

EMOTIONS

Suggestions of How to Recognize Nonverbal Evidence

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TO KEEP IN MIND

1. A person may not show their emotions in a way that is easy to **interpret**. Sometimes they are not very verbal or nonverbal, their body is not very demonstrative, or they may not know or be able to easily express their emotions.
2. Because a person may have difficulty experiencing emotion and to think or process information at the **same time**, it is important to address and respond to a person's emotions first, before trying to make a request or give instructions. Help a person feel comfortable and understood. When a person is **calm and relaxed**, they are more likely to see and hear more accurately and to understand and respond more easily to what you are saying or doing.
3. It is important to constantly **observe** and **listen** to a person so you can spot the first signs of distress, confusion, irritation, or anxiety. Then you can **immediately adapt** the way you are interacting, the environment, or the task to help this person feel more relaxed and comfortable.
4. This handout gives suggestions on **where to look** and **what to look for** or **notice**, to help discern what a person is feeling. Many times emotional reactions are subtle and minimal. So careful observation and attention is necessary. Avoid looking away when you are talking to a person, so you don't miss an important small sign of emotional distress that has potential for becoming a much greater expression of frustration or anger, such as a hit or kick.
5. More details and specifics are available in other **CAIS Handouts** and in the *Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Questions to Ask* and *CAIS: Intervention Strategies* especially in the **Communication** part and the **Cognition** part of the CAIS by S. Weaverdyck on the Improving MI Practices website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

SUGGESTIONS OF QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. How does this person sound?

- A. What is this person saying?
 - a. Words
 - b. Vocalizations
- B. How is this person saying it?
 - a. Pace/Speed of sound
 - Rushed, moderately paced, slow
 - Pauses or hesitations
 - Delays in response to stimuli
 - b. Volume
 - c. Pitch
 - d. Repetition
- C. Are there changes in content and style of speech or sound delivery?
 - a. When spontaneous
 - b. When in response to stimuli

2. How does this person look?

- A. Body movement (if parts of their body are rigid, movements may be subtle) Is this person:
 - a. Pulling away
 - b. Tensing
 - c. Jerking
 - d. Relaxing
 - e. Moving with purpose or focus

- B. Face
 - a. Eyebrows (knit, raised, relaxed)
 - b. Eyes (close, flutter, shift, dart, focus, stare vacantly)
 - c. Mouth (tightens, slackens, lifts)
 - d. Jaw or teeth (clenches, opens, relaxes)

- C. Shoulders (tense, jerk, relax, slump)

- D. Arms (tense, jerk, relax, move with purpose)
 - a. Hands (tense, jerk, relax, move with purpose)
 - b. Fingers (tense, fist, jerk, relax, move with purpose)

- E. Torso (tenses, pulls away, jerks, relaxes, moves with purpose)

- F. Legs (tense, jerk, relax, move with purpose)
 - a. Feet (tense, jerk, relax, move with purpose)
 - b. Toes (tense, curl, jerk, relax, move with purpose)

3. How might this person's past help clarify their feelings now?

- A. How has this person usually felt in the past (recent and remote)?
 - a. In general
 - b. About a particular stimulus or situation
 - c. Is there a significant difference between the past and current feelings?

- B. Has there been pain, trauma, or discomfort that might relate to the current feelings?
 - a. Emotional
 - b. Physical
 - c. Sexual

- C. How has this person coped with feelings and events in the past?
 - a. Are they using the same coping strategies now?

4. How does this person seem to be feeling now?

- A. Happy
- B. Content
- C. Giddy
- D. Sad
- E. Grieving
- F. Anxious
- G. Fearful
- H. Confused
- I. Angry
- J. Other