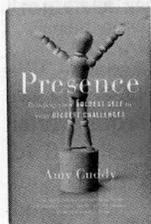


EXCERPT

Strike a power pose—but do it in private

By Amy Cuddy



CAN TAKING CONTROL of your body language help you become happier and more successful? In the time since my collaborators, Andy Yap and Dana Carney, and I first published our experiments with

power posing in 2010, there has been a substantial amount of inquiry into this and closely related body-mind phenomena, which together illuminate the many benefits of adopting expansive, bold poses and upright, good posture.

A lot of the research uncovers something astonishing. It's not only bold power poses that have an effect. Even very subtle types of expansion—like simple, good, “sit up straight” posture—can do the same sorts of things. Expansive movement—and even vocal expansiveness, like speaking slowly—can affect the way we think, feel and behave. Our presence.

Carrying yourself in a powerful way directs your feelings, thoughts, behaviors and body to feel powerful and be present (and even perform better) in situations ranging from the mundane to the most challenging.

But is our presence apparent to the people with whom we interact? And does it really improve our performance in a measurable way? We decided to do another study. We hypothesized that engaging in preparatory power poses before a stressful job interview would improve presence, which would lead to more favorable evaluations of performance and more favorable hiring decisions. Why before? Because adopting big power poses during social interactions often backfires: it's not only strange; it also makes people uncomfortable. Imagine meeting someone for the first time as they stand in the victory pose or sit with their feet on a table and arms akimbo. Now imagine a job candidate doing that while you're interviewing her.

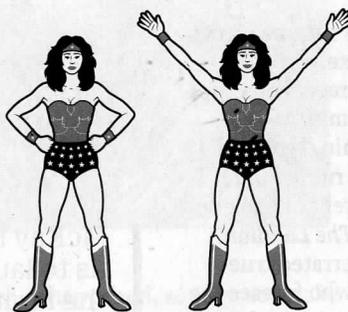
How your body shapes your mind



Powerless Cuddy and her colleagues found that drawn-in poses lowered testosterone and raised cortisol



Powerful By contrast, expansive postures led to positive psychological and behavioral changes



Wonder Woman Cuddy's 2012 TED talk on how placing arms akimbo or “starfish up” can be empowering has been watched nearly 30 million times

After arriving at the lab, subjects were told they would be participating in an intense mock interview for their dream job. They had a short time to prepare a five-minute response to the question “Why should we hire you?” They were told they'd be presenting their answers as speeches to two trained interviewers who would be evaluating them. They were also informed that they'd be videotaped and judged later by a separate panel of experts. And they were told they could not misrepresent themselves and had to speak for the entire five minutes.

The two judge-researchers, who

wore lab coats and held clipboards, were trained to give no feedback of any kind—just neutral expressions. Receiving no feedback from a listener is often more disturbing than getting a negative response.

While preparing their speeches, the subjects were asked to adopt either the high-power or low-power poses that we'd used in earlier studies. They did their posing before the interviews, not during—a critical feature of this study. Each interview was recorded on video, and the recordings were evaluated by three pairs of judges who had no idea what our hypothesis was or anything else about the experiment. This is important.

Two of the judges evaluated the interviewees for performance and hireability, two judges evaluated the interviewees for the quality of the verbal content of their answers, and two judges evaluated them for the variable I was most interested in: the applicants' nonverbal presence (confident, enthusiastic, captivating and not awkward).

As expected, the subjects who prepared for the interview with high-power poses—the more presence our job interviewees displayed—the better they were evaluated and more strongly they were recommended for hire by the judges. But here's the catch, as we found in a related follow-up study: presence mattered to the judges because it signaled genuineness and believability; it told the judges that they could trust the person, that what they were observing was real. In short, manifest qualities of presence are taken as signs of authenticity. The more we are able to be ourselves, the more we are able to be present. And that makes us convincing. Your body shapes your mind. Your mind shapes your behavior. And your behavior shapes your future. Let your body tell you that you're powerful and deserving and you'll become more present, enthusiastic and authentically yourself.

Cuddy is a social psychologist and associate professor at Harvard Business School. Excerpted from Presence by Amy Cuddy. Copyright © 2015 by Amy Cuddy. Reprinted with permission of Little, Brown and Company.