially if the head of the speaker is tilted backwards
- The lowered steeple: normally when one listens
- Shows interest and a readiness to respond
- Fingers should not display tension in this gesture, otherwise it becomes a negative one



(Image: http://www.simplibodylanguage.com/hand_gesture.html)




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Even though it is not associated with clusterings, it should be used in a judicious manner. Used too often, we find that it can be understood as 'a know it all attitude' and the person using it can be understood as a smart person. The lowered steeple is used by people when normally they are listening to something instead of speaking.

The use of steeple during conversation indicates interest as well as a readiness and a willingness to interact. It is also important that fingers do not show any tension in this gesture, if the fingers are tense then it can be understood easily as a negative gesture.

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Relevance of Steepling Behaviour



(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUuo2pxo22k>)

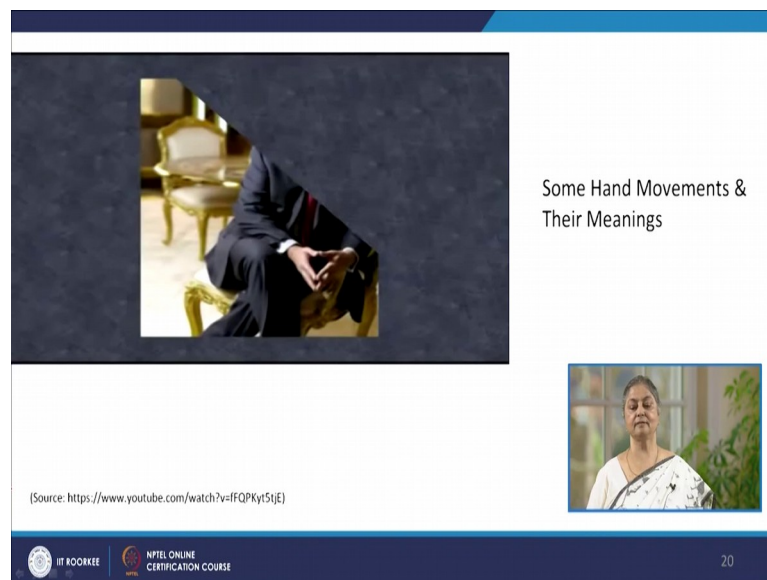
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Here we can look at an analysis of the steepling behavior. How it is important and relevant to understand this behavior in our routine professional life.

One of the displays of confidence that we have the most powerful one is this, is the steepling behavior. And we find that people who really feel confident and positive about something tend to steeple. We do not often see this for instance with people who are being deceptive, it tends to go away right when one at that point when there they are being deceptive.

Similarly, we find that an interesting analysis of some common hand movements and their meanings and interpretations are succinctly given in this video.

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This is probably the only gesture that can be interpreted without looking at the situation or other gestures, it means that the person knows what he is talking about and it shows high intellect. When the hands are steepling up it shows that the person is giving his opinions and when the hands are steepling down, it means that the person is listening. This is a very negative gesture that should be avoided if possible. It shows that the person thinks that he knows more than people he is talking to and it also shows arrogant attitude.

This is a good gesture and it means that the person is very confident and it can also indicate that, she feels that she is superior to the people, she is talking to you. Here is

another gesture that is very similar to the one I have just shown you that has a completely different meaning. I could not find a more suitable picture for that, but here you can see the boy who is gripping his wrist and that means that he is frustrated and the higher the person grips his arm the more frustrated or angst. If the hand is closed and is resting on the cheek, often with the index finger pointing upwards; that means, that this person is making a decision.

Now, this is a similar gesture to the one I have just shown, but here the hand is nearer to the mouth and the thumb is supporting the chin, which means that the person has negative thoughts about what you are saying.

I would close this discussion at this point, in our next module we will take up the movement of the fingers as well as thumb.

Thank you.