**International Body Language: A Language with No Words**

By Anne Merritt

**A. Gestures**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Gestures** | **Meaning** | **Place** |
| **1. Thumbs up**  **2. Tapping finger to temple**  **3. Nodding head up and down**  **4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  "Yes"  "No"  "Yes"  "No"  Rude behavior in a professional setting | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  America  Russia  In America  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Bulgaria, Albania  Turkey  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**B. Silence**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Place | **Silence is seen as …** |
| 1. Western cultures (North America + UK)  2. China  3. Japan | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  (for women) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

To people from cultures in which silence is not viewed negatively, someone who fills the silence and dominates a conversation is seen as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**C. Touch**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contact level | Meaning/Description | Places |
| **1. Low-contact cultures**  **2. High-contact cultures** | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

Rules for contact

1. Men hold hands, kiss in greeting other men, not with women in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. South Korea b. Laos or Thailand c. Arab countries

2. You shouldn't touch someone's head in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. South Korea b. Laos or Thailand c. Arab countries

3. Elders can touch a younger person forcefully when trying to get through a crowd in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. South Korea b. Laos or Thailand c. Arab countries

Misunderstandings:

4. When interacting, someone from a high-contact culture might see someone from a low-contact culture as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. pushy and inappropriate

b. cold and distant

5. Reversely, someone from a low-contact culture might be surprised by the hug or kiss of someone from a high-contact culture and view them as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. unfriendly and closed

b. too friendly and violating personal space

**D.** **Eye-contact**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Level | **A sign of …** | Place |
| **1. Unbroken, frequent eye contact**  **2. Lack of eye contact** | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Respect for bosses and elders | Western / Middle Eastern countries  Asian, African, Latin American countries  Western / Middle Eastern countries  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**ANSWER KEY**

**A - Gestures**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Gesture** | **Meaning** | **Place** |
| 1. Thumbs up  2. Tapping finger to temple  3. Nodding head up and down  4. Shaking head (left-right)  5. Nodding head up and back  6. Using a lot of hand gestures | Middle finger = bad  Shows memory  insanity  "Yes"  "No"  "Yes"  "No"  Rude behavior in a professional setting | Greece and Sardinia  America  Russia  In America  Bulgaria, Albania  Bulgaria, Albania  Turkey  East Asia |

**B - Silence**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Place | **Silence** is seen as … |
| 1. Western cultures (North America + UK)  2. China  3. Japan | problematic/uncomfortable/sign up disinterest  positive/shows agreement/receptiveness  (for women) feminine |

People from cultures in which silence is not viewed negatively, someone who fills the silence is seen as \_\_\_\_pushy or arrogant\_\_\_\_ .

**C - Touch**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contact level | Meaning/Description | Places |
| 1. Low-contact cultures  2. High-contact cultures | very little physical touch in daily interactions  touch is big part of socializing | Britain, Northern Europe, Far East  Middle East, Latin America, Southern Europe |

**Rules for contact**

1. Men hold hands, kiss in greeting other men, not with women in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. South Korea b. Laos or Thailand c. Arab countries

2. You shouldn't touch someone's head in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

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**Misunderstandings:**

4. When interacting, someone from a high-contact culture might see someone from a low-contact culture as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. pushy and inappropriate

b. cold and distant

5. Reversely, someone from a low-contact culture might be surprised by the hug or kiss of someone from a high-contact culture and view them as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

a. unfriendly and closed

b. too friendly and violating personal space

**D - Eye-contact**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Level | A sign of … | Place |
| 1. Unbroken, frequent eye contact  2. Lack of eye contact | confidence, attentiveness  aggressiveness and confrontation  boredom or dishonesty  Respect for bosses and elders | Western / Middle Eastern countries  Asian, African, Latin American countries  Western / Middle Eastern countries  Asian, African, Latin American countries |