

Speaking in tongues

BODY LANGUAGE

Shani Raviv

I was told that my body language gives men the wrong impression. But I cannot remain impervious to such insinuations. Every woman has the right to stride with pride. Just because our bodies speak with self-awareness and confidence does not mean that we are sending out subliminal mating messages to mankind.

I have never known a friendly chat with a guy to mean that I wanted him to take me home for a night of pillow talk. And just because I smile at a guy does not mean that I want him to hold my hand while I give birth to our first child. How is a woman supposed to form platonic friendships with males in a world where we open our mouths and some guys think "blow job"?

Sure our body language talks — but it doesn't talk a foreign language! If my body spoke Japanese, you would think the guy was trying to decipher what it was saying in Albanian.

Whenever I strike up a friendly conversation with the opposite sex I think: just hold it dude — is there a translator in the house who speaks body language?

The other day a newspaper reporter stopped me in the street to interview me on my casual footwear. We struck up small talk about flip-flops. The next thing I knew, he was inviting me, to the house he was sitting, for a glass of wine by the fireside. How low can you go, picking up a woman on the pavement!

I am stunned by the arrogance of men who misconstrue our amicable, feminine charm as a come-on. At the same time, I am baffled by the testosterone-driven desperation that builds such conceitedness. I am often



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Photograph: Shani Raviv

tempted to ask, "At what point — exactly — in our petty conversation did you hear me say, 'let's get naked'?"

Because women know when guys are after one thing only. We can smell it in the air. Guys can be like bitches on heat and we get blamed for giving these dogs a boner. And like dogs, some guys need to be trained. Anything will do really, short of barking "down big boy" to the next man who misinterprets your good nature, lest he should latch on to the ambiguous connotations of such a command. But sometimes their panting and wagging

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happens so fast that we are caught completely off guard.

Last year I went with a male friend to pick up his metrosexual bachelor buddy from his apartment. He was the banking type with designer cufflinks, a bathroom torn from the pages of *House & Leisure* and an empty fridge, except for a tin of strawberry jam into which he inserted his finger and proceeded to lick it suggestively.

I deliberately turned my back, to his art work on the walls, as a decoy to his gross performance. Then he asked me out! All I could say was, "that's really abstract" and I was referring to the art. A day later I heard he had found a girl to shag with a name like Porsche.

Weeks later my male friend visited me and brought along his depressed buddy who had verbal diarrhoea and wore a white-collar shirt with

sweat-stained pits. This guy loafed on my couch and did nothing but criticise my technology: "Your TV is so small; your amps have no base."

My temperate demeanor was simply an attempt not to provoke such idiotic etiquette but instead he saw it as a window to my world. I discovered later that he wanted my number because apparently he thought I was "really nice".

Women can't win. If we're friendly, guys think we want to jump into bed with them. If we're not friendly, guys think we're cold-hearted bitches.

But this vibe that guys get off on is our spirit, our strength, the essence of a woman. And we do not need to explain our womanly ways of companionable socialising to men who use their dicks as radar. What we need is for men to trust that we will use our tongues — to speak our minds, not to tickle their fancy!