

Personal space

Ilaria Zhao

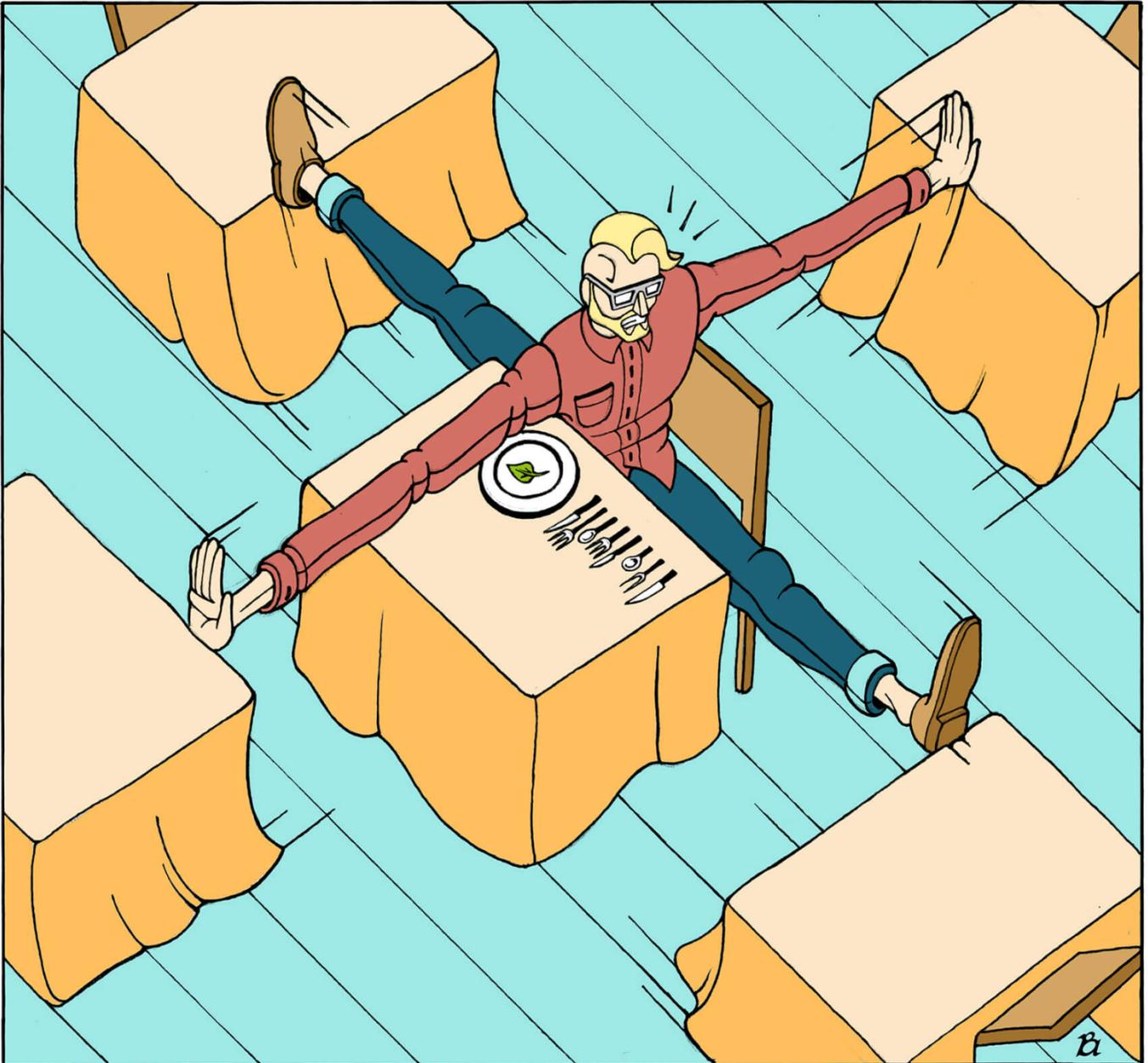
It is ineluctable to have a conversation with people in reality, so our personal space could be invaded. For instance, have you ever been uncomfortable when somebody stood too close to you? And who seemed to put their face inches from yours during a small talk? That is because this person has invaded your personal space. Do you know the reasons why?

First of all, to be clear, the term “personal space” means the physical distance between two people, and everyone has it. We can imagine it as a surrounding invisible bubble, it will be awkward when someone breaks it. And this space can vary, which means a person would demand different personal spaces in different conditions. However, how big the personal space is depends on the level of your relationship with that person, where you are, and your culture.

Obviously, personal space will probably be smaller when you talk to someone you know well rather than to a stranger. Except for that factor, it is contingent on where you actually are. The demand of personal space will be little or even none when you are in a crowded bus as there are too many people on one bus. Whereas in a wide-open area, it will be much bigger. Therefore, it is said that people who live in densely populated areas will require less personal space than those in poorly populated areas. Moreover, the differences between cultures will cause different distances between two people. Japanese are prone to have small personal space and the Europeans would like to have a greater one. Some studies say that those in warmer countries are likely to stand closer, while colder countries prefer to be further apart.

Personal space has a territorial characteristic, depending on the intimacy of relationship. Within 50 centimetres is the intimate space for couples, from 50 to 125 centimetres is the personal space for good friends and families, from 125 to 350 centimetres is the social space for acquaintances and from 350 to 750 centimetres is the public space for any types of public speaking.

In short, what we had better do is to be aware of the importance of personal space. Besides, we should respect ourselves and others without invading their personal space.



I decided to write this article as I was offended by other people who invaded my personal space.

This image is about a man who tries to protect his personal space using arms and feet in a restaurant. This represents that people value arm length between each other.