

LISTENING TO NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Non-Verbal Cue	Possible Meaning*
EYES	
Looking away	Divided attention
Glaring	Anger
Rolling the eyes	Not taking someone seriously, frustration, annoyance
Not maintaining eye contact	Suspicion, discomfort, uncertainty—but cultural norms about eye contact also vary greatly
Direct eye contact	Interest, attentive, trust
Peering over glasses	Skepticism, disapproval
Looking at something else (phone, document, etc) while engaging in conversation	Lack of interest
Averted gaze	Disbelief, disengaged
Looking straight at the speaker but slightly unfocused	Boredom
Extended eye contact	Trust
FACE	
Smiling	Positive emotions
Frowning	Disagreement, negative emotion
Scratching the chin	Confusion, uncertainty, thinking
Tugging the ear	Uncertainty
Head tilting to one side	Boredom
BREATHING	
Deep sighs	Release, relief, or displeasure
Heavy breathing	Anger, stress
Yawning	Fatigue, emotional overwhelm, emotional release
TORSO AND ARMS	
Crossing arms over chest	Putting up a barrier, feeling defensive, closed to what you're saying, feeling bored
Rubbing arms that are crossed over chest	Feeling protective, defensive Or possibly cold.
Crossing arms over chest, leaning back, and a blank facial expression	Hostile
Arms behind body, hands clasped	Authority or confidence
Leaning towards speaker	Interest, openness, engagement
Leaning away from speaker	Disengagement, lack of investment in conversation

* There are many ways to interpret non-verbal cues—these are only some of the emotions the cue may reflect.
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