

More on managing body language

By [Melissa Shaw](#)

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Last time, we covered some of the basic body language mistakes managers make when it comes to space and territory. Today, body language expert Patti Wood offers advice on how your voice and posture contribute to the signals you send.

In addition to physical space violations, managers can also invade a person's auditory space, Wood says. The subject is called para-language, which covers a person's voice tone, speaking rate and volume level.

Wood says she sees many people sent to body language training because they're yelling or raising their voice, and they don't even realize it.

"It invades somebody's space," she says. "Again their perception is they think they're being firm or managerial when it's seen as an attack or an assault on a person."

On the other hand, sometimes managers go too far the other way and are not powerful or assertive enough. Pay attention to your para-language and see if what you think you're projecting is what is actually being projected.

Another indicator of power is whether your body is relaxed or tense. Sometimes you'll see managers seated with their feet propped up on their desk, arms relaxed or behind their head. While managers may think they're projecting a relaxed image, Wood says the body posture takes up a tremendous amount of space projecting a very dominant image, like a lion sprawled out in a jungle. The posture is dominant because it is not one a visitor can match.

"The perception is showing how relaxed I am, but they're showing 'I am dominant,'" Wood says.

Another space-related tip: "If you really want an employee to talk, to really share with you, you need to talk to them in their space or in private, neutral space and sit side by side." Wood says. "Don't call people into your office."

Wood says this is an especially good practice if you're managing a new team or you want to improve the relationship with an employee.

"Men are more likely to self disclose to other men when they're sitting side by side," she notes. "Also it can take care of some of the inequities with Generation X and other generations."

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