

Idiomatic Metaphors of the Body

The English Language applied to the body
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An idiom is a phrase or expression which is commonly used to convey a particular meaning but which is not intended to be translated literally. There are two interpretations occurring simultaneously with an idiom. One is the literal interpretation. The other is the metaphoric interpretation. We offer this information as we found it without any judgment whatsoever about its propriety or political correctness.

The Language of the Body

Language is more than verbal. Some estimate that over 85% of human communication is non-verbal. The body presents language in a number of ways including “verbal” metaphor. Symptoms of dis-ease can be viewed as messengers speaking your core beliefs out loud to you in metaphoric language. As you listen with intent to understand, the body systems feel fulfilled and acknowledged for their speaking. As the messenger feels complete and acknowledged, the system can return to normal functioning.

When you feel or have a hurt in a part of your body, your body is speaking to you in metaphor. What the body does is validate your core beliefs; and it does this in its own language – the language of metaphor. We offer here some possible core belief metaphors presented by the body in English through idioms. The following are general metaphoric considerations that could apply to you.

Idioms and Metaphors of the Body

General

Left Side [right brain] [back] - (Latin, *sinister*, meaning bad, ominous, or sinister; French, *gauche*, meaning awkward; Anglo-Saxon, *lyft*, meaning weak or worthless, implying moral weakness)

- ☐ Left-handed compliment
- ☐ On the other hand
- ☐ Left out, left behind, left off (past tense of leave)
- ☐ Left out in the cold
- ☐ In politics: liberal or radical
- ☐ In religion: outcast, evil, bad, hated
- ☐ Out in left field (meaning strange or off the mark)
- ☐ In judgments: bad, wrong, incorrect, weak, silly, foolish, false, unstable, unreliable, irresponsible, weird, ungrounded, flighty, split, obnoxious, clumsy, dishonest, disagreeable, emotional, absurd, stupid, strange, out-of-control, unfair, sneaky, underhanded, dark side, fake, capricious, dirty, daydreamer, failure, loser, promiscuous, idiotic, immature, inappropriate, unsuitable, insane, radical, artificial, rebellious, disobedient.
- ☐ Feminine

Right Side [left brain] [front] - (Latin, *dexter*, meaning skill, dexterity, or adroitness; French, *droit*, meaning good, just, or proper; Anglo-Saxon, *reht* or *riht*, meaning straight or just)

- ☐ Right (as in correct)
- ☐ Right-hand man
- ☐ Starting off on the right foot
- ☐ On the one hand
- ☐ Right on, right here, right there
- ☐ Right now! Right away!
- ☐ In politics: conservative
- ☐ In religion: good, righteous, loved
- ☐ ... my rights.
- ☐ In judgments: good, right, correct, strong, sincere, wise, true, stable, reliable, responsible, rational, grounded,

reasonable, single-minded, cultured, graceful, honest, agreeable, composed, sensible, smart, realistic, controlled, fair, upright, forthright, light side, real, logical, clean, attentive, successful, winner, virtuous, straight, mature, appropriate, suitable, sane, conservative, genuine, cooperative, obedient.

- ☐ Masculine

Possible body “voice intonations”

- ☐ itch - awareness, look at this belief now
- ☐ tic, twitch, habitual movement - direct, repeated communication of core belief
- ☐ pressure, bruise - suggestion or invitation to investigate core belief
- ☐ breaks - loud cry for change (break in core direction) of core belief
- ☐ pain - core belief speaking out (intensity of pain ‘ degree of urgency)
- ☐ chronic pain - deep seated trauma-based core belief at the surface
- ☐ disease - wake up call, core beliefs on the surface ready for examination
- ☐ accidents - sudden call to awakening

Overall -

- ☐ sore loser
- ☐ cramping my style
- ☐ burning with rage
- ☐ itching to get away, get out
- ☐ it strikes me that...
- ☐ get up on the wrong side of the bed
- ☐ a bone to pick with you
- ☐ lost my bearings
- ☐ wouldn't be caught dead in it
- ☐ old as the hills
- ☐ on the level
- ☐ skeleton in the closet
- ☐ no bones about it
- ☐ you rub me the wrong way
- ☐ headlong (as in plunging forward without regard)
- ☐ head first (meaning reckless and rash)
- ☐ be ahead (as in to be winning or profiting)
- ☐ heady (as in being prideful or mental)
- ☐ headache (source of worry, annoyance, trouble)
- ☐ head-to-head (meaning a conflict)
- ☐ headhunter (as in seeking to destroy someone)
- ☐ headlight (as in seeing what's coming through the darkness)
- ☐ headliner (as in needing to be center stage)
- ☐ head-over-heels (as in falling or out of control)
- ☐ headquarters (as in the main office or center of control)
- ☐ headstrong (determined not to follow directions, obstinate, stubborn)
- ☐ get in your hair (a nuisance, trouble)

The head -

- ☐ hanging the head in shame
- ☐ sore head
- ☐ perish the thought
- ☐ give you a piece of my mind
- ☐ fat head
- ☐ mind your own business, manners
- ☐ getting ahead (as in winning at all cost)
- ☐ head games
- ☐ talk your head off
- ☐ head up, head out, head on (as in leading)
- ☐ making headway (as in moving forward)
- ☐ heads up! (as in alertness)
- ☐ heading in a direction
- ☐ a one track mind
- ☐ looking ahead, ahead of the game, (“ahead” suggesting forward projection)
- ☐ headstone (as over a grave)
- ☐ head honcho (as in the boss)
- ☐ headdress
- ☐ head waters

The Face -

- ☐ face-to-face, face off (as in a conflict)
- ☐ losing face (as in shame)
- ☐ face lift (as in improving one's condition, self improvement)
- ☐ facade (as in putting on airs)
- ☐ face someone down
- ☐ talk until you're blue in the face (as in wasted speech)
- ☐ face (as in turning toward)
- ☐ face the music, to face up to (as in courageously confront or resist)
- ☐ in your (my) face
- ☐ faceless (or faithless)
- ☐ on the face of it (as in superficial or surface)
- ☐ fly in the face of (as in daring or defying)
- ☐ face (as in covering with a new surface, to mask or hide)
- ☐ two-faced (as in lying or cheating)
- ☐ bald-faced (outright, as in bald-faced lie)
- ☐ at face value (accepting without investigation)

- ☐ stuff your face (eating too much)

The Ears -

- ☐ lend an ear (as in listen)
- ☐ hearing (as in listening)
- ☐ here (sound alike to “hear”)
- ☐ deafness (unable to hear)
- ☐ balance (another aspect of the ears)
- ☐ burning ears (harsh words)
- ☐ play it by ear (relying on “sound” judgments)
- ☐ wet behind the ears (inexperienced, sound [justified] emotions)
- ☐ out on your ear (discarded, rejected)

The Eyes -

- ☐ I (first person pronoun)
- ☐ aye (as in Ayes@)
- ☐ keep your eye on... (as in don’t trust...)
- ☐ see you to the door (make sure someone leaves)
- ☐ looking through rose colored glasses (seeing only what you want to see)
- ☐ apple of my eye (judgment)
- ☐ in the blink of an eye (as in very quick)
- ☐ eyesore (as in disgustingly dirty)
- ☐ eyeful (all you can take)
- ☐ wide eyed, bright eyed (meaning full)
- ☐ blind to (as in not able to see what’s coming)
- ☐ see, sight (as in understanding or knowing)
- ☐ a sight better than (as in just a little better)
- ☐ eye wash (as in flattery or nonsense done to impress)
- ☐ eye witness (first person account, actually there)
- ☐ mind’s eye (as in an insight)
- ☐ insight (as in an inner knowing)
- ☐ seeing is believing (establishing proof)
- ☐ public eye (as in being watched for appropriateness)
- ☐ watch out, look out, watch what you say (as in being on guard)
- ☐ narrow vision (shutting off other options)
- ☐ look up to (as in comparing to another)
- ☐ highbrow (judgmentalism)
- ☐ eye-to-eye (agreement, I-to-I)

The Nose -

- ☐ keep your nose out of (avoiding conflict)
- ☐ sniffing out trouble, smelling trouble
- ☐ I don’t like the smell of this
- ☐ nose out of joint (expression of anger or annoyance)

- ☐ to cut off your nose to spite your face
- ☐ nosey (know-sy, wannabe know-it-all, need to know)
- ☐ keep your nose out of my business
- ☐ [common-, money-, self-] sense (scents)
- ☐ knows (nose)
- ☐ no’s (taboos)
- ☐ nose to the grindstone (struggle)
- ☐ pay through the nose (rewards for negativity? - “pay through the no’s”)
- ☐ rubbing your nose in it (learning through struggle, hardship)
- ☐ I smell a rat (combination of eye and nose?)
- ☐ poke your nose into their business
- ☐ poke their nose into your business
- ☐ no skin off my nose (doesn’t matter to me)

The Cheeks -

- ☐ flushed (embarrassed)
- ☐ cheeky (saucy, brass, impudent)
- ☐ turn the other cheek (forgiving)
- ☐ tongue in cheek (without sincerity)
- ☐ cheat, cheep (cheek sound alike)

The Mouth -

- ☐ tight lipped (angry, suppressed anger)
- ☐ bite your lip, shut up! (be quiet – don’t speak)
- ☐ loose lips sink ships
- ☐ keep your tongue, bite your tongue, hold your tongue (don’t say what you think)
- ☐ bite the bullet (endure the pain)
- ☐ a taste of your own medicine
- ☐ to cut your teeth on...
- ☐ bite off more than you can chew
- ☐ say it under your breath
- ☐ bite me! (hostility, anger)
- ☐ put teeth into it (judgment followed with artificial consequence)
- ☐ tooth and nail (struggle)
- ☐ what’s biting you?
- ☐ what’s eating you?
- ☐ mouthy (talk too much)
- ☐ side talk (as in talking behind one’s back)
- ☐ speak up [for yourself]
- ☐ fed up to here
- ☐ grinding teeth (anger)
- ☐ mad enough to chew nails...
- ☐ I could just spit (angry)
- ☐ a sweet tooth
- ☐ shoot off your mouth (talk too much)
- ☐ that sucks!
- ☐ keep a stiff upper lip (endure)

- ☐ like pulling teeth (very difficult)
- ☐ down in the mouth (depression)
- ☐ giving lip service (insincere)
- ☐ flapping your gums (not listened to)
- ☐ lip off (anger, hostility)
- ☐ set your teeth on edge (anxious, nervous, hostile)
- ☐ tongue-in-cheek (falseness, distorted expression)
- ☐ the gift of gab (need to express)
- ☐ fighting tooth and nail (struggling)
- ☐ by the skin of my teeth (close escape)
- ☐ a far cry from
- ☐ suck up to

The Chin -

- ☐ chin up (face your troubles with courage)
- ☐ I've had it up to here... (pointing to the chin)
- ☐ take it on the chin (braving a beating)

The Neck -

- ☐ naked [sound alike] (next to nothing)
- ☐ next [sound alike] (as in the naked truth)
- ☐ pain in the neck (bothersome)
- ☐ stiff necked (as in stubborn)
- ☐ hot under the collar (hostile)
- ☐ hard to swallow (as in hard to believe)
- ☐ choking (as in unable to express)
- ☐ sticking your neck out (as in risking)
- ☐ jump down your throat (hostility)
- ☐ ram it down your throat
- ☐ down the tubes (as in wasted)
- ☐ neck and neck (as in even)
- ☐ wringing the neck (killing by strangling)
- ☐ break-neck speeds (so fast as to kill)
- ☐ by the scruff of the neck (roughness, struggle)
- ☐ breathing down your neck (close to disaster, fear, narrowed expression)
- ☐ swallowed it hook, line, and sinker (belief without reason)

The Shoulders -

- ☐ shoulders (as in Ashould@-ers, where you hold your "shoulds@")
- ☐ put your shoulder to the wheel, shoulder the burden (be strong when you feel otherwise)
- ☐ carrying (shouldering) the burdens of life
- ☐ head and shoulders above... (judgment)
- ☐ shoulder it well (i.e., how you fortify yourself against the "enemy")
- ☐ shoulder to shoulder (as in cooperation)
- ☐ straight from the shoulder (speaking frankly)

- ☐ cry on someone's shoulder (deep grief)
- ☐ rub shoulders with... (i.e., associate or mingle with)
- ☐ cold shoulder (i.e., treat with coldness, to shun or avoid)
- ☐ shouldering arms (i.e., carrying a weapon, ready to fight)
- ☐ shoulder pads (needing protection from foes)
- ☐ chip on the shoulder (hostility)

The Arms -

- ☐ take up arms (i.e., to be ready for battle, fortify)
- ☐ arm's length (i.e., stay away or avoid)
- ☐ harm (sound alike)
- ☐ throw a fit
- ☐ with one arm held behind my back
- ☐ arms (as in weapons)
- ☐ pull a fast one
- ☐ pushing up daisies
- ☐ reaching (a stretch)
- ☐ wear your heart on your sleeve (gullible, careless, vulnerable)
- ☐ reach rock bottom
- ☐ hand in glove with (good fit)
- ☐ defending (poised for defense)
- ☐ hang in there (having to stay in pain)
- ☐ strong arm or being strong armed (i.e., apply pressure)
- ☐ pushing, shoving, fighting, hitting, striking, pulling
- ☐ holding back (i.e., afraid to embrace the new)
- ☐ embracing (ideas, the past, fear, etc.)
- ☐ push comes to shove (i.e., cornered wanting to fight back)
- ☐ elbow room (space)
- ☐ elbow grease (hard work, struggle)

The Hands -

- ☐ grasping, holding on, squeezing, withholding, clenching, manipulating
- ☐ slapping, poking, pinching, wrenching, wringing, pounding, knocking
- ☐ hold on to (i.e., withholding)
- ☐ hand shake (i.e., agreement)
- ☐ palm it off
- ☐ work your fingers to the bone (struggle)
- ☐ grease the palm (pay up)
- ☐ tie up loose ends (completion)
- ☐ handcuff (i.e., being restrained or controlled)
- ☐ handful (i.e., too much to handle)
- ☐ handicapped
- ☐ to be in somebody's clutches (victim)

- ☐ handle it (i.e., control or manage)
- ☐ hand-me-down (i.e., second best or less)
- ☐ handout (i.e., neediness)
- ☐ hands off! (i.e., afraid to touch or address)
- ☐ hand-to-hand (close up combat, fighting, or conflict)
- ☐ hand-to-mouth (no hope for the future)
- ☐ knocking it (dissatisfaction)
- ☐ thumbs up, thumbs down (judgments)
- ☐ dis-a-point-ment (index fingers)
- ☐ grip on reality
- ☐ gripped with fear
- ☐ knucklehead
- ☐ knuckling under (giving in to the pressure)
- ☐ all thumbs (clumsy, not good enough)
- ☐ green thumb (able to grow out of the struggle)
- ☐ red handed (caught, guilty)
- ☐ keep your fingers crossed (switching masculine/feminine hoping for a change)
- ☐ rule of thumb (might is right, opposition is right)
- ☐ thumbs up/down (judgments, opposition)
- ☐ try your hand at (attempt, doubts)
- ☐ got to hand it to you (give credit, relinquish control)
- ☐ come to grips with

The Chest -

- ☐ sigh of relief
- ☐ wear your heart on your sleeve (vulnerable)
- ☐ making a clean breast (deep release)
- ☐ get it off your chest (escaping or avoiding the pressure)
- ☐ chest plate (a protection against perceived aggression)
- ☐ take a ribbing (the brunt of the joke)
- ☐ pull at your heartstrings (sympathy)
- ☐ heartache, heartbreak, heartsick (deep grief, sadness)
- ☐ can't stomach that (too much, overwhelm)

The Back -

- ☐ backbiting (betrayal)
- ☐ back down (retreat)
- ☐ back off! (surrender)
- ☐ back-breaking (struggle)
- ☐ behind your back (betrayal)
- ☐ bending over backwards (sacrifice)
- ☐ get off my back!
- ☐ get your butt in gear
- ☐ you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours

- ☐ don't hold back!
- ☐ don't look back
- ☐ bust your butt (struggle)
- ☐ freeze your buns off
- ☐ spine tingling (terror)
- ☐ spineless (i.e., cowardly)
- ☐ lack (sound alike)
- ☐ payback (revenge)
- ☐ to be on your back (weak, vulnerable)
- ☐ backbone (character, integrity)
- ☐ backward (reversal)
- ☐ background (not noticed)
- ☐ stabbed in the back (betrayed)
- ☐ put your back into it (struggle)

The Abdomen -

- ☐ stuck in the middle (cornered, no place to go, no way out)
- ☐ gut-wrenching fear (terror)
- ☐ gut feeling (anxiety)
- ☐ bowels of the earth, ship (getting to the inside)
- ☐ pity, hollow (afraid to look inside)
- ☐ extreme pain (i.e., disemboweled)
- ☐ soft underbelly (i.e., vulnerable, defensive)
- ☐ butterflies in the stomach
- ☐ wasted
- ☐ waist not want not
- ☐ shooting from the hip (unprepared, rash)
- ☐ stoop (i.e., stoop that low, judgments)
- ☐ caught with my pants down

The Legs

- ☐ don't have a leg to stand on (no justification)
- ☐ it stands to reason that
- ☐ can't stand it (overwhelm)
- ☐ run the risk of...
- ☐ getting your sea legs
- ☐ run a temperature
- ☐ weak kneed, weak in the knees (afraid to stand)
- ☐ stand up for... (implying weakness, and rights)
- ☐ tripping over yourself (i.e., getting in your own way, self-sabotage)
- ☐ running out of... (lack consciousness)
- ☐ running wild (out of control)
- ☐ runway (flight - escaping)
- ☐ some leg room (need space)
- ☐ break a leg, standing ovation (theatrical)
- ☐ needs (sound alike for knees)
- ☐ kick in the pants, get a kick out of you
- ☐ hopping mad (anger)
- ☐ butt kicking (judgment, anger, amusement)
- ☐ side stepping the issue (avoidance)

- ☐ jumping to conclusions (quick to judge)
- ☐ getting walked on, getting stepped on (victimized)
- ☐ pulling my leg
- ☐ foot in the mouth
- ☐ step in the right direction
- ☐ standing room only
- ☐ walk on the wild side
- ☐ walking the tightrope
- ☐ walking on pins & needles
- ☐ walking on egg shells
- ☐ walking the line
- ☐ in the running
- ☐ jogging the memory
- ☐ getting the runaround
- ☐ on your last leg (near death, falling apart)
- ☐ making great strides
- ☐ The Feet
- ☐ understanding
- ☐ heal, healing, healed (sound alike to heel)
- ☐ soul (spirit)
- ☐ putting your best foot forward
- ☐ two left feet (clumsy)
- ☐ stopped dead in your tracks
- ☐ foot in mouth (combining feet and mouth)
- ☐ runaway
- ☐ put you through your paces
- ☐ footstool (less than, combination of feet and abdomen [anus])
- ☐ a foot in the grave (dying)
- ☐ waiting for the other shoe to drop (dying)
- ☐ footloose (free)
- ☐ stamping out fires (fixing all those problems)
- ☐ walk a mile in my shoes (perseverance)
- ☐ standoff (keeping all enemies at bay)
- ☐ walkout (avoiding the pain)
- ☐ running start, hit the ground running
- ☐ running on empty
- ☐ cold feet (afraid to start)
- ☐ land on your feet (after some trauma)
- ☐ kicking the habit
- ☐ cool your heels (slow to “heal”)
- ☐ feet of clay (slow to change the understanding)
- ☐ shoe is on the other foot (crossed beliefs)
- ☐ dig your heels in (resistance)
- ☐ foot the bill
- ☐ off the beaten path
- ☐ off track
- ☐ kick the bucket
- ☐ lose your footing
- ☐ walk a mile in my shoes