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Read your date's body language

By Stephen F. Milioti

Words are nice, and who doesn't love flowers? But, that said, if you really, really want to know how someone feels about you, the answer lies in body language. That's right: Learning how to read someone's body language is one of the best ways to sniff out a ripe romantic match.

For a turbo-charged tutorial on the subject, we asked the expert: Patti Wood (pattiwood.net), who's analyzed the body language of everyone from the most recent presidential candidates to on-the-rocks celeb couples. "You can send up to 10,000 body language cues in less than a minute," says Wood. "And there's no way to control all of them—even if you're sly." While some factors will influence body language (for instance, if a person is super-shy), there are some sure signs of attraction to look for. We offer up the top five for you here:

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Body-language clue #1: The Reach

The first universal sign of interest is something called symbolic reaching: "It's when your hand is subtly reaching toward the other person," says Wood. An example of this, on a dinner date, is resting one's arm and hand on the table, rather than close to the body, with fingers pointing to the other person—as though you're ready to reach out and touch them. (And if your date does reach out and touch, so much the better: That's an iron-clad sign of affection.) On the other hand, if someone sits on their hands or conceals them, that indicates a lack of interest.

Body-language clue #2: The Mimic

Another sign of interest involves the hands and then some—it's something called "matching and mirroring." What's that? It's when your date mimics your gestures, voice inflections and patterns of communication. And it's a good thing. "Their voice will speed up if yours does, or slow down with yours," says Wood. "It happens subconsciously—when we're attracted, we tend to merge into one another in this way." If you're noticing that this happens on the first date—your date is shrugging the way you do when sharing a story, or places his complicated dinner order in the same joking way you do—well, chances are there will be a second date.

Body-language clue #3: The Blink

While some people give you full-on eye contact when they're interested, here's another little-known sign that your date is way into you: Frequent blinking. "When you're highly attracted to someone," says Wood, "one of the natural responses is to get nervous and blink a lot." So if that cutie across the table seems a little flustered and is batting his or her lashes a lot, congratulations—someone's interested in you.

Body-language clue #4: The Distance

Part of body language is not just what you do with your body, but how close you position it to the person you're dating. "If someone's not interested in you," says Wood, "they'll leave a lot of space between your body and theirs...two feet or so. But if a person sits or stands right next to you, or even 16 inches away, that reveals physical intimacy—and real romantic interest."

Body-language clue #5: The Stance

Compatibility clues are even located in an area that's ordinarily overlooked: The feet. "Where the feet go, the heart follows," says Wood. "The lower portion of the body is under the least control, and the feet are the most telling of how someone feels." So if your date is thinking, "Hey, I really like this person," his feet will move towards you—say, they'll stretch their legs out under the table at dinner. That's a very clear declaration of "Let's get closer."

Stephen F. Milioti is a New York-based writer and editor. When he's interested in a date, he'll let that be known by playing footsie under the table.

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