



FACE to FACE



MICRO Facial Expressions of Emotion

The first time I saw a microfacial expression happened when I was sent to interview a boy who we thought was responsible for shooting up a warden's home. Information was that the Illinois CPO had a run-in with him a year back and he'd been doing a slow burn ever since. No one was hurt but the rainy night drive-by set off a multi agency investigation that took me to Ft. Hood Army Post near Austin, Texas.

The evidence was solid. He had enough time to drive from Texas back home, do the shooting, and get back by Monday morning roll call. We were concerned with the time line from the beginning. Many people, though, placed him in town on that day including the town cop. Key evidence also surfaced he trash-talked the officer for arresting him at a late night beer bash outside of town. He definitely had opportunity and motive.

John was brought into a well-lit interview room near the barracks and snapped to attention. "These officers are here from your hometown," the Sgt. barked. "They say you shot up a game warden's house back in Illinois."

That's when I saw it. It was subtle, only a slight brow rising and lips popping open. But it was there — *genuine* surprise with an added body quiver. Typical with micros, it was gone as fast as it emerged. But that quicker-than-an-eye blink flicker told me he was deliberately trying to suppress that particular emotion; desperately fighting *not* to act surprised. But it (the truth) leaked out in a micro moment. His reaction fit perfectly with the situational context as I earlier learned he wasn't supposed to react whatsoever while at attention. This included eye contact which he also violated triggering a swift "don't you look at me soldier" from the Sgt.

That unrehearsed blistering 1/15th of a second look completely changed my strategy on the spot. It was an early tip-off to his in-

stant mental state and told me I should be very careful. Don't get too pushy, let him talk, watch his face even more. Scrutinize but don't over analyze because it looks like he's probably more truthful than not. Of course the critical question was whether his stunned stare meant I'm caught or I'm being falsely accused. The follow-up interview quickly answered this.

It was true John did have a previous confrontation with our officer. He didn't like him and witnesses said he demeaned the warden to friends the day of the shooting, including talk of harming him. He definitely was a good suspect to the investigation team. Turns out it was all talk. We had the wrong guy. The actual shooter was caught a week later after admitting it to a friend then confessing to police.

The microexpression didn't by itself clear him. But spotting it saved considerable time. Time we



Facial expressions are not specific to a culture. They are displayed the same worldwide. These people from New Guinea show disgust, happy, sadness, and anger.

TATTLETALES



Burt Walters

When the officer said "I got em'," the witness acted completely surprised. After all, he'd only reported the suspicious activity a mere two hours earlier. It was a shot that first caught his attention at the state park. Seeing a young man hiding near the road with a turkey made him even more suspicious. When a white pickup screeched to a halt and the man jumped in with the bird, he made the call. Even though he got the license number, the citizen still figured he'd never hear another thing about it.

The case was tailor made for Burt Walters though, an 11-year veteran of Iowa DNR. This spunky warden is well known for

his low-key Andy Griffith approach to information gathering and his passion for marginal evidence cases. He knew this one was solvable by confession, just like the heart-wrenching sex and homicide cases he cracked his previous life as a city detective.

Burt is adamant especially with these kinds of cases, a thorough vetting of the witness is key. They must be interviewed delicately for an accurate recall.

"This case was made by re-winding the witness," Burt said referring to a pragmatic recall interviewing method. "If I would have taken his (the witness) initial information and said okay when he told me 'that's all I know', I would have never made the case."

Having the plate was a gift, but the warden caught himself smiling even more as he approached the suspect's (Jamie) door. Blood drops in the white

pickup; an uncased shotgun; spent shell still on the seat; an untagged turkey carcass near the door. So when Jamie described his hunt Burt didn't interrupt. He knew the value of making a suspect lock in his statement early only to spring his caught-in-a-lie trap later. "I didn't want to play my trump cards until I had to," said Walters.

Jamie said he killed the turkey at 9:00 a.m. somewhere other than the park and claimed he hadn't used the white truck. It was excessively short for a hunting story, only 21 words, so Burt had him tell it again from different perspectives. Sure enough, it prompted Jamie to change the kill site to the park but he was still nebulous.

These inconsistent statements (caused by delaying telling Jamie what he knew), detail problems combined with poor eye contact, voice pitch changes,



and heavy breathing told Burt he was likely lying. When the warden confronted him as they sat on the squad's tailgate, Jamie "dropped his head to his chest and was silent and I could see his neck pulsating he was so nervous."

Jamie halfheartedly told Burt he did lie but only about the time and location. When the turkey ran across the road he said he jumped out, chased it down, and

by Jeff Baile



Certified Forensic Interviewer

spent locating the real shooter not wasting it chasing an ultimate dead end.

I definitely wouldn't have seen it just a year earlier. Fortunately, I had recently been trained in practical face reading from Paul Ekman professor of psychology at The University of California, San Francisco. I learned that, with a little guidance, recognizing micros could be mastered easily. In less than an hour of Ekman's testing, I went from getting half correct to 100% accuracy. With-

out training, Dr. Ekman says most people will miss them because they're just too fast. "These expressions tend to be very extreme and very fast," says Ekman. "Eighty to 90 percent of people we tested don't see them."

My testing years ago involved videotaped subjects flashing emotions five times faster than a blink. Ekman has since updated and refined the procedure to include a CD-ROM set with more test variations.

Referred to as METT & SETT – Micro Expression Training Tool Subtle Expression Training Tool – these easy to use aids can help you learn to spot split second emotions in about an hour. Ekman has tested 10,000 people and found only about half are proficient at seeing them. After taking



Paul Ekman demonstrates the subtle difference between a polite (left) and genuine (right) smile. Notice how the eye muscles are engaged with a real smile.

shot it. Burt definitely wasn't impressed so he intentionally moved Jami from the tailgate to the hood. A strategic change of location often prompts people to reassess their position in this kind of situation. And it worked beautifully.

I've been doing this for a long time. About 90% of the people I deal with are good, 10% are poachers, Burt told him. I understand if someone makes a mistake and I think that I am a pretty good judge of character...unless I'm reading you wrong. I don't think you're a poacher, the worst thing you can do today is lie because then I have to believe you are a poacher. But you're not are you? With extreme eye contact, Burt played his cards. Jamie I know what happened. I just didn't decide to stop by today for no reason.

Jamie must have been on the edge because that did it. The turkey ran across the road all right

but it was his son who shot it. Jamie said he dropped him off for the retrieval then returned to pick him up. That's when they saw the witness looking at them. Jamie was protecting his 20-year old son because he didn't have a tag. Shooting from the truck isn't legal either. As usual both Jamie and his son, who was also ticketed, shook Burt's hand thanking him for the respectful treatment.

Burt maintains his case was solved in part because of Jamie's perception of the evidence. "He knew someone saw him but he didn't know what I knew. I think my confidence and demeanor played a part as well."

I can believe that. After all, wouldn't you rather tell the truth to Andy than Barney?

Submit your Tales directly to Mr. Baile with your name, agency, and photo if available.



There are 43 muscles in the face tethered to 7 emotions; anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happy, sad, and surprise. These emotional ticks come to the surface briefly as emotions first emerge. People don't realize though they have openly flashed their true emotions when they are consciously trying to hide them. A trained analyst can readily process these tiny muscle actions coming at speeds up to 1/32 of a second.

the test he says people easily score 80-85 percent.

Even test subjects, including schizophrenics, given only twenty minutes of training showed "substantial improvement." Interestingly, parents of autistic children – who often have a deficit seeing emotions in others – have also found the CD-ROMs useful. Both CD-ROMs cover the seven emo-

tions universally expressed around the world. Dr. Ekman also has an online self-administered training application.

Go to www.paulekman.com for more information on the CD-ROM set, other training products, research, and scientific publications on facial expressions and deception.



Contempt

Contempt is a special emotion discovered a bit later (1986) than the original 1960's studies by Paul Ekman. It is the only unilateral expression, a tightening and slight raising of only one lip corner. Other synonyms attached to this false smile are scorn, inferiority, worthlessness or the state of being dishonored. The contempt emotion and accompanying facial expression, is typically directed at an actual or perceived lower status person.

Bits of Communication

Certified Forensic Interviewer program going strong



The Certified Forensic Interviewer (CFI) designation continues to grow both in the United States and internationally. The CFI designation is obtained by examination and was developed under the supervision of both public and private representatives. Currently, there are about a thousand CFIs and over 400 different organizations represented from the public and private sectors. More information can be found on the website: www.certifiedinterviewer.com

Quarterly Quote

People make mistakes, that's why pencils have erasers - Montana warden Jason Snyder to an illegal sheep hunter

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