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CAREER COACH

BOSS YOURSELF – THE WAY TO VICTORY THROUGH THE POWER POSE

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Okay. Get up from your computer... put your phone down for a sec. Now stand up. Take up some space. Raise your arms high! Open yourself up. EXPAND. Hold this for 2 minutes.

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by Shaba Mohseni | Staff

No, this isn't the start of some virtual yoga class! The reason I challenge you to do this is because this powerful non-verbal body positioning can literally change the way your mind works, increase your confidence and decrease your stress levels before diving into life's most intense challenges.

Let me explain further. Think back to that time right before your big interview, presentation or competition – some situation where everything was at stake and you had to give your all. You felt a lot of pressure to perform, impress and succeed. What did you do to prepare and feel more confident? Maybe you set yourself up by meditating or you used a visualization technique. You might've rehearsed your talking points in the mirror or unleashed the team chant at the top of your lungs before stepping into the arena.

Everyone has a different way to prepare for intense situations or to influence outcomes. A lot of them are tactics where we ignite our mind in order to affect our body.



The Ultimate Rush: Jessica Ennis-Hill hammering her competitors into the dust at the London 2012 Olympics in the 800 meter run ©Gabriel Bouys/AFP/Getty Images

But what about the other way around? Our minds can change our bodies, but do our bodies also change our minds? That's the question social scientist and Harvard Business School Professor Amy Cuddy asked as she embarked on a research project which revealed that in addition to body language affecting how others see us, it also changes how we see ourselves.

Amy has shared her subsequent findings with the world and they have practical uses for all of us looking to bring our best to work, sport and life.

“We can change our own body chemistry for the better simply by changing body positions. Standing in a posture of confidence, even when we don't feel confident, affects testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain, and might even have an impact on our chances for success.” ▲

Amy Cuddy



Enter the Power Pose

Power Poses are important evolutionary expressions among primates and humans. Animals make these poses when showing their dominance and power in the wild kingdom. Athletes make these poses when they feel full of power, in the intense moment of winning and the unbelievable rush of victory comes over them.

Even just watching this body language is contagious. Immediately the raw emotion is transferred as we share in the glory of the win.

And I bet you've even power posed yourself. What's really interesting is the victory pose above is innate within us. In fact, we're hard-wired to act it out – congenitally blind people do it when they're victorious in events, even when they've never seen it or been taught to do it!

So what if we use these poses proactively to summon strength and power when we need it most?

You guessed it – Amy Cuddy's research dove right into that question too and she initiated various experiments.

The findings were very consistent and quite shocking. When we enact power poses for even just a couple of minutes, there is a considerable increase in the hormone testosterone which leads us to feel more confident and powerful. Plus, there is a decrease of cortisol which translates to feeling less stressed and anxious.

She then took it a step further and had subjects assume both high-power and low-power poses before a very intense interview. The results?

“High-power’ posers were overwhelmingly the ones that non-partial judges who viewed the interviews wanted to hire. Importantly, what these people actually said in the interviews was irrelevant. Presence was everything.” ▲

Amy Cuddy



Ok, so I'm not suggesting you strut through the door into an interview with your hands raised emphatically à La Ennis-Hill crossing the finish line. That might not be received too well! But consider for example how people often sit in low-power poses while waiting for an interview: hunched over, arms possibly crossed, looking down, chin in hand. What if instead you take a couple minutes in the privacy of your own space to strike a high-power pose instead?



Waiting for a job interview can be nerve-stretching - but instead of sitting in low-power poses try to strike a high-power pose the next time to summon strength.

Our Bodies change our minds. Our minds change our behavior. And our behavior changes outcomes.

You can apply power poses to so many important situations in your life – an interview, a speech, a presentation, a big exam, the championship match or race – allowing you tap into your truest potential and Boss Yourself!

There can be positive long-term effects from these simple moves. Amy's final takeaway drives this home.

“Fake it until you Become it. Tiny tweaks in your body language become big changes overtime.” ▲

Amy Cuddy

So try it! You've got nothing to lose and everything to win. Victory is yours for the taking. ▲

Show us how you boss yourself. Share your Power Pose experience with us here.

#victory #powerpose #bodylanguage

