

BRUCE DURHAM



Award Winning
Performance Psychology Specialist

READ THE ROOM

Master the **non-verbal**
cues, build trust and
respond with presence.

By Bruce Durham



INTRODUCTION

In every meeting, conversation or encounter, the **words you hear are only part of the message.**

THE UNSAID SIGNALS

- Posture
- Facial micro-expressions
- Gestures
- Energy in the space

often tell us more.

These ten tips will help you become fluent in reading the room and responding with purpose.

"You can notice what's unsaid and send signals that change outcomes"

BRUCE DURHAM

Award Winning
Performace Psychology Specialist



READ THE ROOM

TIP 1: **SCAN FOR BASELINE BEHAVIOUR**

Before diving into the conversation, observe how people normally sit, stand or interact. Then you'll notice when someone shifts, a change often signals something important.



TIP 2: **OBSERVE POSTURE SHIFTS**

When someone leans back, crosses arms, or turns their body away, it may indicate discomfort, defensiveness or disengagement. Conversely, forward-leaning or open arms often indicate interest or invitation.

TIP 3: **MONITOR EYE-CONTACT PATTERNS**

Consistent eye contact suggests engagement; fragmented or avoided eye contact may signal hesitation, discomfort or disharmony. Notice changes in who people look at.



TIP 4: **NOTICE MICRO-EXPRESSIONS**

A split-second flash of emotion (frustration, fear, scepticism) on someone's face can tell you a lot about how they're really feeling — even if they don't voice it.

READ THE ROOM

TIP 5: **PAY ATTENTION TO THE ENERGY**

Is the group quiet or noisy? Are people clustered or scattered? What's the general vibe? Groups tend to mirror the mood of their leader so your presence can shift that instantly.



TIP 6: **VOICE TONE, TEMPO & VOLUME**

Non-verbal cues aren't only body language. When someone speaks softly, slowly or hesitantly, their confidence or certainty may be low. A louder cadence or faster tempo may signal excitement or anxiety.

TIP 7: **TRACK SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Who stands/sits where? Who is excluded or on the fringe? Proximity and placement often reveal relationships: trust, alliance, conflict or alienation.



TIP 8: **TRUST-CUES vs WARNING-SIGNS**

Trust-cues might include open palms, relaxed shoulders, nodding. Warning-signs may include repeated fidgeting, closed body language, frequent glances at the door. Bruce's keynote "Read the Room" covers this explicitly.

READ THE ROOM

TIP 9: LEAD WITH YOUR BODY

Once you're tuned into the room, use your body language to guide it. Stand/sit with calm confidence, maintain a grounded posture, use open gestures, you're not just reading the room, you're influencing it.



TIP 10: DEBRIEF AND REFLECT

After the meeting or conversation, take a moment to ask: what cues did I pick up? What non-verbal signals were present? How did I respond? How could I respond better next time? This reflection builds your non-verbal fluency.



Bring This Into Your Leadership Practice

Developing non-verbal fluency isn't optional: it's a differentiator. If you want to turn high-stakes moments into reliable responses — one cue, one drill, one calm decision at a time — then these tips are your foundation.



WANT TO GO DEEPER?

Bruce Durham specialises in helping leaders and teams build presence, read the room and deliver under pressure. His programmes are built on the Think → Feel → Act framework.

Book Bruce for a keynote, workshop or tailored session today.
training@huddleculture.com