



# Body Language

Evelyn O. Shih

The incident I am about to share with you happened many years ago.

One evening, as I was signing autographs after lecturing, I noticed in the long line a young man about 20 years old. His hands were writhing and he was obviously very nervous. When his turn came to get an autograph, he mumbled timidly, "I didn't buy your book, I just want to shake your hand."

I stood up right away, gave him a hug, and said, "I am not only shaking your hand, I want to give you a hug also." He was so touched that he began crying over my shoulder. I patted his shuddering back and let him cry like a baby. Then the host came over to drag him away and seat him off to one side, as there were still so many people in line.

After I had finished my business, I went over to him, planning to give him a few minutes to tell me all his problems. Surprisingly, he smiled at me saying, "I'm OK now; I have no more problems!"

We were all surprised by his statement. I didn't know what to say at that moment, then, I asked him to write to me and I promised to pray for him. The young man never wrote to me, but I prayed for him often, praying that God would keep him safe from evil and guide him all throughout his life.

I still don't know his name. I just remember him as the unfortunate young man who cried over my

shoulder. Perhaps no one had hugged him before. This could be, not because there was no one to love him, only that, in our Chinese families, we are not willing to use physical contact, or "body language." As our children grow bigger, we restrain from touching them, especially the boys, and they never have a chance to cry over their parents' shoulders.

This young man did have problems. After I hugged him, his problems didn't disappear. Instead, they became trivial, because he had gotten a grandmother's hug. He felt important and happy now, so he had a different perspective on his problems. That's why he could say that he had no more problems.

As for me, I never planned the hug, especially since I didn't know that a hug could solve his problems so easily. If I had used the usual method of consulting him with words, I might have spent two days a week, for five weeks, with little or no effect. I was glad that I followed the urge of the Holy Spirit to give him that spontaneous hug.

Since that incident, I have learned more about the importance of physical contact, or body language. This is what happens when a couple can settle their spat with a kiss. Even a common shaking of hands can communicate feelings.

With this in mind, try to use your body language carefully, because you never know how you will affect others.

