

## Body Language 15

### *Pinching the Bridge of the Nose*

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

You have probably noticed someone, when in a listening mode, pinch the bridge of his or her nose. There are several possible meanings with this gesture, as with all body language signals. I will share the common meanings in this article. People do not pinch the bridge of their nose while wearing glasses. If a person removes his or her glasses in order to pinch the bridge of the nose, it means the BL signal is greatly amplified.

It is extremely rare for people to pinch the bridge of the nose while speaking. Think about how awkward that would look. The mouth would be blocked by the person's wrist.

I knew a woman who actually did pinch the bridge of her nose while talking. She would frequently also close her eyes while doing this. It was most disconcerting. I found it difficult to form a trusting relationship with the woman because her communication seemed to be contrived and inaccessible. With no eye contact, I felt disconnected from her. I learned that this woman was very insecure, and she communicated in this way as a form of protection so she did not have to witness the reactions of others. It was very unusual.



If a person pinches the bridge of his or her nose while listening, it usually means one of two things. The first interpretation is that the person is trying to focus intently on the meaning. It signals high interest in the incoming message and a desire to focus the energy directly into the brain. The extreme form of this would include closing of the eyes in order to block out any other confusing signals. The connotation is wanting to internalize just this information at the moment.

An alternate reason for pinching the bridge of the nose is that the incoming data is jarring or difficult for the person to deal with at the moment. The gesture is a defensive one where the person is protecting the neck, mouth, and nose areas all at once. A corollary to this explanation is that the person might be experiencing a headache, and the information coming is making it worse. Also, closing the eyes might be in reaction to a painful amount of light coming in.

To determine which of these modes is in play, look at the eyebrows. If they are relaxed and in a raised position, then the person is likely interested in your input. If the eyebrows are narrowed or furrowed, then expect that the second mode is the operative one. The person is in an evaluative or judgmental mode and is experiencing some frustration.

*This is a part in a series of articles on “Body Language.” The entire series can be viewed on [www.leadergrow.com/articles/Bodylanguage](http://www.leadergrow.com/articles/Bodylanguage) or on this blog.*

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