

Your Body Language may shape who you are | Amy Cuddy

<https://youtu.be/Ks-Mh1QhMc>

00:15

So I want to start by offering you a free no-tech life hack,

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and all it requires of you is this:

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that you change your posture for two minutes.

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But before I give it away, I want to ask you to right now

00:31

do a little audit of your body and what you're doing with your body.

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So how many of you are sort of making yourselves smaller?

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Maybe you're hunching, crossing your legs, maybe wrapping your ankles.

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Sometimes we hold onto our arms like this.

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Sometimes we spread out. (Laughter)

00:48

I see you.

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So I want you to pay attention to what you're doing right now.

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We're going to come back to that in a few minutes,

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and I'm hoping that if you learn to tweak this a little bit,

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it could significantly change the way your life unfolds.

01:02

So, we're really fascinated with body language,

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and we're particularly interested in other people's body language.

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You know, we're interested in, like, you know — (Laughter) —

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an awkward interaction, or a smile,

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or a contemptuous glance, or maybe a very awkward wink,

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or maybe even something like a handshake.

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Narrator: Here they are arriving at Number 10.

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This lucky policeman gets to shake hands with the President of the United States.

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Here comes the Prime Minister -- No. (Laughter) (Applause)

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(Laughter) (Applause)

01:42

Amy Cuddy: So a handshake, or the lack of a handshake,

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can have us talking for weeks and weeks and weeks.

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Even the BBC and The New York Times.

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So obviously when we think about nonverbal behavior,

01:55

or body language -- but we call it nonverbals as social scientists --

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it's language, so we think about communication.

02:01

When we think about communication, we think about interactions.

02:04

So what is your body language communicating to me?

02:06

What's mine communicating to you?

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And there's a lot of reason to believe that this is a valid way to look at this.

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So social scientists have spent a lot of time

02:17

looking at the effects of our body language,

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or other people's body language, on judgments.

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And we make sweeping judgments and inferences from body language.

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And those judgments can predict really meaningful life outcomes

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like who we hire or promote, who we ask out on a date.

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For example, Nalini Ambady, a researcher at Tufts University,

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shows that when people watch 30-second soundless clips

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of real physician-patient interactions,

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their judgments of the physician's niceness

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predict whether or not that physician will be sued.

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So it doesn't have to do so much

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with whether or not that physician was incompetent,

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but do we like that person and how they interacted?

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Even more dramatic, Alex Todorov at Princeton

03:00

has shown us that judgments of political candidates' faces

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in just one second predict 70 percent

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of U.S. Senate and gubernatorial race outcomes,

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and even, let's go digital,

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emoticons used well in online negotiations

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can lead you to claim more value from that negotiation.

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If you use them poorly, bad idea. Right?

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So when we think of nonverbals, we think of how we judge others,

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how they judge us and what the outcomes are.

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We tend to forget, though, the other audience

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that's influenced by our nonverbals, and that's ourselves.

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We are also influenced by our nonverbals,

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our thoughts and our feelings and our physiology.

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So what nonverbals am I talking about?

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I'm a social psychologist. I study prejudice,

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and I teach at a competitive business school,

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so it was inevitable that I would become interested in power dynamics.

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I became especially interested in nonverbal expressions

03:58

of power and dominance.

04:00

And what are nonverbal expressions of power and dominance?

04:03

Well, this is what they are.

04:05

So in the animal kingdom, they are about expanding.

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So you make yourself big, you stretch out,

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you take up space, you're basically opening up.

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It's about opening up.

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And this is true across the animal kingdom.

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It's not just limited to primates.

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And humans do the same thing. (Laughter)

04:24

So they do this both when they have power sort of chronically,

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and also when they're feeling powerful in the moment.

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And this one is especially interesting because it really shows
us

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how universal and old these expressions of power are.

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This expression, which is known as pride,

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Jessica Tracy has studied.

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She shows that people who are born with sight

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and people who are congenitally blind do this

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when they win at a physical competition.

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So when they cross the finish line and they've won,

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it doesn't matter if they've never seen anyone do it.

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They do this.

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So the arms up in the V, the chin is slightly lifted.

04:59

What do we do when we feel powerless?

05:01

We do exactly the opposite.

05:03

We close up. We wrap ourselves up.

05:06

We make ourselves small.

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We don't want to bump into the person next to us.

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So again, both animals and humans do the same thing.

05:12

And this is what happens when you put together high and low power.

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So what we tend to do when it comes to power

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is that we complement the other's nonverbals.

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So if someone is being really powerful with us,

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we tend to make ourselves smaller. We don't mirror them.

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We do the opposite of them.

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So I'm watching this behavior in the classroom,

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and what do I notice?

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I notice that MBA students really exhibit the full range of power nonverbals.

05:42

So you have people who are like caricatures of alphas,

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really coming into the room, they get right into the middle of the room

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before class even starts, like they really want to occupy space.

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When they sit down, they're sort of spread out.

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They raise their hands like this.

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You have other people who are virtually collapsing

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when they come in. As soon they come in, you see it.

06:00

You see it on their faces and their bodies,

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and they sit in their chair and they make themselves tiny,

06:05

and they go like this when they raise their hand.

06:08

I notice a couple of things about this.

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One, you're not going to be surprised.

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It seems to be related to gender.

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So women are much more likely to do this kind of thing than men.

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Women feel chronically less powerful than men,

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so this is not surprising.

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But the other thing I noticed

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is that it also seemed to be related to the extent

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to which the students were participating, and how well they were participating.

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And this is really important in the MBA classroom,

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because participation counts for half the grade.

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So business schools have been struggling with this gender grade gap.

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You get these equally qualified women and men coming in

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and then you get these differences in grades,

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and it seems to be partly attributable to participation.

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So I started to wonder, you know, okay,

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so you have these people coming in like this, and they're participating.

06:57

Is it possible that we could get people to fake it

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and would it lead them to participate more?

07:02

So my main collaborator Dana Carney, who's at Berkeley,

07:06

and I really wanted to know, can you fake it till you make it?

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Like, can you do this just for a little while

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and actually experience a behavioral outcome

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that makes you seem more powerful?

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So we know that our nonverbals govern how other people

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think and feel about us. There's a lot of evidence.

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But our question really was,

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do our nonverbals govern how we think and feel about ourselves?

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There's some evidence that they do.

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So, for example, we smile when we feel happy,

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but also, when we're forced to smile

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by holding a pen in our teeth like this, it makes us feel happy.

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So it goes both ways.

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When it comes to power, it also goes both ways.

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So when you feel powerful,

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you're more likely to do this,

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but it's also possible that when you pretend to be powerful,

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you are more likely to actually feel powerful.

08:02

So the second question really was, you know,

08:05

so we know that our minds change our bodies,

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but is it also true that our bodies change our minds?

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And when I say minds, in the case of the powerful,

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what am I talking about?

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So I'm talking about thoughts and feelings

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and the sort of physiological things that make up our thoughts and feelings,

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and in my case, that's hormones. I look at hormones.

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So what do the minds of the powerful versus the powerless look like?

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So powerful people tend to be, not surprisingly,

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more assertive and more confident, more optimistic.

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They actually feel they're going to win even at games of chance.

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They also tend to be able to think more abstractly.

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So there are a lot of differences. They take more risks.

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There are a lot of differences between powerful and powerless people.

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Physiologically, there also are differences

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on two key hormones: testosterone, which is the dominance hormone,

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and cortisol, which is the stress hormone.

09:01

So what we find is that high-power alpha males in primate hierarchies

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have high testosterone and low cortisol,

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and powerful and effective leaders

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also have high testosterone and low cortisol.

09:17

So what does that mean? When you think about power,

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people tended to think only about testosterone,

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because that was about dominance.

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But really, power is also about how you react to stress.

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So do you want the high-power leader that's dominant,

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high on testosterone, but really stress reactive?

09:33

Probably not, right?

09:35

You want the person who's powerful and assertive and dominant,

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but not very stress reactive, the person who's laid back.

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So we know that in primate hierarchies,

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if an alpha needs to take over,

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if an individual needs to take over an alpha role sort of suddenly,

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within a few days, that individual's testosterone has gone up

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significantly and his cortisol has dropped significantly.

10:01

So we have this evidence, both that the body can shape

10:04

the mind, at least at the facial level,

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and also that role changes can shape the mind.

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So what happens, okay, you take a role change,

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what happens if you do that at a really minimal level,

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like this tiny manipulation, this tiny intervention?

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"For two minutes," you say, "I want you to stand like this,

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and it's going to make you feel more powerful."

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So this is what we did.

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We decided to bring people into the lab and run a little experiment,

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and these people adopted, for two minutes,

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either high-power poses or low-power poses,

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and I'm just going to show you five of the poses,

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although they took on only two.

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So here's one.

10:45

A couple more.

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This one has been dubbed the "Wonder Woman" by the media.

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Here are a couple more.

10:53

So you can be standing or you can be sitting.

10:55

And here are the low-power poses.

10:57

So you're folding up, you're making yourself small.

11:01

This one is very low-power.

11:03

When you're touching your neck, you're really protecting yourself.

11:07

So this is what happens.

11:09

They come in, they spit into a vial,

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for two minutes, we say, "You need to do this or this."

11:14

They don't look at pictures of the poses.

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We don't want to prime them with a concept of power.

11:19

We want them to be feeling power.

11:21

So two minutes they do this.

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We then ask them, "How powerful do you feel?" on a series of items,

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and then we give them an opportunity to gamble,

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and then we take another saliva sample.

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That's it. That's the whole experiment.

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So this is what we find.

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Risk tolerance, which is the gambling,

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we find that when you are in the high-power pose condition,

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86 percent of you will gamble.

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When you're in the low-power pose condition,

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only 60 percent, and that's a whopping significant difference.

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Here's what we find on testosterone.

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From their baseline when they come in,

11:53

high-power people experience about a 20-percent increase,

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and low-power people experience about a 10-percent decrease.

12:01

So again, two minutes, and you get these changes.

12:04

Here's what you get on cortisol.

12:06

High-power people experience about a 25-percent decrease,
12:10
and the low-power people experience about a 15-percent
increase.

12:14
So two minutes lead to these hormonal changes

12:17
that configure your brain

12:18
to basically be either assertive, confident and comfortable,
12:23
or really stress-reactive, and feeling sort of shut down.

12:28
And we've all had the feeling, right?

12:30
So it seems that our nonverbals do govern how we think and
feel about ourselves,

12:36
so it's not just others, but it's also ourselves.

12:38
Also, our bodies change our minds.

12:40
But the next question, of course,

12:43
is, can power posing for a few minutes

12:45
really change your life in meaningful ways?

12:47
This is in the lab, it's this little task, it's just a couple of minutes.

12:51
Where can you actually apply this?

12:53
Which we cared about, of course.

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And so we think where you want to use this is evaluative situations,

13:01

like social threat situations.

13:04

Where are you being evaluated, either by your friends?

13:07

For teenagers, it's at the lunchroom table.

13:09

For some people it's speaking at a school board meeting.

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It might be giving a pitch or giving a talk like this

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or doing a job interview.

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We decided that the one that most people could relate to

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because most people had been through, was the job interview.

13:25

So we published these findings,

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and the media are all over it,

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and they say, Okay, so this is what you do

13:32

when you go in for the job interview, right?

13:34

(Laughter)

13:35

You know, so we were of course horrified, and said,

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Oh my God, no, that's not what we meant at all.

13:39

For numerous reasons, no, don't do that.

13:42

Again, this is not about you talking to other people.

13:44

It's you talking to yourself.

13:46

What do you do before you go into a job interview? You do this.

13:49

You're sitting down. You're looking at your iPhone --

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or your Android, not trying to leave anyone out.

13:54

You're looking at your notes,

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you're hunching up, making yourself small,

13:58

when really what you should be doing maybe is this,

14:00

like, in the bathroom, right? Do that. Find two minutes.

14:03

So that's what we want to test. Okay?

14:05

So we bring people into a lab,

14:07

and they do either high- or low-power poses again,

14:10

they go through a very stressful job interview.

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It's five minutes long. They are being recorded.

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They're being judged also,

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and the judges are trained to give no nonverbal feedback,

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so they look like this.

14:25

Imagine this is the person interviewing you.

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So for five minutes, nothing, and this is worse than being heckled.

14:31

People hate this.

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It's what Marianne LaFrance calls "standing in social quicksand."

14:37

So this really spikes your cortisol.

14:39

So this is the job interview we put them through,

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because we really wanted to see what happened.

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We then have these coders look at these tapes, four of them.

14:46

They're blind to the hypothesis. They're blind to the conditions.

14:49

They have no idea who's been posing in what pose,

14:52

and they end up looking at these sets of tapes,

14:57

and they say, "We want to hire these people,"

15:00

all the high-power posers.

15:01

"We don't want to hire these people.

15:03

We also evaluate these people much more positively overall."

15:07

But what's driving it?

15:08

It's not about the content of the speech.

15:10

It's about the presence that they're bringing to the speech.

15:13

Because we rate them on all these variables

15:16

related to competence, like, how well-structured is the speech?

15:19

How good is it? What are their qualifications?

15:22

No effect on those things. This is what's affected.

15:24

These kinds of things.

15:26

People are bringing their true selves, basically.

15:28

They're bringing themselves.

15:30

They bring their ideas, but as themselves,

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with no, you know, residue over them.

15:34

So this is what's driving the effect, or mediating the effect.

15:39

So when I tell people about this,

15:42

that our bodies change our minds and our minds can change our behavior,

15:46

and our behavior can change our outcomes, they say to me,

15:49

"It feels fake." Right?

15:50

So I said, fake it till you make it.

15:52

It's not me.

15:54

I don't want to get there and then still feel like a fraud.

15:57

I don't want to feel like an impostor.

15:59

I don't want to get there only to feel like I'm not supposed to be here.

16:03

And that really resonated with me,

16:05

because I want to tell you a little story about being an impostor

16:08

and feeling like I'm not supposed to be here.

16:11

When I was 19, I was in a really bad car accident.

16:14

I was thrown out of a car, rolled several times.

16:17

I was thrown from the car.

16:19

And I woke up in a head injury rehab ward,

16:22

and I had been withdrawn from college,

16:24

and I learned that my IQ had dropped by two standard deviations,

16:30

which was very traumatic.

16:32

I knew my IQ because I had identified with being smart,

16:35

and I had been called gifted as a child.

16:37

So I'm taken out of college, I keep trying to go back.

16:41

They say, "You're not going to finish college.

16:43

Just, you know, there are other things for you to do,

16:45

but that's not going to work out for you."

16:47

So I really struggled with this, and I have to say,

16:51

having your identity taken from you, your core identity,

16:54

and for me it was being smart,

16:56

having that taken from you,

16:57

there's nothing that leaves you feeling more powerless than that.

17:00

So I felt entirely powerless.

17:02

I worked and worked, and I got lucky,

17:04

and worked, and got lucky, and worked.

17:06

Eventually I graduated from college.

17:08

It took me four years longer than my peers,

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and I convinced someone, my angel advisor, Susan Fiske,

17:15

to take me on, and so I ended up at Princeton,

17:17

and I was like, I am not supposed to be here.

17:20

I am an impostor.

17:22

And the night before my first-year talk,

17:24

and the first-year talk at Princeton is a 20-minute talk to 20 people.

17:27

That's it.

17:28

I was so afraid of being found out the next day

17:31

that I called her and said, "I'm quitting."

17:34

She was like, "You are not quitting,

17:35

because I took a gamble on you, and you're staying.

17:38

You're going to stay, and this is what you're going to do.

17:41

You are going to fake it.

17:42

You're going to do every talk that you ever get asked to do.

17:45

You're just going to do it and do it and do it,

17:48

even if you're terrified and just paralyzed

17:50

and having an out-of-body experience,

17:52

until you have this moment where you say, 'Oh my gosh, I'm doing it.

17:56

Like, I have become this. I am actually doing this."

17:59

So that's what I did.

18:00

Five years in grad school,

18:01

a few years, you know, I'm at Northwestern,

18:03

I moved to Harvard, I'm at Harvard,

18:05

I'm not really thinking about it anymore, but for a long time I had been thinking,

18:09

"Not supposed to be here."

18:11

So at the end of my first year at Harvard,

18:14

a student who had not talked in class the entire semester,

18:18

who I had said, "Look, you've gotta participate or else you're going to fail,"

18:22

came into my office. I really didn't know her at all.

18:25

She came in totally defeated, and she said,

18:28

"I'm not supposed to be here."

18:35

And that was the moment for me.

18:37

Because two things happened.

18:38

One was that I realized,

18:40

oh my gosh, I don't feel like that anymore.

18:43

I don't feel that anymore, but she does, and I get that feeling.

18:46

And the second was, she is supposed to be here!

18:48

Like, she can fake it, she can become it.

18:50

So I was like, "Yes, you are! You are supposed to be here!"

18:54

And tomorrow you're going to fake it,

18:56

you're going to make yourself powerful, and, you know --

18:58

(Applause)

19:04

And you're going to go into the classroom,

19:08

and you are going to give the best comment ever."

19:10

You know? And she gave the best comment ever,

19:13

and people turned around and were like,

19:15

oh my God, I didn't even notice her sitting there. (Laughter)

19:18

She comes back to me months later,

19:20

and I realized that she had not just faked it till she made it,

19:23

she had actually faked it till she became it.

19:25

So she had changed.

19:27

And so I want to say to you, don't fake it till you make it.

19:31

Fake it till you become it.

19:34

Do it enough until you actually become it and internalize.

19:38

The last thing I'm going to leave you with is this.

19:40

Tiny tweaks can lead to big changes.

19:45

So, this is two minutes.

19:47

Two minutes, two minutes, two minutes.

19:49

Before you go into the next stressful evaluative situation,

19:52

for two minutes, try doing this, in the elevator,

19:55

in a bathroom stall, at your desk behind closed doors.

19:58

That's what you want to do.

20:00

Configure your brain to cope the best in that situation.

20:03

Get your testosterone up. Get your cortisol down.

20:05

Don't leave that situation feeling like, oh, I didn't show them who I am.

20:09

Leave that situation feeling like,

20:11

I really feel like I got to say who I am and show who I am.

20:14

So I want to ask you first, you know, both to try power posing,

20:20

and also I want to ask you to share the science, because this is simple.

20:25

I don't have ego involved in this. (Laughter)

20:27

Give it away. Share it with people,

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because the people who can use it the most

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are the ones with no resources and no technology

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and no status and no power.

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Give it to them because they can do it in private.

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They need their bodies, privacy and two minutes,

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and it can significantly change the outcomes of their life.

20:45

Thank you.

(Auto-generated by YouTube.)