

## Body Language 33

### Mirroring

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP



You have probably noticed that people have a tendency to mirror or mimic the manerisms of other people, particularly if they are interested in the converstaion. For example, you may be chatting with another person at a table and realize that you have folded your hands in the same way the other person has already done. You did not make this move consciously, but the mirrored configuration happened by instinct.

Mirroring can be a very powerful force. Let me share a real example to see if it works for you. If I use the word “yawn” in this article, some percentage of the readers will find themselves yawning within a minute. See if you are one of them. Did I bait you?

The most common form of mirroring is a smile, You will instinctively smile at a person who smiles at you. Try this experiment next time you are walking down a hallway. As you pass a person, show a smile and see that in most cases the person you smiled at will return the smile to you.

According to [Psychologia](#), the mirroring is primarily caused by a neuron that affects part of the brain. That neuron causes you to mimic the facial expression you see in others. The gesture shows affinity for the other person and is a way of bonding. Mirroring is a way of controlling your mood.

You can change your mood simply by thinking thoughts consistent with the desired state. If you smile and think you are happy, it will tend to cheer you up. If you feel deep anger, chances are that emotion is becoming evident on your face. Likewise, if you think successful thoughts, you have a tendency to move in the direction of higher success.

The science is called [Psycho-Cybernetics](#) as described in the book by the same name by Maxwell Maltz in 1960. He described techniques to develop positive inner feelings as a means to enable positive outcomes. Another common way of expressing the phinomenon is “fake it till you make it.”

Try another test. Next time you are discussing something with a friend, try steeping your hands by having fingers together and palms apart. You should notice that you feel

more confident about what you are saying. That is because steeping is a means to show confidence or even superiority.

Mirroring occurs in voice mimicking as well as body positions. You can observe people modifying the volume, cadence, and even accents to match the person the other person. It can be a great way to develop rapport and trust, but there is a major precaution.

You have to be careful with mirroring, because if you do it consciously, you will likely overdo it, and you will annoy the other person. If you have ever been on the receiving end of someone trying too hard to mirror you, then you know how exasperating it can be.

The best approach with mirroring is to observe it in others, but let your subconscious do the mirroring for you. It will be more natural then and will likely be well accepted.

As you go about your daily routine, try to count the number of times you see people mirroring other people. If you count accurately, you may be astonished at the number of times you see this type of gesturing.

*This is a part in a series of articles on “Body Language.” The entire series can be viewed on <https://www.leadergrow.com/articles/categories/35-body-language> or on this blog.*

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