"Reading" my date [1]

Dear Alice,

I really liked my first blind date and thought we had much in common (even backgammon). He, however, was hard to read. Parting, he said, "Really enjoyed meeting you, hope we talk again soon." But his body language and lack of follow up hollered, "Don't bother me again, you fool."

Which to believe: Words or deeds?

Answer

Dear Which to believe: Words or deeds?,

Actions can sometimes speak louder than words. But, unlike words, there's not really a dictionary where you can look up the meaning of a person's body language. It can be difficult to infer a person's message solely on body language, especially when you don't know the person well. Do you think there's a chance that you misunderstood your blind date's nonverbals? It may be that he felt nervous or he has a different cultural background. Because this was just a first date? and a blind date, at that! ? it may be wise to resist the urge to read too much into his body language. While body language is definitely a form of communication, you may consider talking to him about how he felt about the date, or ask him if he's interested in going on a second one. Verbal communication may help you set the record straight about his true feelings and intentions.

As you replay the date in your head, what were the actions or body language that made you think he isn't interested? The following lists outline some examples of positive and negative body language in romantic situations. It's worth noting that the scientific understanding of romantic body language has mostly come from research among heterosexual couples, so these lists may not fully represent all forms of body language. Nonetheless, these lists may help you think through your interpretation of your date:

Positive body language during a date

- Relaxed posture
- Leaning forward or minimizing the physical distance between the two of you
- Good eye contact
- A tilted head
- Making some physical contact (like grazing your hand or putting an arm around you)
- Listening intently to you during the conversation, reciprocating, and seeming interested in what you say
- A pleasant tone of voice, smiling, and relaxed laughter

**Negative body language during a date**

- Arms crossed throughout the date
- Constant yawning or other expressions of boredom (like glancing at a wristwatch)
- Infrequent or no eye contact
- Physically distancing her/himself
- Not making physical contact with you
- Seeming uninterested in anything you two are talking about
- A monotone voice, frown, or lack of laughter

Beyond behaviors or gestures that may indicate positive or negative emotions, he may also simply be exhibiting subconscious physical habits; these may not be a reaction to the date, rather they are habits unique to the person. For example, self-grooming (think: flipping hair, straightening a tie, smoothing out a shirt) is one common behavior when people are just trying to look their best. Similarly, being in a new environment, such as a blind date, can make a person nervous or self-conscious, which may lead them to bite their nails, tap their toe, fiddle with objects, or shift around in their seat. Finally, your date's cultural upbringing may also be playing a role. Some cultures tend to be more "expressive," where lots of eye contact, smiling, and open body positions indicate intimacy and interest; other cultures may be "reserved," where briefer eye contact and less physical touch indicate respect, interest, or reverence for a potential partner.

With these examples in mind, what do you think now? If you're still in the dark about whether your date was actually feelin' it, is a bundle of nerves, or is just not that into you, consider chatting with him about it! You might consider reaching out to set up a second date to see if the body language from the first date was a fluke. Or, you could send a message telling him that you enjoyed the date and want to know if he's interested in hanging out again. If you're still stumped, check out If he likes me, why won't he call? [2] among other Q&As in the Relating and Communicating [3] section of the Go Ask Alice! archives.

Dating can be frustrating and challenging at times, but if you're truly interested in finding a meaningful relationship, then it's worth the risk of the occasional angst in return for the rewards. The more you date, the more chances you'll have to find that special someone who will be interested in a second, third, fourth ? and maybe even hundredth! ? date. Keep on keepin' on!

Alice!
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