Kinoetics: Personal Body Language™
As Signs of Conflict

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Abstract: The work of Kinoetics™ reflects a relatively unexplored aspect of body language, that is the brief and frequent self-touching that occurs in response to internal cues. In these instances, touching oneself is usually a symbolic representation of what one is thinking and feeling about an internal experience of conflict. As many elements of the conflict are unconscious, the meaning is generally not understood by observers, and also is not even understood by the subject him/herself.

A critical factor contributing to the body language phenomenon is the underlying, subconscious disharmony or dissonance that results from an increased awareness of a contradictory, oppositional or unacceptable aspect of self within the individual.

Knowledge of the significance and symbolism of our Personal Body Language provides opportunity for the recognition of the presence of oppositional states/positions within oneself, and thus provides a window of opportunity for its resolution and integration.

Background
This work has evolved over the many years I have practiced psychiatry and observed the significance and symbolism of the unspoken language communicated by the body, so-called body-language. This nonverbal communication, "spoken" through facial expression, body motion and posture, often conveys more than the spoken word and is more honest than the spoken word. In fact, unless done consciously with the intention of deceiving others, body language is highly accurate and specific, as the "body doesn't lie".

My initial interest in this area began to develop in medical school when I became aware of the numerous studies showing the exquisite responsiveness of nervous system physiology to emotion. The knowledge that, for example, the lining of the stomach could "blush" or conversely could show pallor, similar to color changes in the face in response to emotion, gave me the awareness of how profoundly important all observable body changes are as clues to our mental state.

Personal Body Language (PBL)
Observing individuals in the privileged setting of psychotherapy, it became apparent that when specific areas of the head, face, chest, arms, and legs were spontaneously touched, as if to relieve discomfort, the movements generally – perhaps usually – had symbolic meaning. It also became apparent that this self-touching was a response to internal cues and was not meant for communication to others. In this sense, self-touching differs from gesturing or facial expressions, i.e., it is a personal dialogue with oneself. The hypothesis is that the conflict within oneself produces a sensation in the body, often barely perceptible to the conscious mind. One responds to the rising presence and awareness

of this sensation most often by bringing the hand automatically to the affected area.

The particular thought or memory of the conflict associated with PBL touching may or may not reach some level of conscious awareness, and yet unconsciously we “talk” to ourselves about it through our body touches and movements. Personal Body Language is both indicated by and defined by the context in which it occurs.

These personal observations of body motion, in the context of the subject matter and the associated expressed or implied emotion, prompted me to begin to decode the signs I repeatedly witnessed. I refer to these motions of self-touching as our Personal Body Language. The distinction between PBL and gestures, which are purposeful motions for communica-

tion, is readily seen in the Clinton /Gore contrast. While President Clinton is gesturing the message he wants others to get (perhaps, “my hands are clean of this matter,”) Vice President Gore is responding with a signal of PBL to an internal experience of conflict he has believing what is being said.

Over time, observation of repeated and recurring motions suggested specific symbolism for each kind of self-touching. The significance of Personal Body Language™ to the subject was then inferred from the context in which the motions occurred – that is, in the context of the subject’s thoughts, mood, facial expression, posture, and movements. Kinesiology was used to check, correct and modify those inferences. KINOETICS was chosen as the term for the study of the symbolism in PBL (Greek kin, to set in motion + noetics, the act of knowing), hence, the knowing or information that is inherent in our personal body language.

Use of the interpretive symbolism provides material for relevant questions with the intent of drawing out the unconscious elements in the individual’s internal story. This process markedly facilitates therapeutic interaction, and it was this noticeable efficacy in therapy early in my work that encouraged me to pursue this line of inquiry.
Conflict and Balance
The hypothesis of Kinoetics is that the conflict within oneself produces a sensation in the body, often barely perceptible to the conscious mind. One responds to the rising presence and awareness of this sensation most often by bringing the hand automatically to the affected area. The area may be touched, held, rubbed or scratched in response to a body sensation, which may vary from pronounced to a barely perceptible sensation. These motions appear to be random, but thoughtful observation will reveal their specificity. The subject will also note a feeling of relief as they touch their body.

Kinesiology will demonstrate the connection between the self-touching and an associated thought, memory, or feeling. This self-touching appears to be the same energetic phenomenon that we refer to as therapy localization, the difference being that the subject him- or herself is doing the localizing spontaneously without prompting from someone else. The clear impression is that the subject is attempting to regain balance by bringing energy to that site where a deficiency is felt, related to the conflict in the thought field. The most dramatic example of this, as shown in the next two photos, is this hand brought to the forehead when the stressor is near overwhelming. Here, overwhelming stimuli – traumatic thoughts, memories, or feelings – cause this spontaneous response to conflict in an attempt to regain internal hemispheric balance.

The Essence of Conflict
As we know from science, the universe consists of opposites, and the fundamental detectable factor is charge — i.e., positive and negative charge, creating the forces of attraction and repulsion. In science, the word dynamics is used to refer to the principles of the driving forces acting in any field. In biology, attraction and repulsion are observed as the fundamental dynamic of approach-avoidance. In psychology, we speak of these same forces in terms of motivation and behavior.

Conflict, then, is the push/pull sensation that arises when one wishes to approach and avoid at the same time. (Approach/avoid conflicts are the most challenging. Approach/approach and avoid/avoid conflicts are usually less so; each of these have elements of their opposite, although it may not be immediately apparent.) As conflict is inherent in the approach-avoidance mechanism, it is an inherent part of higher animal and human life, alerting the subject of the need to change direction or modify behavior, i.e., to make a choice.

Conflict and Brain Function
One of the great discoveries in science was that of the different functions of the sides of the brain, and of the corresponding differences of the contra-lateral side of the body. Sperry, whose pioneering work in separating the hemispheres by severing the connecting corpus callosum earned him the Nobel prize in medicine, noted that the most striking feature of this procedure was the observation that following surgery each patient demonstrated evidence of two separate spheres of consciousness. This included not only different functional capabilities, indicating differences in hemispheric organization, but different orientations, consistent with the concepts of masculine and feminine traits and values.

The great quarterback Dan Marino reacts after a big loss in an important playoff game. He retired soon after.

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright confers with top brass and aides about Bosnia, a conflict that seemed to have no resolution.
Bogen, the neurosurgeon who did the original split brain surgery on humans, was particularly struck by the changes in awareness of the sides, and the occasional assault of one side toward the other. He called this phenomenon of apparently spontaneous and unprovoked attack of one side on the self (e.g., one hand is on the steering wheel, and the other hand grabs the driving hand and attempts to drive the car off the road) the Alien Hand Syndrome, later adding that the term Disconnection Syndrome was more descriptive.

As we have come to understand the fundamental differences in orientation between left and right hemispheres, i.e.,
- Freedom vs. Fullness
- Autonomy vs. Relationship
- Time vs. Space
- Word vs. Image
- Rational vs. Intuitive
- Culture vs. Nature

One at a time vs. All at Once Input, we have a basis for understanding how disparate beliefs and values are commonly held in opposition by the two sides of the body. This sidedness is commonly expressed when we find ourselves either ambivalent or contradictory, and having stated a viewpoint, go on to say, "...on the other hand", at which point a divergent position is offered, which may afford an alternative, but just as frequently presents the elements of conflict.

For example:
Question: "How are you?"
Answer: "Fine, I am feeling well being on vacation... on the other hand, I am feeling antsy as I am about to move in a week and am dragging my feet in finishing all my projects."

The value of hemispheric differences combined with the integrative ability of the brain is so remarkable that the "disagreements" about values and priorities between the sides has been given little attention until recent years. That is, unless we consider that the right brain has greater access to the unconscious, in which case depth therapy has been exploring these disagreements for about a century as it has attempted to uncover the repressed material preventing the resolution of conflict.

The evidence that the "either/or" challenge in making a choice between values is the principle source of conflict within oneself is based on different observations, both instrumental and experiential. Each day we note the variations of our own "sided-ness," that is, of our own "on the other hand" thoughts, feelings and inclinations. This is the most immediately impressive and least expensive "test" we can employ, and it is easily checked with kinesiology.

PBL Signals & Their Significance
In Kinaesthetics, the areas of the body have the symbolism that one would expect to derive from structure/function relationships. The way that one can infer that these touches are symbolic is to notice where the person touches, observe the structure of the site and its function; and then seek the symbolism of the touch. Thus, the context — the mood, facial expression, tone of voice, body posture, and the subject matter — and the structure/function relationships of the site touched provide the material for drawing the inferences about the inherent symbolism of the PBL signal.

Self-touching, at the moment it occurs, provides a window of opportunity to become aware of elements of an issue in our psyche which we could not consciously perceive previously. At that moment, the unconscious material is attempting to break through and the force of the defense mechanism of repression is reduced in power. It is then that an opportunity for moving past self-deception (false self) and accessing increased truthfulness (the real self) presents itself.
HEAD AND FACE

1) Touches to the head, including the forehead usually indicate something about the person’s thoughts or mental activity. Some examples follow:

   1] A hand at the front center of the scalp indicates a block to receptivity generally, while...

   2] If the hand is further back over the top and center of the head, or the hand is run through the hair in a stroking manner, there is an issue particularly about receptivity to spiritual help and/or a block to receiving guidance.

   3] If fingers go to the forehead and rub, it seems that a thought is trying to come through.

   If the fingers go to the scalp above the hairline either side of top center, it usually indicates the presence of a hidden “terrible thought” that is being resisted.

EYE, EAR AND MOUTH

Touching the sensory organs of eye or ear indicates conflict about seeing or hearing (an unacceptable thought), while touching the mouth is not only about speaking, but also about position, i.e., conflict about the speaker’s social status.

   1) Rubbing an eye, or both eyes, indicates sadness about something that side of self does not want to see. It’s as if it is too much to see that thing, thought or memory.

   2) When a finger is placed alongside a nostril, it represents disagreement, with deception, of others or of one’s own self.

   Touching both sides of the noses indicates a “double” disagreement, always with oneself, and thus the presence of a double bind. Both sides of the individual are in conflict with no way out.

   3] Rubbing underneath the nose signifies an effort to be brave or courageous, like a child trying not to cry and rubbing away sniffles.

   4] After the 1998 mid-term elections and the controversy surrounding the leadership and conduct, Newt Gingrich meets the press and announces that he is stepping down as the Speaker of the House. He seems to be indicating that there is something he does not want to see or feel.

   5] Covering the mouth during a press conference, NY Mayor Giuliani pauses (restrains himself as he debates what to say) to determine how much of his mind to speak about the unpleasant circumstances of the shooting death of a man by city police.
TRUNK
When the hand is brought to the trunk, it invariably covers an organ, and by doing so, brings attention to the emotion, expressed or unexpressed, relating to that organ.

1] A hand placed over the lung area may be indicating sadness or grief, felt or unexpressed. If the hand is up on the shoulder, guilt is likely to be present;

2] A hand placed over the heart may indicate that there is a loss of a heart connection, that fear is spoiling joy, or that one is harboring hatred.

3] A hand higher up the midline of the torso, placed over the thymus, might indicate there is feeling of being attacked, an inability to defend self, or a sense of personal deficiency (frequently with envy).

LIMBS
The limbs have straightforward symbolism, as suggested by their muscular activity.

1] When the lateral thigh is touched or stroked from mid-thigh toward the knee, the motion refers to change that is difficult, that is, i.e., the ability to change directions is impaired.

Touching the back of the thigh may refer to not being able to carry on – often feeling the weight of a burden, particularly one laden with heavy emotion, as grief or excessive responsibility.

2] Touching the deltoid area usually refers to an unwillingness to do, or participate, or disclose – i.e., not willing to do something voluntarily.

Touching the back of the deltoid also signifies unwillingness, but in the sense of holding something back – as if the arm were extended backward to withhold, restrain, or protect.

3] Placing one hand into the other seems to refer directly to the male/female relationship, one side placing itself in the care of the other side, asking for support.

5] Touching the knee refers to a conflict about submission to authority, ranging from mild (e.g., deferring to an opinion) to extreme, as total submission and feeling no choice.

4] Touching the inside of the knee may indicate a lack of ability to support authority, perhaps feels “not up to the task.”
Psycho-Dynamic Kinesiology
The method of psychological kinesiology that I developed and employ in my professional practice, Psycho-Dynamic Kinesiology (PDK), focuses on basic concepts borrowed from psychodynamic psychotherapy. Ultimately, in seeking an individual’s psychodynamics, one seeks core issues that are part of the individual’s assumptive world; i.e., those assumptions that were made following life experiences and which ultimately shape one’s values, beliefs, and attitudes, motives, and behavior.

PDK, aided by Kinoetics, facilitates an increased awareness of the assumptions and thus of the reactive positions that evolved in an individual, as well as the associated physical sites in which conflict manifests in the body. Additionally, one can determine which side of the body, and presumably the contra-lateral brain, is particularly affected/avoidant due to earlier experiences. Thus, the contradictory positions on an issue, between our sides, our masculine/feminine orientations, can be clarified.

Any time we touch ourselves, it highlights an area of self-deception that is trying to break through. In this PDK process, it is interesting to observe how individuals signal conflict at an increased rate as the substantive issues become apparent or, as one might say, the core issues and thematic considerations are accessed.

Conflict Resolution
The universe functions as one because of the balance and integration of opposites. The state of wholeness that results from the balancing of opposites, or the integration of opposites, defines the potential for healing.

A useful distinction between the concepts “cured” and “healed” has been made, resulting in the premise that one may be cured but not healed, and also healed but not cured. Health practitioners ideally seek to promote healing.

In this sense, efforts to balance our polar opposites are an attempt at optimizing integration and promoting wholeness/healing.

Healing implies wholeness, and that a union of our disparate parts is achieved by the resolution of conflict.

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Dr. Linson is a psychiatrist in private practice and an educator, teaching his Kinoetics work to therapists and educating patients how to become well. His interest in the last decade has been on the manifestation of conflicting beliefs and values between the sides of self, in particular between right and left brain, and the masculine and feminine energies. Dr. Linson has just published his book, “Personal Body Language, Signs of Conflict.” He is in the process of making videos which demonstrate Personal Body Language™ and the techniques of Psycho-Dynamic Kinesiology and Integrative Therapy™.

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