Some sort of sign

Recently, I was working a charity auction when I asked a novice bidder if he wanted to bid again. He was trying to give me some sort of sign, but I had no idea what he meant. Was he through bidding, did he want to cut the bid in half, or was he trying to tell me to go kill myself by slashing my throat?

That's when it dawned on me: we speak different languages with our hands and need a universal system of gestures.

It's gotten out of hand. (Pun intended.) I was watching a football game when the referee made a holding call by grabbing his wrist and making a fist. I've seen the same sign used by a road-rage victim indicating he was going to knock my block off, and, I swear, it's exactly the same sign my wife made when I accidentally vaccinated her in the wrist with five-way vaccine.

She held it against me for years but it must have worked because, to the best of my knowledge, she has never contracted leptospirosis or vibriosis. And you can hardly see the scar if she wears long sleeves.

I've seen rodeo cowboys point and look skyward just before they settle in on 2,000 pounds of trouble. It's as if the cowboy is asking God if he has a vacancy for one more. It's also the same sign my mother used to make when she'd shake her finger at me right before swatting me with a yardstick, but it's also the gesture an observer might make if a grand piano was falling from the sky and was aimed right for you. It's at times like these when hand signals need to be universally understood.

Another common sign is the one baseball umpires make when they call someone "OUT!" It's the same sign we'd make in the oilfields when we wanted the crane or A-frame operator to raise whatever it was he was tied on to.

We've all seen exactly the same sign being used by a hitchhiker alongside the road, or by a big biker in a bar who is telling you in his own unique style, "Let's go outside and settle this man to man."

In the NFL, if the referee turns his arm in a circular motion parallel to his body it means to start the clock, and to an operating engineer it means start the machine.

I used the same sign once when I tried to get some feeling back in my hand after my wife started pounding the post pounder before I'd completely removed my hand. She says it was an "accident," but I think it was just payback for the five-way incident.

Then there is the gesture where fishermen hold their hands far apart to lie about how big the fish was they caught. Football referees make the same sign to show how much yardage is needed for a first down, and I once used the same sign to show a Texas truck driver how far back he needed to go until he nestled gently up against my loading chute that was only staying together because the termites were holding hands.

I moved my hands closer and closer together, and then I clapped real hard for emphasis right before he backed right over the loading chute.

Believe me, I gave that trucker a sign he understood!

If you ever have the need to tell a crane operator to raise the "headache ball," just make a circular motion in the air with your hand at head level. The problem is cowboys don't speak the language of operating engineers. I made this proper sign one time to a fellow cowboy when a horse fell on top of me and pinned my leg in a figure 8. But when I made the circular sign to the cowboy indicating he should "raise the horse, I think my leg is broken," he thought it meant "let's rope" so he went back to the barn to get his roping glove and good horse without ever lending an assist.

The point I'm trying to make is that we need some sort of a uniform system of signs that we all can understа ... oops, I'm sorry but I must interrupt our little chat because my wife is making some sort of irritated gesture at me. I think it's either the "gather up and let's go shopping" sign, or "you left the toilet seat up again." Either way, my goose is cooked.

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