



For you, your career, and your life

Vol. VI No. 2

Resident Assistance Program Newsletter

July 2009

Flirting or Just Friendly? How to Tell the Difference

In the middle of an incredibly demanding schedule, a little flirtation can lighten the mood...right? After all, it happens between characters on TV hospital dramas week after week.

Yet crossing the line from friendliness to flirting can complicate work relationships, whether you're the person sending out flirtatious signals or the one receiving them. Here are tips that can help you recognize the difference between a friendly exchange and one that strays into less-than-professional territory.

What Is Your Body Language Saying?

Your body language can come across as flirting, even if you don't intend it that way. Tonya Reiman, Fox News contributor and author of *The Power of Body Language*, explains how nonverbal communication can convey messages we may not intend.

"Quite often, charismatic individuals innocently flirt without recognizing they are

doing it," says Reiman. "These individuals are usually the most attractive to us because they give off an aura of confidence."

There are ways to avoid sending out signals that could be interpreted as flirting, Reiman says. "When dealing with other professionals, maintain eye contact within the eye-nose triangle. Keep the eyes focused on the chin area and up. Any unnecessary eye contact which is held for more than a second or two is intense and can be felt literally across a room. A wandering eye over the body is a strong indicator of flirting. A tilt of the head with a prolonged smile can also be seen as flirtatious."



"It is your work in life that is the ultimate seduction."

— Pablo Picasso

Appropriate professional behavior means being aware of how we come across to others, maintaining appropriate boundaries and demonstrating respect. It can be difficult to learn the best ways to communicate with attending physicians, colleagues, staff, patients, friends and family. You may not always know when you've stepped over the line and offended someone with words or unspoken signals.

When you face challenges in any of your relationships and you need someone to help you sort things out, your Resident Assistance Program is here for you. We're your resource for improving your ability to excel as a physician and a leader.

Call us at 813-870-3344.

CONFIDENTIAL

Flirtation differs from friendliness in several ways, Reiman explains. "Flirtation cues tend to linger. Usually, flirting can be discerned by open posture, a movement into another's personal space, self touch or touching another—which connects with our primal instincts—and, of course, smiling."

"Listening to someone flirt is as critical to a situation as is seeing them flirt," Reiman continues. "If, for example, during a discussion, your conversant speaks slowly in a low sultry voice and perhaps ends on a rising note, you might recognize there is a level of interest."

Continued on next page



Money Matters

Be Wise About Your Money

When it comes to managing money, many of us can use a few lessons. When you're a busy medical resident, spending time in a classroom or seminar to learn about finances just isn't realistic. So do your learning in bite-sized portions, from your own computer.

MoneyWi\$e [www.money-wise.org], launched in 2008, is a series of free online financial education eLearning modules for consumers. The courses offer case studies, interactive tips and exercises along with a variety of resources based on the MoneyWi\$e financial education materials. They are available in English and Spanish.

MoneyWi\$e modules include:

Managing your money – How to set financial goals, create a budget, and handle credit responsibly.

Building good credit – Tips to build and maintain good credit, including how to calculate credit payments and monitor credit history.

Rebuilding credit – Tips to rebuild credit, including steps to take, making good credit choices and ordering a credit report.

Saving to build wealth – Learn about the importance of emergency savings accounts and retirement planning, budgets and setting financial goals.

Many publications in the MoneyWi\$e online library are also available in Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese and other languages. MoneyWi\$e is a joint financial education project of Consumer Action and Capital One.

Find additional free online resources, including articles, calculators, newsletters, e-seminars and glossary of financial terms in the Muniz and Associates' Learning Center [www.munizandassociates.com].

Julio C. Muniz, a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU). 813-258-0033

Flirting or Just Friendly? *continued*

So are there ways to use nonverbal communication to make sure communications stay on a professional level with colleagues, patients and others? Yes, says Reiman.

“The simplest way to neutralize flirting signals from others is to somewhat disengage yourself. Start by orienting your body slightly away from the individual. This sends a clear message that you are not sexually interested in them. In addition, it's imperative that you maintain an adequate amount of space between you and your conversant. Speaking to them in a direct manner, using less-animated facial expressions, will convey a stronger sense of professionalism.”

Resources:

The Power of Body Language: How to Succeed in Every Business and Social Encounter by Tonya Reiman (2007).

www.TonyaReiman.com

The Nonverbal Advantage: Secrets and Science of Body Language at Work by Carol Kinsey Goman, Ph.D. (2008).

www.NonverbalAdvantage.com

Professionalism Is for Everyone: Five Keys to Being a True Professional by James R. Ball (2007).

Body Language Affects Women's Professional Interactions

Carol Kinsey Goman, Ph.D., president of Kinsey Consulting Services, is an author, keynote speaker and seminar leader for corporations, associations and government agencies. She shares this story about one challenge women often face in the workplace.

An attractive female executive was having problems dealing with her male co-workers. “They never take me seriously,” she complained. “It's as if they think I'm flirting with them. I definitely am not!”

After watching her interact with various men, I saw the problem. She was trying to discuss work-related issues while using a “social gaze.”

Here's what I mean . . .

If you create an imaginary triangle, the base of which are the eyes and the apex is mid-forehead, you will have mapped out the “look of business.” When you keep your gaze in that area, you nonverbally signal a no-nonsense, business-like approach.

When you invert the triangle and move your focus to this area—from the eyes to the mouth—you turn your gaze into one more appropriate for social encounters. And a social gaze can be misinterpreted as flirtatious—even in a business setting.

Knowledge about the business gaze doesn't mean that you should never look in someone's social gaze area. (It can be highly effective to do so—using direct eye contact only when you want to underline important points.) But women need to be aware that to be taken seriously in business interactions, a business gaze has the most impact.