



I How often do you touch people?

The American psychologist, Dr Sidney Jourard, has a fascinating job. He travels the world watching how people in different countries behave. He recently visited Puerto Rico, France and Britain to see how people greet and talk to each other. This article describes some of the things he found out.

1 Before you read, discuss the following.

How do you greet people in your country? Do you shake hands, bow or kiss each other on the cheek?
How do you learn the right thing to do?

Do you greet friends and family differently from people you do not know?

Glossary

- 1 touchy: very sensitive
- 2 when it comes to: on the subject of
- 3 carried out: did
- 4 missing out: losing an opportunity
- 5 pumping: shaking very strongly, up and down
- 6 give off: transmit

WHAT PUERTO RICANS DO 180 TIMES AN HOUR, THE FRENCH 110 TIMES AN HOUR AND THE BRITISH NOT AT ALL

Britons are touchy when it comes to touching each other, according to a top psychologist.

He spent an hour in a coffee shop to count the number of times he saw one person touch another. *Not one did.*

But when he carried out the same survey in Puerto Rico, 180 people touched others. And in France there were 110 touches.

The psychologist, American Dr Sidney Jourard, recorded just two touches an hour in the United States.

It seems that most Britons and Americans are missing out. For surveys show that people like being touched.

Marriage counsellors have found that the happiest couples touch each other often.

Waitresses who touch their customers get larger tips than those who don't.

And nearly all doctors believe touch helps relieve patients' fear of treatment.

Routine

Research has also revealed, though, that there are times when a touch is not welcome.

Like a pumping handshake from someone we don't know well.

Or the hugging and kissing that is just a routine every time friends meet.

A young married woman admitted avoiding acquaintances who gave ritual hugs.

"It is too casual, and that irritates me," she said.

"I prefer touching to occur spontaneously, when I am engaged in a significant conversation with someone."

"In this atmosphere I have never withdrawn or feel the other individual withdraw from a touch."

People who don't want to be touched give off clues, say experts.

They may stiffen or back away. Eyes narrow and lips tighten. But even if we don't like being touched, experts say a smile can make us feel better.

Smiling, which involves our 80 facial muscles, increases blood flow and triggers the production of "happy" brain chemicals.

But a frown restricts the blood supply, and that can leave us feeling low or depressed.

So let's have a big smile from you. And don't forget to keep in touch.

