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Robert Rail, Varro Press

*Carrying contraband or carrying something hazardous to public safety will be different than how a person carries routine items or packages. The differences we look for are very clear and very obvious once you know what they are.*

**Can you match what you read with the photos that follow...**

## **PACKAGES & GESTURES**

Packages - we see them around us every day. Some large, some small, different colors, different shapes and sizes, from the beginning of our day to the end of our day we see them around us constantly. Often, we try to determine what's in these packages. Could it contain a threat to public safety or some other form of contraband? How can we tell what's inside all of these packages?

It's not the package we need to know about! It is the understanding of the person who is carrying the package. We can't read minds, but we can read and understand the body gestures of the person who has the package. Reading the gestures of the person carrying the package helps us determine the contents of the package.

Think back for a second - every day you see how people handle things they carry. Think about a supermarket. Think about a person reaching into a cooler area and taking out a container of eggs. How do they handle the eggs? Is it different than how they handle a case of soft drinks? Of course there is a difference. Everyone handles different contents in a different way. We need to look closely at the body gestures of the person handling the contents.

In that same supermarket you will notice a great difference between a person handling a bag of potatoes and a small child. The child will, hopefully, be handled with great caution and care while being placed in and out of the shopping cart seat. Do we think a bag of potatoes will be handled with the same amount of care? This is all human nature. It is the way we all are. You do not have to know the contents of a package to see how the package is being handled. It is the body gesture being displayed by the person who does know what is in the package that is important. How the package is being picked up, carried around, and put down will tell us what is in it.

Carrying contraband or carrying something hazardous to public safety will be different than how a person carries routine items or packages. The differences we look for are very clear and very obvious once you know what they are.

A common way contraband is carried is called "dissociation." In other words, they are going to carry the package as if they don't want the package to be part of them. They are not comfortable with it. They're walking and moving with the package uncomfortably away from their body. It's like setting a powerful, spring loaded trap and holding it in the

palm of your hand. You wouldn't carry this device close to your body. You'd carry it out and away from yourself in case it snapped. It's not a bag or a box swinging at your side.

You will also notice that when they put the package down they carefully place it down with a high level of caution. Many times as they set it down they will look at their surroundings and not look at the package. You will see their body posture leaning away from the package. You will also see how they maintain distance away from other people and the package. When people walk near their package they will stand between them and the package or even move the package away from others. If they are in an open area they may stand over the package to guard it. As they are dissociative with the package, they also want others to be physically dissociative with the package.

Another common way suspicious packages are carried is "parental gestures." This is being literally wrapped around the package. You will observe the body posture curve protectively around the package as if it is a child or small pet. This item is of great importance to them. They aren't just holding it at their side as they walk. They have it up in their arms and are holding it against their chest or stomach, shielding it from the world around them. Whatever they are doing, you will notice that they do not relinquish their hold on this package. It constantly remains in their parental type of control. If you are standing near them or approach them, you will notice that they hold the package even tighter and closer. If that package is so important to them then it should also be of great importance to you!

Another type of body gestures an individual with packages can exhibit is "mechanical." With mechanical body gestures the person's appearance is stiff and almost mechanized. They appear to move very deliberately in an almost robotic method. They turn, and then they walk forward. Their movements are stiff and lack flexibility. All of their motion appears to be under total control at all times. The eye gestures are also very robotic. When the head turns left the eyes look left. When the head turns right the eyes look right. The head turns and moves with the movement of the body in a very rigid format. All of the body gestures become literally "locked" together. They will have the appearance of being devoid of emotion and of being more of a transport device than a human being. They will exhibit stiff rigid posture and will walk consistently at one speed. Their voice will be an emotionless monotone.

One very interesting thing about all three types of "carriers" is that before they have the package or after they relinquish control of the package they exhibit normal body signs. Look for the difference. Look for the changes that package causes the person to exhibit.

Remember that body gestures and knowing their meaning is like understanding a language. One body sign is just a few words and a compound gesture becomes a sentence. This means that the more you observe, the more you will understand of this language. The more body signs and gestures you are able to compile, the more accurate your understanding of the person will be. We don't want to draw opinions from a very short story, and we don't want to draw conclusions from only one or two body signs. We want to watch, and gather in as many body signs as possible so that this language breaks down into many paragraphs, which will lead us to a clearer, better, understanding of what we are seeing happening before us.

## **APPAREL & GESTURES**

A person can conceal weapons or contraband anywhere on their body. They are not going to tell us verbally where they have put these weapons or contraband but when we watch their body gestures it is a matter of simply “listening” to what they are saying. They tell us through large gestures and some very discrete gestures where the illegal item is. What is a tremendous advantage to us is that they do not even realize that this language exists. All they know is that they have put something in a concealed area and now they are going to continue with their activities without even realizing that their gestures will be giving them away. It is a tremendous advantage to us and it is easy to use against them.

Watch for clothing that is inappropriate for the day or the surrounding conditions. If a person is carrying a heavy overcoat over one arm on a warm day it could be so they can conceal something under the coat. Watch for people wearing raincoats or carrying umbrellas when there are clear skies and no rain predicted. Watch for loose fitting sweaters and vests. Extra layers of clothing allow for more “hiding places”. Watch for items of clothing that are being worn unevenly – a shirt that is tucked in on one side but out on the other side to help cover a pocket.

Gravity can help us determine where an individual has hidden contraband on themselves. If they put an item that has any discernable weight in a pocket there will be a noticeable change in the appearance of their apparel. Most individuals that carry a gun illegally are not going to purchase a holster for that gun. They are going to purchase or steal the weapon, and then they are simply going to put it in their pocket. If they are carrying any extra ammunition they will put that into a pocket as well. Don’t just check the pockets – check the pant legs. The bottom of the pant leg on the side where the object is will hang down noticeably lower. When a heavy item is in a coat pocket the collar will be pulled down on that side. There can even be a shift or “pulling down” on the side of the jacket if the hidden item has enough weight. Both uneven cuffs and uneven jacket edges are signals for you to look further into the situation.

There is another type of “gravity” that comes into play when you are dealing with people and illegal items. That is the gravity that weighs on the person’s mind, their emotions, and sometimes, their guilt. This causes major changes in the person’s body gestures. Their hand or arm will stay close or even repeatedly touch the area of concealment to tell us that they are concerned with that pocket or part of their apparel. They will cover that area with their arm or hand. They will walk differently; they will move differently. They will swing the arm on the concealed weapon side much less than on the other side causing a very unequal gait in their body movement. A professional will have a means of holding a weapon securely. These individuals will have to be careful that their “contraband” doesn’t fall out of its hiding spot.

Just like you can tell when a scale is off balance, with a little bit of practice, you will be able to tell when an individual is “off balance” because they are trying to hide something in their clothing.



