

## Body Language 66

### Mirroring

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP



Mirroring in body language means that one person mimics the movements of the other person while they are in dialog.

Usually mirroring happens unconsciously, but if you are paying attention and looking for it, you can gain some important insights whether you are in discussions with an employee, negotiating a big deal, or even trying to get through to your kids.

In general, when a person mirrors the body language of another individual, it means there is a positive bond between the two people, at least on the topic currently being discussed. If you are chatting with another person and his hands are folded on the table, see if yours are folded as well.

According to George MacDonald in his [blog for coaches](#), mirroring and matching are techniques widely used in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP, an interpersonal communication model created by Richard Bandler and John Grinder in the 1970s. The idea is that people feel most comfortable around those who are like them – they feel that their point of view is understood. The more someone believes you are like them, the easier it is to develop trust and rapport at the unconscious level.

If you spot mirroring behavior, one logical question is who started the chain and who is doing the mimicking. Actually, it does not matter who initiated the gesture, the mere fact you have both assumed a certain position means there is a good chemistry going on, and you have the opportunity to use that knowledge to enhance the conversation.

### **Building Rapport**

You can build greater rapport with another person by reflecting back some of the body language the person is showing. The huge precaution here is not to overdo the reflections so they become obvious. If you go too far, you will put the other person off with clumsy imitations. Simply lean in the direction of the gestures you are seeing, and you will deepen trust with the other person.

If the person sitting across from you just crossed her legs, don't immediately cross yours like it is a mechanical thing. However, through the natural gaps in the conversation and inevitable changes in posture, if you end up with your legs crossed, that is usually a helpful sign for the conversation. Just do not try to force gestures, let them happen naturally, but do pay attention for similarities in body position when you see them.

### **Authenticity**

When sending body language signals, it is essential to be authentic. Trying to put on a show at any point will usually label you as a phony and trust will be broken.

### **Mirroring creates synchronicity**

When we assume the body position of another person, it becomes easier to get on the same wavelength and communicate in constructive ways. We listen better to people who appear similar to us. The listening leads to more understanding, which becomes the basis for trust to grow.

*This is a part in a series of articles on "Body Language" by Bob Whipple "The Trust Ambassador."*