



# Tips For Reading People

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

## Published

March 31st, 2011

When you are in business, it is very important that you are able to read people. This applies not only to your customers or clients but also to your staff. There are several things to pay attention to so that you understand what is truly going on with the other person:

1. Watch the body language - If someone is shaky or doesn't look you in the eye, you have a good clue that there is a problem. People who are worried or fearful will usually take on passive or agitated behaviours whereas those who are angry will usually assume an aggressive stance with glaring stares, red face and perhaps even clenched fists. Pay attention to what their body language is telling you.
2. Listen for the tone, volume and the words that are being used - A loud voice and threatening words are warnings that the other person is wanting something to be done. They may be demanding and talk using strong terms. They may interrupt and you will need to be careful so that you speak at the most appropriate time. On the other hand, some people are hesitant about stating what they need and you may have to coax them into telling you what they are thinking or feeling. The tone of voice, volume and words are all good indicators of the person's mood.
3. Consider patterns - If you have known someone for a while you might recognize specific patterns that they use. For example, they may be individuals who wait until their time with you is ending to tell you exactly what is on their mind. In my private practice, I have noticed for example, that clients often begin crying in the last ten minutes of the session. Some people who seem to be unreasonable when you first meet with them will calm down after a rant if they think that you have listened to them and want to help them. Past patterns are a good way to predict what the person might do or say next.
4. Ask good questions and focus on the response - When you deal with a situation in a direct manner and then carefully assess the replies you will likely be able to develop understanding of the person's perspective. Be careful though in your assessment. One-word answers might be either hesitancy or disguised anger.

All of the above strategies could give you insight into the other person's mood and interests. There are times, however, that you might need to use all of them in order to truly read the other person.

As you practice using these strategies you will find that, over time, you will become very good at reading other people, In fact, others will likely watch and wonder how you do it!