

 **the schwartz center**
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

**Conversations Without Words:
Using Nonverbal Communication
to Improve the
Patient-Caregiver Relationship**

Judith A. Hall, PhD
University Distinguished Professor of Psychology
Northeastern University
j.hall@neu.edu
Tuesday, March 15, 2016



Moderator



Kim Vaillancourt
Producer, Webinar Series
The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare

 **the schwartz center**
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

2

Audience Reminders

- This webinar is funded in part by a donation in memory of Julian and Eunice Cohen.
- You may submit a question by typing it into the Question and Answer pane at the right of your screen at any time.
- Participate in polling questions by clicking on the response that best represents your opinion.
- We value your feedback! Please complete our electronic survey following the webinar.

Host



Beth Lown, MD
Medical Director
The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare

Compassionate Collaborative Care Framework	
http://www.theschwartzcenter.org/media/Triple-C-Conference-Recommendations-Report_FINAL1.pdf	
Focuses attention	Demonstrates trustworthiness
Recognizes nonverbal cues	Communicates with colleagues, adjusts
Actively listens	Practices self-reflection
Elicits info about the “whole person”	Builds relationships, partnerships, teams
Nonjudgmentally values each person	Practices emotion regulation
Asks about, responds to emotions, concerns	Practices self-care, attends to personal and professional development
Shares information, decision-making	Practices self-compassion

Today's Speaker



Judith A. Hall
University Distinguished Professor of Psychology
Northeastern University

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

6



Outline

- I. The Nature of Nonverbal Communication (NVC)**
- II. NVC in the Clinical Setting: What the Clinician Does**
- III. The Clinician's Interpersonal Accuracy**
- IV. Tips to Help Your NVC**

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

7



I. The Nature of Nonverbal Communication (NVC)

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

8

What is Nonverbal Communication (NVC)?

- **Everything except the words themselves**
- Facial expressions, body/arm/leg movements, gait, posture, vocal quality, gaze direction, touch, interpersonal distance
- Ability to “read” others’ nonverbal cues
- Ability to “send” the cues and expressions (messages) you intend to

What Are the Functions of NVC?

- Emotional expression
- Revealing inner states
- Conveying attitudes
- Managing the conversational flow

Relation to Verbal Behavior

NVC often **co-occurs** with the words being spoken:

Voice qualities, hand gestures, postures, facial expressions while speaking
Can contradict or reinforce the words

NVC also **stands alone**:

Substitutes for words

Nonverbal Communication is Ever Present

You can't NOT communicate nonverbally

No matter what your intentions, your behavior will be interpreted

Spontaneous vs. Intentional

Often, nonverbal cues are **spontaneous and even unintended** (“leaked”)

Other times, they are done **deliberately** to convey an impression or conceal the truth

People can control their faces more easily than voice, body, hands, and feet

Spontaneous vs. Intentional

Regarding **your own** NVC:

Doing something mindfully does not equate to “inauthenticity”

Newly learned behaviors often feel false or awkward before they are fully internalized

Can NVC Be Measured?

Yes, by independent measurement

Through analysis of video/audio recordings, or
live trained observers

Very specific movements and muscle activity
can be measured

Impressions formed by NVC can be measured
(e.g., anxiety, friendliness)

Not very well by self-reports—people
are not very aware of their own NVC

Example of Facial Action Measurement

- On the left: A smile with activation of the cheek raiser (orbicularis oculi) muscle



Polling Question #1

Which face looks more like true enjoyment?

- 1- Face on the left
- 2- Face on the right



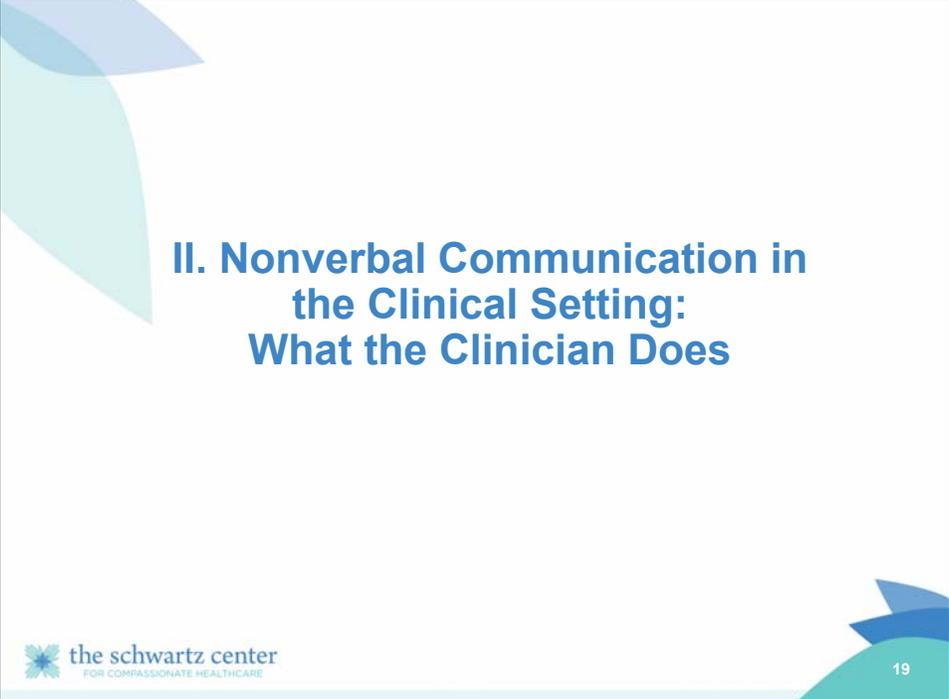
Building Your Nonverbal Skills

Intuitively, everyone knows that nonverbal communication matters

But in practice, it's hard to monitor, control, and notice your own and others' cues

PRACTICE is the key

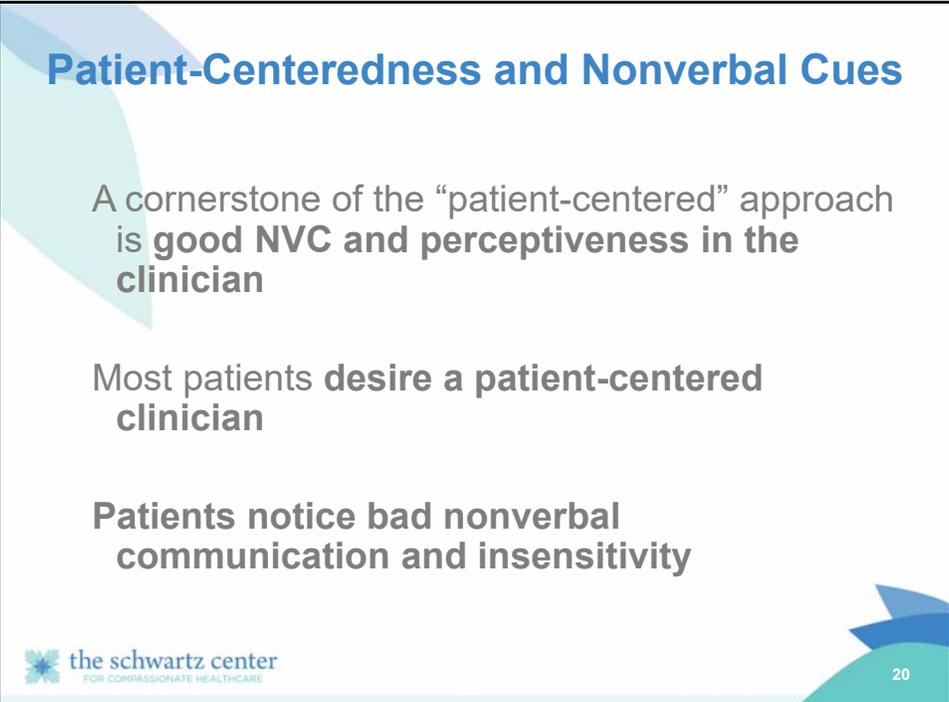
Knowing the research can help



II. Nonverbal Communication in the Clinical Setting: What the Clinician Does

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

19



Patient-Centeredness and Nonverbal Cues

A cornerstone of the “patient-centered” approach is **good NVC and perceptiveness in the clinician**

Most patients **desire a patient-centered clinician**

Patients notice bad nonverbal communication and insensitivity

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

20

Functions of NVC in Clinical Interactions

Conveying and detecting **emotions**

Close observation of NVC contributes to good **diagnosis**—physical and mental

Signaling **good listening** (nod, gaze, listener responses—mmm, uh-huh)

Building **rapport**

You Are In It Together

- **BOTH** clinicians and patients have emotions, attitudes, and expectations
- **BOTH** clinicians and patients convey and judge each other's nonverbal cues
- Often, they **reciprocate** each other's NVC (emotional tone, interruptions, gazing)

Nonverbal “Immediacy”

Certain nonverbal cues convey warmth, approach, and interest:

Nodding, smiling, direct gaze, forward lean, closer and more direct interaction, expressive voice, touch

These promote good relationships, the perception of being liked, attended to, cared for—also they lead to reciprocal behavior in patient, promote learning, reduce anxiety

Nonverbal “Immediacy”



Context is Everything

There is **no cookbook** for how much, and when, to do these things

There is **no dictionary** of exact meanings of nonverbal cues

Every behavior can be used too much, or too little, or at the wrong times

Clinicians Differ in Style

You must adopt a behavioral repertoire that **matches your individual personality**

Less of one behavior can be **compensated** for by more of another

What Does Nonverbal Communication Predict?

Looking at the patient predicts:

More patient talk and more disclosure of health problems, especially psychosocial problems

More awareness of the patient's problems and more accuracy at identifying distressed patients

What Does Nonverbal Communication Predict?

Patient satisfaction is predicted by:

More physician vocal and facial expressiveness, more forward lean, nodding, gestures, closer distance, more gazing at the patient

Clinician NVC also predicts **impressions of empathy** and even of **competence**

What Does Nonverbal Communication Predict?

Lack of smiling and gazing

Physical therapy patients' declines in physical and cognitive function

Dominant voice tone

More likelihood of surgeons getting sued

What Does Nonverbal Communication Predict?

Gender matters in predictions:

When either or both physician and patient are **male**, more interruptions predict **LESS satisfaction**

But when both are **female**, more interruptions predict **MORE satisfaction**

Gender and NVC

Female physicians (and/or women in general)

More warm NVC (smiling, nod, responsive)
Listening behaviors ('mmm,' 'uh-huh')
Closer physical distances, more direct orientation
More eye contact

III. The Clinician's Interpersonal Accuracy

Interpersonal Accuracy

Interpersonal accuracy refers to noticing and correctly interpreting cues that are conveyed by someone else

Much research shows that interpersonal accuracy is an **important skill** in life and in clinical settings

Interpersonal Accuracy

It is a **measurable skill**– validated tests exist for measuring accurate perception



Irritated, worried, sarcastic, or friendly?
(Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test)

Interpersonal Accuracy

Despondent, relieved, excited, or shy?



Polling Question #2

What is the expression conveying?

- 1-Playful
- 2-Comforting
- 3-Irritated
- 4-Bored



Interpersonal Accuracy

People **vary** in the skill of “reading” others’ emotions or other qualities

Clinicians do not stand out as unusually gifted in “reading” people accurately

Correlates of Interpersonal Accuracy

People who are more accurate in interpreting others’ cues:

- Have more satisfying personal relationships
- Are more altruistic and empathic
- Are more effective in workplaces
- Teach, lead, persuade, and negotiate better

Clinicians' Interpersonal Accuracy

Clinical psychologists in training who are more accurate in interpreting others' cues:

Earn higher clinical effectiveness ratings by supervisors

Clinicians' Interpersonal Accuracy

Physicians who are more accurate in interpreting others' cues:

Get higher satisfaction ratings from patients
Their patients adhere better to appointment schedules

Clinicians' Interpersonal Accuracy

Medical students who are more accurate at interpreting others' cues:

Were rated by standardized patients as having better interpersonal skills

Clinicians' Interpersonal Accuracy

Medical students who are more accurate at interpreting others' cues:

Were rated by observers as exhibiting more rapport in visits with standardized patients

Clinicians' Interpersonal Accuracy

- **Physicians who are more accurate at interpreting others' cues:**
 - Are more successful at adapting their communication style to the interactional preferences of the patient (physician-centered vs. patient-centered preference)

Clinicians' Interpersonal Accuracy

Physicians who are more accurate at interpreting others' cues:

Are more likely to be female

Training to Improve Accuracy

Short-term training **increases accuracy** of interpersonal perception

Practice with feedback and discussion are the most effective elements in training

Conclusions

Nonverbal communication is **important** in clinical interactions

There is an **evidence base** for this conclusion

Clinicians can work to **improve their NVC** through practicing their awareness of other's cues



IV: Tips to Help Your NVC



 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

47



Tips

Remind yourself to **monitor your own NVC**



 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

48

Tips

Maximize “**immediacy**” when this is appropriate

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

49

Tips

Get in the habit of **monitoring your own NVC** and how it might be impacting the patient

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

50

Tips

Practice **close observation of others' cues**: try to judge the nonverbal and verbal messages separately as a good observational discipline

 51

Tips

Don't assume you know what the other's NVC means: **when unsure, ASK**

 52

Tips

Ask for **feedback** on your own NVC



53

Questions



Judith A. Hall
University Distinguished
Professor of Psychology
Northeastern University



Beth Lown, MD
Medical Director
The Schwartz Center for Compassionate
Healthcare



54



Upcoming Webinars

**ACTIVE LISTENING: LOST ART
OR LEARNABLE SKILL?"**

Abraham Fuks, MD, professor, Department of Medicine,
Pathology and Oncology, McGill University
April 19, 2016

*Visit theschwartzcenter.org for more details or to register for
a future session. Look for our webinar email invitations
and share them with your friends!*

 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

55



 the schwartz center
FOR COMPASSIONATE HEALTHCARE

**Thank you for participating
in today's session.**

**Please take a moment to complete the
electronic survey upon exiting today's program.**