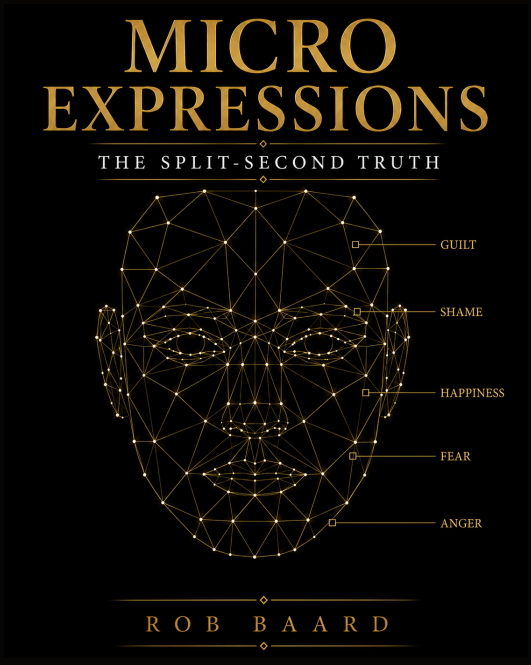
FREE COMPANION GUIDE · MICRO EXPRESSIONS

The 7 Micro-Signals Most People Miss

Reading the split-second truth — the tells that are hard to fake.



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THE DOCTRINE

Baseline. Cluster. Judgement.

The face tells the truth before the mouth does. For a fraction of a second, real emotion shows whether the person wants it to or not. That moment is what this book trains you to see.

But a single flash means little on its own. Reading a face means reading a whole person — their baseline, their situation, and the cluster of signals around that one moment. Chase a single tell and you will be wrong. Read the whole picture and you will be right far more often.

Three promises hold the book together: truth over tricks, context before conclusion, and honesty about limits. No expression is read alone. Baseline first. Cluster second. Judgement last.

> *The face opens the door. What lies behind it is still yours to find.*

The Seven Universal Signals

Seven emotions show on the face the same way in every part of the world. This guide walks each one — its true signature and the tell that is hard to fake. The full manual takes them through 35 chapters of science, case study, and field craft.

— **1. The True Smile** — happiness reaches the eyes, or it is a mask.
— **2. Sadness** — the inner brow lifts past the manners.
— **3. Fear** — the gathered brow that beats thought.
— **4. Anger** — the set jaw behind the calm voice.
— **5. Surprise** — the fastest flash — and what it turns into.
— **6. Disgust** — the wrinkled nose that leaks rejection.
— **7. Contempt** — the one-sided tell that warns.

SIGNAL 1 OF 7

The True Smile.

A smile that reaches the eyes.

A genuine smile of enjoyment uses two muscles, not one. The mouth corners lift — but so does the ring of muscle around the eye. It tightens on its own, raises the cheeks, narrows the eyes a little, and creases the skin at the outer corners, the lines people call crow's feet. When both fire together you are looking at a true smile, what researchers call a Duchenne smile.

How to tell a true smile from a mask

- The mouth can be worked at will — it is the polite smile, the photograph smile, the smile you give a stranger in a corridor.
- The eye-ring muscle, the orbicularis oculi, fires only with real enjoyment, and most people cannot switch it on deliberately.
- A social smile is the mouth without the eyes: lip corners up, cheeks flat, no crease at the outer corners.
- Timing gives it away too — a put-on smile snaps on too fast, sits too long, or arrives a beat late.

> *The mouth is a performance. The eyes are the truth.*

SIGNAL 2 OF 7

Sadness.

The inner brow is the tell.

Real sadness lifts the inner corners of the eyebrows up and together, often forming a small raised triangle in the middle of the forehead. The upper eyelids droop, the corners of the mouth pull down, and the whole face loses tone, as if it has grown heavier.

Why the brow gives it away

- The inner-brow lift — Action Unit 1 — is one of the most valuable signs in the whole book, because most people cannot make it on purpose.
- Ask an untrained person to produce it and the brow will not obey; when it appears on its own, you are almost always looking at genuine sadness.
- The brow beats the mouth every time — a person can hold the mouth steady and the voice level while the inner brow slips out.
- Sadness is one of the most covered feelings — hidden behind a word like fine — so it leaks more than almost any other emotion.

> *The inner brow is simply faster than the manners.*

SIGNAL 3 OF 7

Fear.

Brows raised and drawn together, with stretched lips.

In fear the eyebrows raise and pull together at the same time — a hard combination that gives the forehead a tense, gathered look. The upper eyelids lift so the eyes open wide, often with white above the iris, and the lips stretch back towards the ears, pulling the mouth wide and thin.

Why fear is honest

— Fear runs on the brain's fast route — the feeling is on the face before the part of you that would hide it has caught up.

— People can widen their eyes and raise their brows, but the true tense, gathered brow of fear is difficult to produce to order.

— It is the honest separator from surprise: curved brows and a loose, dropped jaw mean surprise; tense, drawn-together brows and stretched, tight lips mean fear.

— A steady voice with a flash of fear is a person working hard to seem unbothered by something that has bothered them a great deal.

> *Fear flags what matters.*

SIGNAL 4 OF 7

Anger.

Lowered, drawn-together brows over a hard stare.

The eyebrows lower and pull together, bringing the brow down hard over the eyes, often with vertical creases between them. The eyes take on a hard stare, and the lips press into a thin, tight line — or square off when the person is shouting — with tension through the jaw.

How controlled anger leaks

— Anger is held down more than any other feeling, because in most settings letting it out makes things worse.

— It leaks in the parts that are hard to control: the jaw sets, the lips press and lose their colour, the nostrils flare, the eyes narrow and fix.

— A calm voice over a set jaw and pressed lips is a warning — the person is angrier than they are letting on.

— Anger that appears suddenly on a blank, controlled face is the danger signal: a lot is being held down, and the control could give way.

> *A calm voice over a set jaw and pressed lips is a warning.*

SIGNAL 5 OF 7

Surprise.

Open and upward, with no tension.

The eyebrows raise high in a curved arch, the forehead lifts with horizontal lines, the eyes open wide with white above the iris, and the jaw drops so the mouth falls open, loose and relaxed. Everything about it is open and upward — and there is no tension, which is what separates it from fear.

Why faked surprise is easy to catch

- Surprise is the shortest emotion there is — by its nature it cannot last, so it is almost always a flash, even when nothing is hidden.
- Genuine surprise appears the instant the surprising thing happens and fades within about a second.
- Faked surprise gets the timing wrong: it arrives a beat late, and it is held too long, like a pose.
- The real skill is catching what surprise turns into — the second emotion it hands over to is the true reaction.

> *Surprise is just the door the real feeling comes through.*

SIGNAL 6 OF 7

Disgust.

A wrinkled nose and raised upper lip.

The nose wrinkles, pulling up and drawing lines along its sides. The upper lip raises, sometimes far enough to show the upper teeth, the cheeks push up, and the lower eyelids tense. It is the face you make at a bad smell — and it looks much the same whether the cause is a smell or a person you find distasteful.

Why the nose is the tell

- The same face appears for moral disgust, so it leaks when someone speaks politely about a person or idea they actually find repellent.
- The tell to trust is the nose — people arrange their mouths into polite shapes, but the small wrinkle at the top of the nose slips out on its own.
- Disgust is symmetrical — both sides of the face move — which separates it from one-sided contempt.
- It means the person wants distance from what they are looking at or hearing, and it often shows before the words admit it.

> *The nose slips out on its own, and it means the same whether the cause sits on a plate or stands across the room.*

SIGNAL 7 OF 7

Contempt.

One-sided — the only asymmetric emotion.

Contempt shows as one corner of the mouth tightening and pulling up and back, on one side of the face only. The lip corner may dimple slightly while the other side stays still. There is no brow movement, no nose wrinkle, no wide eyes — just the one-sided tightening at the corner of the mouth.

Why one-sidedness matters

- It is the only one of the seven that is asymmetric by design — every other expression is balanced, so one-sidedness is the fastest way to identify it.
- It flashes while the person is otherwise composed and speaking respectfully — the respect in the words is not matched by the feeling underneath.
- Disgust says this repels me; contempt says I am above this.
- Gottman found contempt the single strongest predictor of relationship breakdown — the most damaging of his Four Horsemen.

> *Anger can come from caring too much. Contempt comes from a loss of respect.*

THE COMPLETE MANUAL

Micro Expressions.

This guide gave you the seven signals. The full manual takes them through 35 chapters — the science from Darwin to Ekman, the brain behind the face, the fake smile, baselines and clusters, context and culture, reading intent before a strike, the interview room, and the ethics and limits of reading people.

Grounded in peer-reviewed research and a working life spent reading faces — not guesswork, not opinion dressed up as fact.

> *Baseline. Cluster. Judgement.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Rob Baard is a Bujinkan Ninjutsu Shihan and licensed Private Investigator with over thirty years of training. He studied directly under Grandmaster Masaaki Hatsumi in Japan. His documentary on the tradition was screened by invitation at the Togakushi Ninja Mountain ceremony and is now permanently exhibited at the Togakushi Ninja Museum, Japan.

Micro Expressions — The Split-Second Truth is his book on reading faces and micro-expressions, a companion to his Training & Tactics series.

GET THE BOOKS

The Rob Baard Library.

Micro Expressions trains the eye to read what a face gives away in the moment it shows. It sits alongside the Training & Tactics series — each book a complete reference, and together a working education in reading people and protecting yourself.

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