

# Four Opportunities

***Four viable opportunities allow investigators to detect when a person hides something, feels anxious, about a question, lies or, has knowledge of guilt***

Source: Extract from an article by Joe Navarro (M.A.) under the heading “Perspective - Detecting Deception” in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin dated August 2012

Link: <https://leb.fbi.gov/2012/august/perspective-detecting-deception>

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## **“When Asking**

The first opportunity to detect deception arises when the interrogator asks a question.

As the subject hears questions, the officer should look for behaviours that indicate restricted body movement (the freeze response, the first reaction to any threat), negative affect (chin withdrawal or compressed lips), or self-soothing (hand-on-body touching or massaging). A proficient (skilful) interviewer asks questions and observes without being intrusive, showing doubt, or displaying suspicion.

Investigators should look for any sign of discomfort, nervousness, or pacifying as they ask their questions.

## **While Processing**

(John Read refers to this as the “response latency stage”.)

Interviewers have a second chance to gauge for deception when the interviewee processes the question.

Some people quickly think things over, while others take their time. Regardless, the interviewer is looking for the effects of processing the question. For example, interrogators should watch for actions, such as the suspect repeating the question (a delay tactic, perhaps), seemingly troubled by the question, hesitating, or appearing to think deeply and carefully (sign of a cognitive load).

Other behaviours to note include interviewees suddenly locking their ankles around the legs of their chairs; looking straight ahead, frozen in their seats; or darting their eyes, looking for an answer. These observations are important because changes in behaviour or facial expressions mean adjustments in thinking, processing information, or feeling emotions. If a subject struggles with or appears troubled by a question, the interviewer needs to determine the reason.

## **When Answering**

The third occasion to assess for hidden information, deception, or guilty knowledge is when the interviewee answers the question.

The interrogator should note if the person gives the response with conviction, without hesitation, with an unwavering voice, or with confidence. Interviewers can watch to see if suspects respond passively, use a quiet voice, limit how much space they take up, or pacify themselves.

Other conduct by the subject might include answering with palms up (wishing to be believed) or palms down with fingers spread (dominant confidence display). They may reply with one shoulder slowly rising toward the ear, indicating weakness, doubt, insecurity, or lack of confidence. Their voices may crack, trail off, or change to a higher pitch, signifying important issues to explore. These tendencies indicate the need to look closer at the individual and determine why these behaviours exist.

### **After Responding**

Investigators have the fourth opportunity for assessment after the suspect answers a question.

At that point, a skilled interviewer will wait and watch for 2 to 4 seconds, creating a natural but pregnant pause to observe the interviewee.

A number of behaviours revealing knowledge or guilt may present themselves after a subject responds to a question. Suspects may move or shift around (wiggle), create distance (move the chair or lean away), conduct releasing breathing (long exhale), self-soothe (massage their shoulder or leg), wipe away sweat, or perform other actions to relieve the stress resulting from hearing, processing, and answering the question. These discomfort behaviours speak volumes to the investigator.

### **Additional Considerations**

After making the proper observations during these four phases, it proves useful to remember that speech errors, hesitation, lack of confidence, indicators of stress, and pacifiers in relation to a question merely suggest *some* cause. They indicate that a stimulus (the question) has created stress and that something is there to pursue, much as in a polygraph exam. Investigators must remember that stress indicators do not conclusively indicate deception. As one nonverbal communications expert has said, “Unfortunately, there is no Pinocchio effect” when it comes to deception.

Law enforcement officers must recognize the limits of lie detection. Deception can be identified only when all information is known, which usually is not the case. To guide them in their inquiries, investigators look for cues of discomfort or lack of confidence. If unknown issues or hidden information cause stress, interviewers must ask why. They should ascertain if the suspect is involved, lying, or not telling the entire story. Investigators should pursue all questions that indicate issues. A polygrapher cannot say definitively that persons have lied, only that they displayed indicators of stress when asked a question. Unfortunately, the same holds true for interviewers. That does not mean that interrogators stop asking questions. The interviewee’s discomfort or lack of confidence during questioning compels knowledgeable investigators to look further.

### **Conclusion**

Reliable indicators of deception presently may evade interviewers; however, law enforcement can look for signs in a suspect’s verbal and nonverbal language that may indicate issues or deception. Interviewees’ behaviours help investigators identify knowledge, guilt, deception, issues of concern, or concealed information. The author’s experience teaches that during questioning, interviewers have four viable opportunities to look for these clues - valuable indicators that professional interrogators can use to determine the truth. “

**Footnote:**

The contents of this article appears comparable to advice by the John Reid Institute that suggests that the only meaningful non-verbal behaviour during a structured interview is that which takes place during these four (4) phases.) And for that reason the interviewer should pay close attention to non-verbal indicators – focusing on these indicators to gauge why they were revealed.