

Program: Body Position to Show Emotion

Many authors give good face to show emotion.
Raised eyebrow, rolled eyes, pursed lips, big grin...

But we need more of the body used for variety!

You can show more of a wealth of emotions and their depths! Sometimes more effectively.

Look at the following photos. What can you tell about the characters, their relationships, their feelings just by studying their body positions?

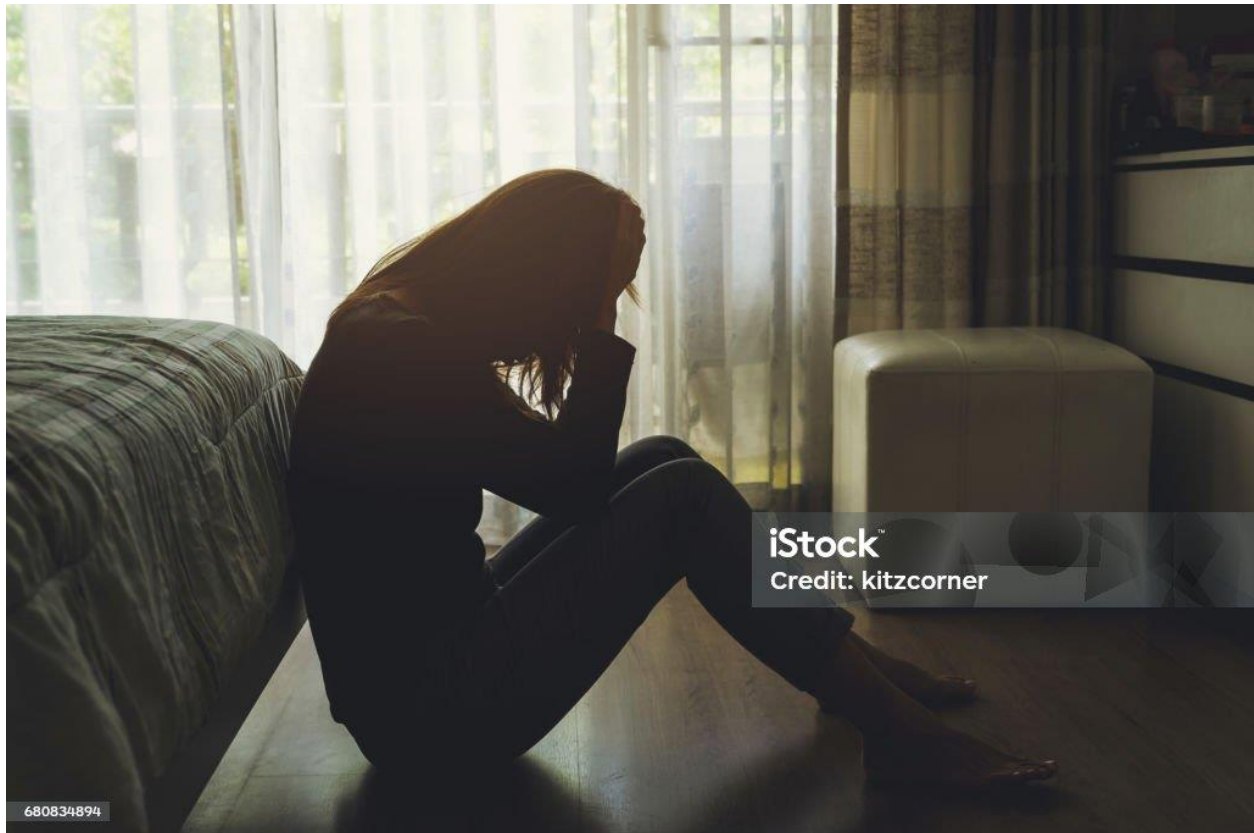
For the next part, try covering the faces of the people in the photos. Only look at their bodies.



How do you know these two are comfortable with each other? Their closeness? The casually crossed arms and the child's legs? The lean on the shoulder?



This is one people use a lot for memes. And it's obvious why. The male is positioned in the center, his body telegraphs his interest with the turn, the way he holds his head. And while the facial expression on the girl in blue's face makes her feelings clear, you can also see that she is close to the man, they're holding hands, and the arm reaching out to him shows she has an expectation that they share a committed relationship. Maybe not the same expectation is shared.



It was common to have the person slumped to show depression, but nearly always the person was holding up their head or resting it on something. It shows that their thoughts are too heavy to hold up. This common image of depression could be why it is sometimes missed in people who present as if they are happy or life of the party. Thinking about what people present outwardly versus their real feelings is a juxtaposition writers can use to build interesting characters.



And here you can see that showing the body position of the dog and the resting of its head clearly communicates something.

Reasons to use the body to show emotion.

1. Use it to show rather than tell.
2. Use it because more than 50% of human communication is non-verbal. (William says it actually 80%.)
3. Use it to show how your character's emotions affect their actions.
4. Use body language to add depth to dialogue.
5. Use all body language description in moderation. If overused, it can slow your story down.
6. Watch overuse of same positions!

SHOWING EMOTION: MOVING BEYOND THE FACE



Often when it comes to showing emotion, writers center on the face. But whole body description invites fresh writing, and more options. Show feelings by describing the character's...

Body posture (open or closed)

Shoulder position (back, low, caved, etc.)

Stance and bearing (confident, hesitant, intimidating, etc.)

Shielding (covering parts of the body)

Personal space preferences (leaning in or away, standing close or back)

Movements (rushed, jerky, slow, methodical, etc.)

Body tension or lack of (muscles either tight or relaxed)

Self-soothing gestures (touches to comfort when stressed)

Fiddling & touching (fingering jewelry, buttons, pulling at clothing, straightening hems, etc.)

Angle of the body (facing head on or slanted to present a smaller target)

Feet position (pointed toward or away from another person, an exit, etc.)

Need ideas on how to show what your character feels? Try One Stop for Writers' huge Emotion Thesaurus.

Ready to elevate your storytelling? Visit: www.onestopforwriters.com

On the following website is a helpful checklist that gives emotions and suggested movements to show them in writing. Worth a look!

<https://www.writerswrite.co.za/cheat-sheets-for-writing-body-language/>