

CENTER FOR NONVERBAL STUDIES

HOME

NONVERBAL DICTIONARY

ADAM'S-APPLE-JUMP

AMPHIBIAN BRAIN

ISOPRAXISM

NONVERBAL BRAIN

NONVERBAL WORLD

ZYGOMATIC SMILE

PUBLICATIONS

ADAM'S-APPLE-JUMP

Body movement. 1. A conspicuous up-and-down motion of the Adam's apple. 2. A movement of the throat visible while gulping or swallowing, as in nervousness.

Usage: The Adam's-apple-jump is an unconscious sign of emotional anxiety, embarrassment, or stress. At a business meeting, e.g., a listener's Adam's apple may inadvertently jump should he or she dislike or strongly disagree with a speaker's suggestion, perspective, or point of view.

U.S. politics. The Adam's apple gained it's 15 minutes of fame when former Vice President James Danforth Quayle's thyroid cartilage "jumped" in the 1988 vice-presidential debates, as his opponent, Lloyd Bentsen, pointedly replied, "I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy!"

RESEARCH REPORTS: 1. *Swallowing* "associates well with flight and **submission**" (Grant 1969:528). 2. Stimulating the emotionally sensitive **amygdala** can cause involuntary body movements "associated with olfaction and eating, such as licking, chewing, and swallowing" (Guyton 1996:758-59).

Anatomy. Anxiety, social discomfort (e.g., embarrassment), and fear are often visible in unwitting, vertical movements of a projection at the front of the throat called the *laryngeal prominence*, where the largest (or *thyroid*) cartilage of the Adam's apple shows, prominently in men, but less noticeably in women.

Neuro-notes. Acting through the *vagus* nerve (cranial X), emotional tension from the brain's **limbic system** causes unconscious muscular contractions of the *sternothyroid*, *thyrohyoid*, and associated *inferior pharyngeal constrictor* muscles of the Adam's apple. Movement is evident as the muscles contract to swallow, to **throat-clear**, or to vocalize an objection which may be left unsaid. The Adam's apple is emotionally responsive (i.e., reflects visceral or "gut" feelings) because its muscles are mediated by the *vagus* nerve, one of five cranial **special visceral nerves**.

Synonym—Gulping. See also **NECK DIMPLE**, **NECKWEAR**, **PALM-UP**, **SHOULDER-SHRUG**.

Copyright © 1998 - 2009 (David B. Givens/**Center for Nonverbal Studies**)