In 1961, the Bay of Pigs invasion happened near Cienfuegos, Cuba, just a few miles away from the home of an eight-year-old boy named Joe Navarro. Not long after the failed invasion, Navarro and his family, who were suspected of being American sympathizers, fled to Miami. Fresh off the boat, Navarro knew no English, so he relied on careful observation of people around him to survive in his new country.

Navarro's talent for reading non-verbal clues, cultivated from an early age, eventually turned into a lifelong career. While still in his early 20s working as a police officer in Florida, he was recruited by the Federal Bureau of Investigations. That led to a remarkable 25-year career as a counterintelligence specialist with the FBI. Over that time, Navarro learned to apply the science of non-verbal communications in ways that had never been done before in a law enforcement setting. Following his retirement in 2003, Navarro began consulting for major corporations. Today, he's known as arguably the world's foremost authority on reading non-verbal cues — you've likely seen him sharing his wisdom on programs such as the Today Show, or ABC's Good Morning America.

Navarro is also an accomplished author, with five books to his credit. What Every BODY is Saying, Navarro's best-known body language book, has sold well over 150,000 copies worldwide since its first publication in 2008 and has been translated into 16 languages.

Much of what Navarro writes about in What Every BODY is Saying was not even recognized fifteen years ago by the scientific community. It is only because of recent advances in neuroscience and brain-related technologies that scientists have been able to confirm the validity of the various non-verbal cues that Navarro has spent his whole life observing. What this means is, unlike many other books on non-verbal behavior, the information presented in What Every BODY is Saying is actually based on scientific facts, and field-tested findings, rather than on opinions, anecdotes or armchair speculations.

If you ask Joe Navarro, learning to read people's non-verbal cues, particularly in the workplace, is one of the most important survival skills one can master. Regardless of what kind of organization you work in, you cannot escape the fact that effectively dealing with people is always your number one key to your success. And unfortunately, that's not as easy as it sounds.
Because people are inherently complicated, and they rarely tell you how they truly feel or what they're really thinking ... or do they?

As you'll discover in this summary, your colleagues' facial expressions, gestures, movements, posture, and body distance actually tell you a heck of a lot about what they are thinking at any given moment, and how they're likely to act. Let's explain why.

**What Exactly Is Nonverbal Communication?**

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, we should take a moment to consider the meaning and significance of the term "non-verbal communication." According to Navarro, non-verbal communication, often referred to colloquially as "body language," is a critical means of transmitting information. It can be just as revealing or nuanced as the spoken word — except it is achieved through facial expressions, physical movements and even the tone of a person's voice. Fascinatingly, whether we realize it or not, non-verbal actions actually comprise between 50 — 60 percent of all interpersonal communications.

As Navarro came to realize during his many years with the FBI, non-verbal communication is generally more reliable than spoken (or written) words when it comes to revealing a person's true thoughts, feelings, and intentions. For this reason, non-verbal behaviors are sometimes referred to as *tells* (they tell us about the person's true state of mind). Because people are not always aware they are communicating nonverbally, body language is often more honest than an individual's verbal pronouncements, which are consciously crafted to accomplish the speaker's objectives.

In the first chapter of his book, Navarro relates a memorable example of how body language can be more truthful than verbal language. Navarro was interrogating a suspect in a rape case involving a young woman on an Indian reservation in Arizona. Navarro was sitting across from the suspect, and all his words sounded convincing and entirely plausible. The suspect claimed he hadn't seen the victim while out walking that day. Instead, the suspect claimed he'd walked through a cotton field near the victim's house, turned left away from the victim's house, and then walked straight home.

While Navarro's colleagues jotted down notes about what they were hearing, he kept his eyes firmly on the suspect. By doing so, Navarro noticed that as he told the story about turning left and going home, the suspect's hand gestured to *his right*, which was exactly the direction that led to the rape scene. If Navarro hadn't been watching him closely, he wouldn't have caught the discrepancy between his verbal ("I went left") and nonverbal (hand gesturing to the right) behavior. But once he saw it, Navarro immediately suspected he was lying. In the end, the man confessed to the crime.

**How To Read People Successfully**

Much of Navarro's book is devoted to identifying and cataloguing common behaviors, gestures and signals that can generally be relied upon as visual cues. But in order to start
recognizing those behaviors in others, you'll need to be highly observant of your environment. So Navarro begins with a handful of tips on how to observe others better.

Navarro's first bit of advice is a reminder to "use all of our senses," in any given situation, not just our sight. For example, whenever Navarro walks into his apartment, he takes a deep breath in through his nose. If things don't smell normal, he becomes concerned. One time, after he'd just returned from a long trip, Navarro detected the lingering smell of a cigarette as he walked in his front door. Immediately, Navarro suspected foul play. As it turned out, there had been an intruder, but in this case it was by a maintenance person — a welcome intruder — coming to fix a leaky pipe. Still, the lesson holds true: by using all our senses, we're better able to assess our environment and stay safe.

Here's another important tip from Navarro: When you interact with others, try to establish their baseline behaviors. In order to get a handle on the baseline behaviors of the people with whom you regularly interact, you need to note how they look normally, how they typically sit, where they place their hands, the usual position of their feet, their posture and common facial expressions, the tilt of their heads, and even where they generally place or hold their important personal possessions, such as a purse. This tip also applies to one-off interactions. Even in a single encounter with someone, you should attempt to note his or her "starting position" at the beginning of your interaction, he says.

"Not getting a baseline puts you in the same position as parents who never look down their child's throat until their youngster gets sick," writes Navarro. "They call the doctor and try to decide what they see inside, but they have no means of making a comparison because they never looked at the child's throat when he or she was healthy. Only by examining what's normal, can we begin to recognize and identify what's abnormal."

At the same time, when you're observing others, you need to be subtle about it (another important Navarro tip). Using nonverbal behavior requires you to observe people carefully and decode their nonverbal behaviors accurately. However, one thing you don't want to do when observing others is to make your intentions obvious. Many individuals tend to stare at people when they are first learning to spot nonverbal cues. This is not advisable. Your ideal goal is to observe others without their knowing it.

Like anything else, though, practice makes perfect. "If you work hard at perfecting your observational skills," writes Navarro, "you will eventually be both successful and subtle."

**Non-Verbals Of The Feet And Legs**

With those important observational tips in mind, let's now review some of the most common behaviors, gestures and signals that can generally be relied upon as visual cues, starting with our feet and legs. Navarro begins this chapter by asking his readers to guess which is "the most honest part of the body" (i.e. the part that is most likely to reveal a person's true intentions). Rather surprisingly, the answer is actually our feet!
Why are our feet the most honest part of our bodies? The answer according to Navarro is evolution. For millions of years, long before the automobile, our feet were the primary means of locomotion for the human species, he explains. Over that entire period, they were the principal means by which we have maneuvered, escaped, and survived.

When reading body language, most amateur observers begin their read at the top of a person (the face) and work their way down. This is despite the fact that the face is the one part of the body that most often is used to bluff and conceal true sentiments! But professionals like Navarro know better. He always starts by looking at people's feet.

People tend to turn toward things we like or are agreeable to us, explains Navarro. This includes agreeable individuals with whom we are interacting. And so, we can use this information to quickly determine whether others are happy to see us (or not).

There are unlimited workplace applications of this particular bit of knowledge. "Assume you are approaching two co-workers engaged in conversation," writes Navarro. "These are individuals you have worked with for some time, and you want to join in the discussion, so you plan to walk up and say 'hi.' The problem is you don't know them particularly well socially, you're not sure if they really want your company. To find out, just watch their feet. If they fluidly move their feet — along with their torsos — to admit you, then their welcome is full and genuine. However, if they don't move their feet to welcome you but instead swivel partially at the hips to say hello, then they'd rather be left alone."

Moving up from the feet, careful observation of people's legs can also help you determine how comfortable they are around you and/or other colleagues. According to Navarro, leg crossing is a particularly accurate barometer of how comfortable we feel around another person. We don't do it if we feel uncomfortable, he says. We also cross our legs in the presence of others when we are confident, which is part of comfort.

**Non-Verbals Of The Arms**

Because our arms, like our feet, are designed to assist with basic survival, Navarro believes that they can be commonly relied upon to reveal true sentiments and intentions (just as Navarro relied upon a hand gesture to crack the Arizona rapist case we saw earlier).

For example, in business meetings, a speaker whose arms maintain a large territorial footprint is likely to be very confident about whatever it is that's being discussed. According to Navarro, spread-out arms means "I am confident." Conversely, when someone is made to feel uncomfortable, they will typically draw their arms inward to protect their torso. This is also true of crossed arms, which signal defensiveness.
Non-Verbals Of The Face

Finally, we'll jump from our arms up to our faces. "When it comes to emotions, our faces are the mind's canvas," writes Navarro. "What we think and feel can be exquisitely communicated through a smile, a frown, or immeasurable nuances in between."

According to the author, our ability to communicate so broadly and deeply simply through facial expressions is an "evolutionary blessing" that sets us apart from all other species and makes human beings easily the most expressive animals on this planet.

Yet, while our faces can be very honest in displaying how we feel, they do not always necessarily represent our true sentiments, warns Navarro. This is because most of us can, to a degree, control our facial expressions and, thus, put on a false front. And often we do this without even realizing it, with no conscious effort to deceive. For instance, from an early age, we are taught by our parents not to make faces when we don't like the food in front of us, or we are compelled to fake a smile when greeting someone we don't like. In essence, we are taught to lie with our faces, and so we become quite adept at hiding our true sentiments facially, even though they occasionally do leak out.

Often this emotional leakage will occur through an insincere smile. It is well known by researchers that humans have both a fake and a real smile, explains Navarro. The fake smile is used almost as a social obligation toward those who are not close to us, while the honest smile is reserved exclusively for those people and events we truly care about.

A real smile appears primarily because of the action of two muscles: the *zygomaticus major*, which stretches from the corner of the mouth to the cheekbone, and the *orbicularis oculi*, which surrounds the eye. When working together bilaterally, these draw the corners of the mouth up and crinkle the outer edges of the eyes, causing the crow's feet of a familiar warn and honest smile. It's these wrinkles that are telling.

By contrast, when we exhibit a false smile, the lip corner stretches sideways through the use of a muscle called the *risorius*. When used bilaterally, these muscles pull the corners of the mouth sideways but cannot lift them upward, as they would with a true smile. And so, real smiles are almost impossible to fake when we have a sincere lack of emotion.

The Rule Of Mixed Signals

If interpreting visual cues were easy, we probably wouldn't need to read a book like *What Every BODY is Saying* to figure out how to do it. The fact is, mastering non-verbal communication is tough, and this is largely because we are all experts at sending out mixed signals to throw others off. We often say one thing but really believe otherwise. This brings us to Navarro's final chapter on how to deal with mixed signals.

When confronted with mixed signals (such as happiness cues along with anxiety signals or pleasure behaviors seen alongside displeasure displays), or if the verbal and nonverbal facial
messages are not in agreement, Navarro believes we should always side with the negative emotion as the more honest of the two. In his experience, the negative sentiment will almost always be the more accurate and genuine of the person's feelings and emotions.

For instance, if someone says, "So happy to see you," with jaws tightened, the statement is false. The tension in the face reveals the true emotion the person is feeling. Why side with the negative emotion? Because our most immediate reaction to an objectionable situation is usually the most accurate; it is only after a moment when we realize that others are watching us that we cover up the initial (true) response with some facial behavior that is more socially acceptable, such as a fake smile. So when confronted with mixed signals, go with the first emotion observed, especially if it is a negative emotion.

Conclusion

Take it from Joe Navarro: With just a few simple rules and guidelines, and an awful lot of practice, the silent and mysterious language of the body can be yours to master.

Whether you are interested in learning more about non-verbal communication techniques because you want to get ahead in your job, or simply because you want to get along better with friends and family, you can't go wrong by heeding the words shared in What Every BODY is Saying. Of course, gaining proficiency in this area will require more time and effort than simply reading his words. But if you take the author's teachings, and couple them with a serious commitment to practice them into your daily life, then one day you may find that, with just a glance, you too have the ability to read what every BODY is saying.