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Pride

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The gestures associated with pride seem simple enough, but you need to be careful because there are other emotions that can have similar features. In this article I will give some tips on how to spot true pride.

Signals that demonstrate pride can also be seen in a person experiencing simple satisfaction. The two emotions are not the same at all, but the body language is similar. Also, hubris can have many of the same

characteristics. Curiously, the gestures for contempt are very close to those of pride, so you need to be a bit careful.

Let's pick apart the specific gestures and see if we can isolate those that are most associated with pride as opposed to other emotions.

Chin

The most important part of the body associated with pride is the chin. When a person is proud, the angle of the chin will be up. The head is generally slightly backward but vertical from side to side and not tilted at all. If the chin is down, then you may be looking at satisfaction rather than pride.

The mouth



A person experiencing pride will have a slight smile associated with a symmetrical pulling back of both cheeks. If only one cheek is pulled back then the smile is gone, and the gesture is probably that of contempt or distrust as opposed to pride.

This would be like the famous gesture of “unimpressed” that McKayla Maroney made while receiving the Silver Medal in gymnastics in 2012 and later mimicked with President Obama, as in the attached photo.

Eyes and gaze

A person who is proud will have a fixed gaze and make good eye contact with the person he is facing. Someone experiencing hubris may have more shifty eyes indicating lack of confidence. With pride, the eyes will be relaxed and steady, but that can also be said of someone experiencing satisfaction.

Eyebrows

When a person is expressing pride, the eyebrows are relaxed and not furrowed at all. Pride carries a connotation of confidence and sometimes even dominance, so there is no indication of worry or stress in the eyebrows as would be the case with hubris.

Shoulders

A person demonstrating pride will not be slouched over. His shoulders will be erect and slightly back. The back will be arched. Pride often reflects a kind of military stance that is often seen with service members on the assembly field. Similarly, if a proud person is seated, his back will be straight and his shoulders held high with no sign of a slouch.

Hands and arms

With many emotions, the hands are somehow involved touching various areas of the face or head. Pride rarely calls for interaction between the head and the extremities. It would be unusual to see a person who is feeling pride holding his jaw or putting his finger in front of his mouth.

What to do

When you see a person showing body language signals reflecting pride, the first thing to do is see if you can, if need be, through dialog, uncover the source of the pride. Quite often, when a person is experiencing pride it is pretty obvious why that is the case. You can make an affirming statement or gesture indicating you agree with the person's right to be proud and endorse that emotion. That gesture of support will tend to enhance the trust between you both.

The only caveat here is that if you support the person's pride, it needs to be genuine. If you are putting on an act to avoid conflict, then the other person is likely to detect that, and you will do damage to the relationship.

On the other hand, you may feel that pride is not warranted in this situation. That becomes a delicate situation, because there is lack of agreement that the person should be proud.

In our highly polarized society, there can be disconnects between the way two people will view an issue, so it is important that if you detect this is the case to proceed with

caution. An open discussion may draw out the true source of pride and whether it is false pride. It could also mean that you did not understand the background well enough so you felt the person didn't have a right to be proud when he really did. Either clarify the disconnect, or it may be a good strategy to agree to disagree on this particular issue.

Conclusion

Pride is rather easy to spot when you see it, but you need to be careful because several other emotions have some of the same characteristics. Whether it is true pride or something else, an appropriate response is important. This brief article attempted to sort out a few key differences.

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