

Example of Dominant Body Language (Pictures)

The Power Moves | 18 July, 2017 | by Lucio Buffalmano

For a full overview of dominant body language check out:

- [How dominant men speak](#)
- [How dominant men move](#)
- [Alpha male body language](#)

This article is about a specific gesture, which I call the “ear cup, and it’s a specific example of dominant body language.

Without even touching anyone or saying a single word, it compels people to take action for you (and jump through your hoops).

But don’t worry: by the end of this article you will know how to respond when people try to use this body language of domination against you.

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The Story

I had just finished the most important elevator pitch of my life.

My audience were the top conference speakers, the movers and shakers of the industry.

To a startup sales guy, it’s dream scenario: get in, make friends and pitch the heavy hitters as an equal. Or so I thought.

The pitch was done. I ask my key question:

| **Me:** Could that be interesting for you?

And then I drop the mic.

The heavy hitters say nothing.

I say nothing.

Make your move

And then it comes.

| *“GTFO of Mount Olympus you mere mortal, you’re too beneath us”*

he says.

He doesn’t actually *say* it of course, but worse.

He slowly raises his hand instead, turns his face, grimaces a bit, and taps his ear.

Boom!

He had just used against me one of the most dominant body language move out there: the ear-cup.

The Less You Move, The More Dominant You Are

Social interactions have this tendency: the most powerful people make other people move, with less.

Think about, what's the most powerful sign of power? It's the "pollice verso", the idea that an ancient emperor decided upon life and death with a mere hand gesture.

Luckily we don't face similar scenarios often, but the concept is the same: the bigger the difference between the dominant gesture and your reaction, the bigger the social status difference.

And that's why the "Repeat Please" Ear Cup is such a dominant body language gesture: he puts a finger on his ear (low effort nonverbal), you repeat your whole spiel (high effort).

Here's a gangster movie example. Paulie's status as the big boss is conveyed (a bit theatrically) by the fact he doesn't move and doesn't talk.

And who's the one moving the most? The kid, the dead last in the social ladder.

And now let's get to the juicy part: how you react.

#1. Submit... At your own volition

Again on Paulie's intro, have you noticed how [one of the top guys](#) responds to Paulie?

He doesn't flash a quick grin, he doesn't nod a hundred times. He waits a second. And then he nods, slowly, thus mimicking Paulie himself. Paulie is the big boss of course, but he's no fifth wheel either.

This is a great way to submit at your own pace in all situations where you're not well served by throwing down the gauntlet -as in the conference opening story for example-.

So you take a second, as if to stress you're not rushing to obey anyone's order.

Then you smile a bit, as in saying "I know what you just did there" and slightly touch his arm. The touch, as a [dominant behavior](#), mitigates your actions.

You say "sorry" slowly ([very high rate of speech = low confidence](#)) and neutrally (there's a [relation between pitch and perceived confidence](#)).

And then you repeat. Shortly. And this time clearly ?.

#2. Hit Back

A good option is to reply something like:

You: Yeah, it's a a bit of complex topic, I know.

What you're doing here is implying that it's not you who wasn't clear, but that *he* didn't get it.

Touch his arm as you speak, lower your gaze for a moment and smile, your expression saying "*sorry, I overestimated you but you're actually a bit slow*".

And then look mostly at the rest of the group as you re-state: you are *not* following his lead, just using the opportunity to speak again.

#3: Recruit Friends

Don't bat alone when you got a pal.

You pause for a bit, then turn around to someone you're closer to in the group and ask:

You: Did you get an idea of what I mean?

If you phrase it that way and ask a friend, you'll likely get a yes. And you'll probably also get a summary of what you just said.

You confirm of course, and keep building on that.

Very leading move: you call into action someone, have him chime in following your lead and resume talking -and [speaking time has direct correlation to dominance](#)-.

You take lead, the Ear Cupping Power Mover takes the group's dumb@Ñ role.

#4: Ignore and forge ahead

And, of course, an evergreen, the [36th law of power](#): you ignore.

You almost always win when someone wants to get a rise out of you and you deftly ignore and move along.

You can either do nothing and wait for someone to jump in, or better still, take the lead: turn to someone else in the group and move the conversation along either pretending they got it, or changing conversation (and don't worry if nobody got your point, you can repeat to someone else, the key is you don't submit to the nonverbal Ear Cupping).

The Power Mover is left in the dust, his gesture completely spurned, while the group moved to a new topic under your leadership.

Wanna see an example? Look at Mayweather ignoring Conor McGregor (not too good) ear cupping move.

[Note Mayweather could have done even better by smiling a bit: too stiff looks fake and would look much worse in a more natural setting \(also note McGregor takes the final social win by turning first, getting the crowd cheering and Mayweather following suit, in a clear display of leader/follower scenario\).](#)

When The Ear-Cup is Friendly

Just as a note, the Ear Cupping gesture isn't always an unfriendly body language gesture.

Like most body language it can also be used to convey warmth, depending on the delivery.

You will easily recognize warmth because he/she will:

- Lean toward you
- Accompany the gesture with words
- Possibly lightly touch you to convey closeness
- Maybe add a smile

For your benefit, here's a [video example](#) of a friendly *non* dominant Ear Cupping.

Summary

The "repeat please" Ear Cupping gesture is a very dominant body language expression, that's why you'll often see [cops using it](#).

It's not a good sign when someone does it to you: it means the Power Mover feels so superior that he can

issue nonverbal commands and have you comply.

As always, your goal is to find the most socially shrewd way to *not* submit and, possibly, hit back in style.

So you:

- Imply the Power Mover is a bit slow
- Recruit someone else to isolate the Power Mover
- Ignore, forge ahead and change topic leaving the Power Mover in his dust

So long, onwards and upwards :),

Lucio

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