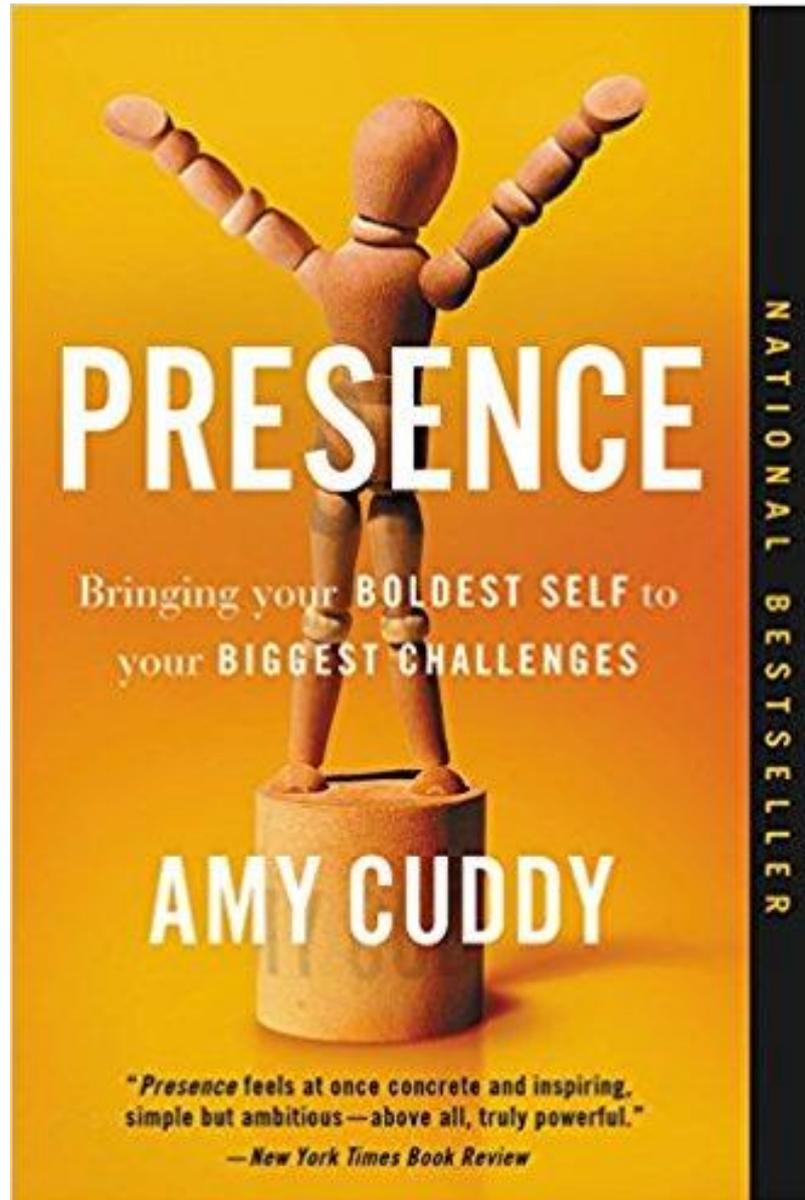


# *Presence*

## *Reading Guide*



Created for the members of the  
Thrive Within Virtual Book Circle

## Introduction

When Amy was in college she was involved in a car accident, the would change her world dramatically. Despite looking whole and well on the outside, she sustained a traumatic brain injury, which eventually led her to studying the science of presence.

After her empowering and enlightening TED talk, she is often email or stopped in a coffee shop and told about how much her research has helped changed people's lives.

This book is not just a collect of her work, but the work of many social scientists who study things like presence, power, confidence, etc.

### Questions:

- Have you ever felt powerless? What was it like? What did you do (or not do)?
- What is the relationship between presence and power?

## Chapter One: What is Presence?

### Summary:

Amy starts this book by sharing a story of her own, when she was anything but present. She was a doctoral student hoping to get a professorship, and was at an annual conference when she found herself in an elevator with three esteemed professor. The quote to sum it up is..."That was the worst elevator-pitch I have ever heard."

*L'esprit d'escalier* (Coined by Denis Diderot)—the do-over that we long for that comes after we have descended the stairs. It's a feeling that many of us long for.

In Lakshmi Balachandra's study, she was looking at how potential investors respond to pitches. The attributes that stood out were passion, confidence, and enthusiasm, all of which can't be faked.

*PRESENCE* (as defined by Amy) *is the state of being attuned to and able to comfortably express our true thoughts, feelings, values, and potential.*

Presence is a personal sense of power, where you are not trying to make an impression, or fake your way through an experience, or convincing yourself you “should do it this way.” It’s about being YOU, no matter what the moment. It’s not about being extraordinary—it’s about embracing YOUR ORDINARY.

With presence trust can be built, and when you aren’t present then people can tell and don’t know what or how to interpret you and your actions.

There is a difference between confidence and arrogance. People who have a true sense of self and thus high self-esteem do not need external validation—it comes from the inside. They are willing and open to other perspectives and to not being agreed with.

When we are fully present, there is a synchronicity between our verbal and non-verbal communication because we are aligned internally. Which means, that when we are not being present, there is a disconnect between the words we use and the movements our bodies and faces make.

(BY THE WAY, you are not as great of a lie detector as you think, according to Nancy Etoff’s study. It’s more about the verbal/non-verbal disconnect than about the actual words said, which is what you probably focus on...)

Presence comes when we believe in ourselves and our story. We could “sell” to ourselves.

### **Key Ideas:**

- When we spend our time thinking about the moment we are in, we aren’t in the moment. We aren’t being present.
- You can’t fake presence.
- When we can be present through the small challenges, we gain the power to be present in the more challenging moments.
- Presence is when we are not fighting ourselves but BEING ourselves.
- Worry about being judged is futile—you will be judged no matter what and YOU are also judging.
- True confidence comes from LOVE.
- Nervousness isn’t always a sign of fear—it can also be a sign of PASSION.

### **Questions:**

- How would you define presence? What does it look like? Feel like? What is it NOT?
- Amy describes how she “backwards-projected” herself in order to figure out how things “went wrong”? Do you ever do that? What does it do for you? Would you prefer to do something else? Like what?
- How do you express your worthiness?
- **FROM AMY:** Is presence about the physical, psychological, or spiritual? Is it about the individual alone or in relation to others? Is it a fixed characteristic or a momentary experience?
- If you think of two moments—one when you weren’t proud of how you handled yourself, and one where you were. What was the difference? Was a sense of presence involved?
- Is there anyone in your life who you think lies? What about them leads you to believe so?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you tried to be “more of yourself”? What was the result?
- What is your biggest take-away from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

## **Chapter Two: Believing and Owning Your Story**

### **Summary:**

The self is not your personality test results. It is multi-faceted and dynamic and is expressed in different ways through our thoughts, feelings, values, and behaviors. It is open to growth.

According to Amy, the authentic self is an experience—a state, not a trait.

The many of the adversities that we face in our lives are painful, they are a part of us, and help to shape who we are both physically and psychologically. It would be good for us to embrace them and see their strengths, rather than wish that they had never happened.

One way to profile your best self is to look at what beliefs, attitudes, characteristics, etc of BLOCK you or ENABLE you to be your best self. (See questions below for how to do this yourself.)

One way in which we can defeat a threat before it exists is through self-affirmation. This is not about repeating one-liners in the mirror, but about connecting to your values and what matters most.

Many studies have shown the effects of self-affirmation, but one that stands out was conducted by David Creswell and David Sherman. The subjects took the Trier Social Stress Test (TSST) which is supposed to examine responses to stress, yet before they underwent the test, they were asked to write about one of their core values, or another value that they do not resonate with. Those that wrote about their core value, showed lower stress responses, as per saliva tests.

Amy gives us several examples from the performing arts that give us another glimpse into what presence looks like. The performing artist shows presence when they are no longer thinking about the technical quality, and instead are feeling their way. They are connected, which then connects you as well.

Finally, Amy describes all of the nuggets that she learned from her interview with actor Julianne Moore. The importance of being seen. The importance of relaxation. Preparation is important, but it isn't all of it. It's not all about what you say, but HOW you say it. The importance is honesty and authenticity. If we are trying to be someone we are not, we can't be present. If we are protecting ourselves too much, we can't be present.

### **Key Ideas:**

- Your authentic self is dynamic, rather than static. You can change.
- Before entering a stressful situation, re-connect to your core values.
- Self-affirmation is confirming yourself to yourself.
- We know that we are being our authentic self when we could not repeat the "performance."
- Being present is about being SEEN.
- When we are present, we become better listeners, and support others to be present as well.
- When you are fully present, everything is ELEVATED.

### **Questions:**

- **FROM AMY:** What is the authentic self? What exactly does it mean to be true to yourself? Is it what your friends have in mind when they encourage you to "just be yourself"? Is it the feeling we have when we're "being real" Can we expect to be the same person, in every

circumstance, at every moment? How many selves are in there, and how is it determined which one we express? WHAT IS THE SELF?

- **FROM AMY:** Is your authentic BEST self the same as your authentic TRUE self?
- What is it that prevents you from believing, trusting and BEING your boldest self?
- **FROM AMY:** Who exactly is our authentic best self, and how do we find it when we need it?
- **FROM AMY:** What are three words that best describe you as an individual? What is unique about you that leads to your happiest times and best performance? Reflect on a specific time—at work or at home—when you were acting in a way that felt “natural” and “right.” How can you repeat that behavior today? What are your signature strengths and how can you use them?
- What are some of the situations that currently induce anxiety for you?
- What are some of your core values? How can you use the findings in the Creswell/Sherman study to reduce your anxiety the next time you feel threatened?
- Amy talks about how when a musician is being their authentic self, you know because there is a harmony to everything they are doing. How does this relate to what you read about in *The Art of Possibility*?
- Have you ever prepared and prepared and prepared for something, and it still didn't go well? After reading this chapter, what could you pinpoint was the issue?
- How can you take this idea of OWNING your story to your life and anxiety-provoking situations?
- What advice or words from Julianne Moore had the greatest effect on you? How can you use those words moving forward?
- What is your biggest take-away from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

### **Chapter Three: Stop Preaching, Start Listening: How Presence Begets Presence**

#### **Summary:**

Jeffrey Brown, a young baptist minister, had no idea what he was getting into when he decided to work toward a more integrated approach to the gang and homicide issue in Boston. Without knowing what would happen, he walked

the deadly neighborhoods night after night looking to understand and connect, because that would be what it took to reach these young people, and find a solution. They needed to disrupt the status quo. Through his work, there was a dramatic drop in the murder rate in Boston, as well as a Season of Peace, where no guns were fired at all.

When we meet new people, we classify them into types usually based on competency or warmth, with warmth being of greater importance to us. Interestingly, though, when people are asked if they would rather be seen as warm or competent, they choose competent.

Brown tells the story about what it means to be *silk*. Essentially, being silk is when you are being too smooth, and not real.

William Ury also illustrates the importance of listening, when he talks about negotiating with Chavez in Venezuela. He emphasized the importance of not giving advice or offering assistance, but of asking questions when openings arose. It's about listening to truly understand.

Truly listening is about letting go of what you think you already know. Setting aside all prejudices and preconceived ideas.

Being with people can sometimes create magic, and bring peace.

When we truly listen, these things happen:

- We build trust.
- We learn something.
- We see people as individuals, and sometimes allies.
- We co-create solutions.
- The other people start to listen as well.
- Sometimes the best words are no words at all--simply your presence.

### **Key Ideas:**

- To have presence you must show up--literally. And HOW we show up matters significantly.
- Without trust, your great ideas won't go anywhere. "Trust is the conduit for influence."
- Revealing our true self allows other people to reveal theirs.
- We can affect more change when we turn our "ear toward collaborative listening."

- When we relinquish power, we become more powerful.

### Questions:

- There may not be deadly gangs in your world, but there may be some hostility. What can you learn from Jeffrey Brown's approach to dealing with the gang violence in Boston?
- Would you rather be seen as trustworthy or competent? Why? What is more important when meeting other people? Are the people you hang out with most, more warm than competent, or more competent than warm, or is it a wash?
- **FROM AMY:** Why is it so hard for YOU to shut up and listen?
- What or who in your life have you recently been trying to control and have power over? How can you turn to listening as a means to have more power?
- What would it look like you to turn your ear toward collaborative listening? What Possibility, might you create together?
- What is your biggest take-away from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

## Chapter Four: I Don't Deserve to Be Here

### Summary:

Amy starts this chapter off with the story of Pauline--a smart and capable woman who was constantly plagued by the thought that she didn't belong and fit in and that her success wasn't sustainable.

Psychologists refer to this as *Imposter Syndrome*, *Imposter Phenomenon*, *Imposter Fears*, or simply *Imposterism*. It's more than just a general fear of doing something, but a broader fear of being "found out" and exposed for fraud.

Imposterism is a feeling of not deserving to be someone or somewhere, and is highly prevalent among high-achieving women, though it does affect men as well. Men, though, tend to talk be quieter for fear of "stereotype backlash" (when we harass or ostracize others for falling outside of the norms of our group or culture.)

The research has not been able to pinpoint one cause of imposterism. Instead it can be linked to things like childhood experiences, family dynamics, societal expectations, prejudices, personality, and life experiences at school and work. Fear of failure, along with perfectionism, low self-esteem, and introversion, are also common in imposterism.

Fear of failure, ironically, is often common among people who have achieved something, and it doesn't seem that more achievement leads to less fear. Often it is the inverse, the more we achieve, the more we fear failing. We then understate our success and exaggerate our failures.

Sometimes our imposterism can trap us, as we distance ourselves from our successes and attribute it to luck instead. The voices of doubt reign in our heads, and we look for, or focus solely on the evidence of our imposterism. This leads us into the trap of not being present and then underperforming, which gives us more evidence. And the cycle continues.

When we spin our wheels focusing on what might happen, and what judgments could come our way, we aren't able to focus on what is actually happening in the moment.

Amy tells her own story of dealing with imposterism after her accident. She even thought about quitting so that she wouldn't have to "be found out" when she had to do a 20 minute talk. Her advisor encouraged her to "fake it until you realize you can do it." She did, and eventually came to a point when the imposterism was no longer present for her.

Since almost everybody deals with imposterisms, we must conclude that either A) we are all imposters and don't have a clue, or B) we aren't very good at judging ourselves and our abilities.

Amy's advice for dealing with imposterism is to 1) be aware of your fears, 2) talk about them, 3) learn how they operate for you.

### **Key Ideas:**

- When we are agonizing over what people MIGHT think, we don't focus on what they DO THINK.
- Imposterism can defeat us before we even begin.
- Face your fears by talking about them.

## Questions:

- Have you ever quit something because you felt like an imposter or fake?
- Have you ever successfully moved past a sense of imposterism? How?
- Are there any current imposterisms lurking in the dark? What are your next best steps?
- What has been your experience with “stereotype backlash”? On the receiving or giving end? If you were the giver, what fears do you think contributed to the backlash?
- If you were to pinpoint the cause of any imposterism you face(d), where would it hide? How can you re-write your interpretation of the past, so that you can write a new future?
- Who can you talk to your imposterisms with?
- How can you get to know your imposterism mannerisms better? What does it feel like in your body? What does it look like outside your body? Etc.
- What is your biggest take-away from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

## Chapter Five: How Powerlessness Shackles the Self (And How Power Sets it Free)

### Summary:

Life happens to us and with us, whether we decide to play the game or not, and with those changes can come a self-perceived loss of power. In its place come insecurity, anxiety, discouragement, and feelings of defeat. Any number of things can cause us to feel threatened, which only causes us to further withdraw, which further demonstrates our powerlessness. It’s exhausting!

David Keltner shed light on how it works in our brains and bodies. When we feel powerful, we activate the psychological *approach system*. We feel more free and safe, and are thus more open to opportunities. Power begets more power. The inverse is also true. When we feel powerless, we activate the *inhibition system*. We feel threatened, and our focus is on those threats, not the opportunities. Powerlessness begets powerlessness.

One way to overcome this cycle is to focus only on the BENEFITS of a decision, rather than the costs. No more PRO-CON list...just PRO-PRO.

Power, or lack of it, can have a big impact on our thoughts, feelings, behavior, and even physiology.

Power can be looked at through two lenses--SOCIAL POWER and PERSONAL POWER. Social power is that power that comes with being able to dominate or influence, and is characterized by *power over*. Personal power is freedom from influence of domination, and reliance on our INNER resources. It's *power with* or *power to*.

With that said, though, the two types of power can be very intertwined. High social power without personal power can lead to feelings of imposterism. Sometimes the loss of social power leads to a loss in perceived personal power. And oftentimes, with strong a strong sense of personal power, social power increases.

Powerlessness can affect us in a number of ways:

- It can limit our executive functioning abilities.
- It causes us to be self-absorbed, and unable to see other perspectives. (The spotlight effect)
- It limits our ability to objectively remember a situation.

Power can also affect us in a number of ways:

- It protects us against negative emotions
- It can lead to more easily forgiving others, and thus creating connections.
- It increases our ability to think critically and creatively.
- It allows us to be more vulnerable and share our feelings.
- It gets us into ACTION.
- It allows us to perform better because we believe we can, and will.

Power and powerlessness can affect our physiology, namely our hormones. Several different studies have shown the relationship between feelings of power and our levels of testosterone (the "assertiveness hormone") and cortisol (the "stress hormone"). Most leaders demonstrate the sweet spot high levels of testosterone and low levels of cortisol. One study showed that high levels of both, actual leads to an impulse to cheat.

Finally, to answer the question...does power corrupt? Yes, it can, but it doesn't have to. More likely, it is those with high social power where the corruption happens. As Amy says, "Power reveals." When we feel personally powerful we are more likely to bring forth our best selves.

### Key Ideas:

- Focus on the benefits of two decisions. Forget the costs.
- Social power is focused on others. Personal power is focused on self.
- Our feelings of power or powerlessness can have dramatic consequences in our life.
- Remembering a time when you felt personally powerful can prime you to feel more confident and self-assured.
- Feelings of personal power are limitless and can't be taken away by anyone.

### Questions:

- How do you define power? Powerlessness? Who do you see as being powerful? What makes them so?
- **From Amy:** Recall a time when you felt personally powerful. Take a few moments to reflect on that experience and how it felt?
- Are there any areas of your life where you felt powerless? What is the difference between the two if you were to dig deeper? Is it mindset, skill-level, or something else entirely?
- What threats do you see in your world?
- Think of some of the demanding moments you have encountered in your life? Did you see them as threats or challenges? How did your initial perception relate to the outcome?
- **From Amy:** Is power all in our heads?
- If you know that high cortisol is one of the key markers to feeling powerless, what steps can you take to reduce your stress and cortisol levels? How can you make it a regular practice?
- If you were to look more closely at the questions asked by the Emory professors with relation to sportsmanship, leadership, and effort (pg 138), how would you answer those questions as it relates to the different areas of your life (potentially, including this book circle.)
- In what ways (if any) do you "cheat" in life? (Presumably when you have high testosterone levels and high cortisol levels.)
- What is your biggest take-away from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

## Chapter Six: Slouching, Steepling, and the Language of the Body

### Summary:

Amy begins this chapter talking about the All Blacks, the New Zealand Rugby team and the haka that they perform before each match. Many people see it is a war dance meant to intimidate, but it is also used in times of peace and at funerals to show respect. It is communicating something, but what, exactly? There is a link between how we hold our bodies and how powerful or powerless we feel. It is seen in the animal kingdom, as well as in humans. When we feel good, we expand. When we don't, we shrink.

But it's not just about how we hold ourselves. It's in our facial expressions, our eyes, our gaze, our hand gestures, our walk, and our vocal patterns.

Some of the research around powerful/powerless non-verbals:

- Steepled fingers, or finger tenting is a sign of confidence
- Feeling powerful leads to believe you are taller than you actually are, and others as smaller than they actually are.
- Pride is expressed with a small smile, head tilted back, and chest out. (Even in congenitally blind athletes.)
- Feeling powerful leads people to walk with a swagger, with arms out in a more expansive way. Feeling powerless leads to the opposite. More closed in.
- When we feel powerful, we talk slower, take more breaths, and aren't afraid of silences.
- A hand on the neck is a sign of feeling threatened, as we protect our carotid artery from a "predator."

In several experiments, boys and girls were given gender neutral dolls in certain high-power or low-power postures. The evidence was clear--high-power postures are significantly more attributed to boys/men and low-power postures to girls/women. As young as the age of 6.

Amy doesn't want to tell girls to be more like men, but to girls to exert more personal power and take up more space.

Yet, we need to find a harmony. Powerful body language can signal people to stay away, and the goal is not for intimidation but for intimacy. Power with or power to, not power over.

In going back to the haka dance, it is about pride, yes, but it isn't just about intimidating the other team. It's about connecting with the other teammates in a ritual that strengthens and grounds all of them.

### Key Ideas:

- When we feel powerful we expand. When we don't, we shrink.
- Some of our body postures are learned, while others are universal across cultures.
- Men often show more expansive body language, not because of biology, but because of historical power differences.
- Overt displays of body language dominance won't work.
- Mimicking another person's body language can lead to smoother interactions.
- Understand the cultural norms around body language when interacting with people of other cultures.
- Our thoughts and feelings shape our body language.
- We hold entire conversations with people without saying a word.

### Questions:

- Go onto google and look for an All Blacks Haka Dance. What do you notice? How do you feel watching it? Does anything surprise you?
- Think about different situations in your life. How do you hold yourself? When you are talking to someone in "authority"? When you are reading your book? When you are in front of the computer? When you are having a difficult conversation? What do you notice about your body postures?
- How were you taught to hold your body by your family or culture? How does that relate to the research about powerful and powerless body postures?
- For those of you who were taught to hold yourself small, here is a question **from Amy**: How can you respect what you were taught by your well-meaning elders, while growing up with a sense of pride and power?

- Can you think of a time in your life, or a pivotal moment when you may have started to collapse? (Around middle school, perhaps?)
- What do you make of the research with the gender neutral dolls with the 4 and 6 year olds?
- What is your biggest take-away from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

## **Chapter Seven: Surfing, Smiling, and Singing Ourselves to Happiness**

### **Summary:**

Amy begins this chapter with a description from surfer Eve Fairbanks, and how her success at surfing was not solely based on skills or muscle memory, but on the decision to “stay on the board.” It wasn’t her success that brought forth her confidence, it was her decision to be confident that brought forth her success. This is similar to psychologist William James’s often quoted saying, “I don’t sing because I am happy, I am happy because I sing.”

The mind and body are extremely connected, and both of these examples show that bodily experiences can cause emotions. It’s the power of faking it until we actualize it. We can sing until we feel happy. We can be confident until we feel confident.

Mountains of research over the years has shown the link between facial expressions and feelings. Namely, holding an angry face makes you feel angry, just as holding a smiling face makes you happy. Even research on Botox recipients have found the same to be true, because their ability to make certain facial expressions is limited.

Post Traumatic Stress leads to struggles for many people, and many types of therapy have been used as a treatment. One that stands out through research, though is yoga. Yoga yields positive psychological and physiological results for patients with PTS, most notably because of the breathing used.

When our sympathetic nervous system (SNS) is activated in stressful situations, we tend to breathe more rapidly. When our parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) is stimulated we feel more relaxed and breathe more slowly. One way to

stimulate the PNS is to breath with a slow exhalation--2 count in breath, and 5 count out breath.

Our bodies determine more than we realize, and can have a dramatic affect on how we think and feel, on our endocrine system, our autonomic nervous system, and our brains.

### **Key Ideas:**

- Confidence can simply be a decision.
- How we hold our face, can affect how we feel.
- We can shift how we feel, but shifting how we breathe.
- We don't have to solely rely on outside circumstances to change how we feel. We can change our bodies or our breathing.

### **Questions:**

- What do you belief stands in the way of your confidence? What can you take away from Eve Fairbanks comment that, "Decisions create confidence." Are there any new decisions you might want to make?
- Besides, singing and smiling, what are some other ways you might be able to "fake" an emotion until you actualize it?"
- What is your favorite song to sing that really makes you feel alive? What if you set a time to sing it everyday?
- "Our bodies, don't just carry us where we want to go: they can help carry us to who we want to be." Who do you want to be and how can you use your body to carry you there?
- Do you practice yoga, meditation, tai chi, qigong, or chanting? Given the research cited in this chapter, do you think you might want to start? When?
- What else sticks out from this chapter? How can you take action around it?

## **Chapter Eight: The Body Shapes the Mind (So Starfish Up!)**

## Summary:

As you already learned in the previous chapter, when we are scared, we tend to collapse on ourselves, as Amy did after her accident whenever she drove in a car. The questions that came up was: Can I fake my comfort and actually be more comfortable? Can I expand my body position and actually shift my sense of power?

Two events pulled Amy into the realm of studying not how the mind talks to the body, but how the body talks to the mind. The first was watching her students before class and associating that with their participation in class. The other was her interaction with former FBI agent Joe Navarro.

What resulted was several experiments on how when we change our body posture, we can change sense of power, and our life. We develop more presence, more creativity, more courage, and even become more generous.

The question that drove the research was: What would happen if we adopt expansive postures even when we are feeling powerless?

Here are some of the results:

- High power posers were more likely to take risks.
- High power posers showed increase in testosterone and decreases in cortisol. Low power posers the opposite. (Remember the earlier data about leaders?)
- Quantitatively, the high power posers also reported feeling more powerful, confident, assertive, less stressed, and overall happier.

Other research looked at the connection between high power posing and status power, and found that high power posing for a couple of minutes proved to be more effective than have actual status and power.

There is also a correlation between how you hold your and your speech patterns. The more upright, the more positive vocabulary. The more slouched, the more negative. You also slow down your speech patterns when you are feel more comfortable.

Studies of depressed people also show that they have a bias toward the negative when they sit in a slouched position or walk with a slumped posture.

Posture doesn't just affect how we feel, it also affects how we think. When we are more upright we think more positively about ourselves, and have more positive memories and overall thought patterns. Better posture, better positivity, and better productivity.

Other interesting findings:

- The smaller the posture, the less persistent we are. It initiates a sense of learned helplessness.
- Expansive body postures increase our strength and physical skill level.
- Expansive body postures lead to increase ability to withstand pain.
- Expansive body posture lead to increased sense of presence (and hireability.)
- The smaller the device we use and the more of an iHunch we have, the less assertive we become.
- You can picture yourself in an expansive posture and BAM, you feel more powerful.
- We embody the characteristics of our avatars, so choose wisely (and tall.)

### **Key Ideas:**

- Pay attention to how you hold your body, it affects you more than you think.
- Some power poses are more effective than others depending on where you come from or where you live.
- When you are about to receive potentially bad news or criticism, open up. It won't hurt so much.
- Even if you can't physically do the power poses, you can imagine it and have the same effect.
- Starfish up!

### **Questions:**

- What situations really scare you? That would make you want to curl up in the fetal position. Would you be able to fake yourself through that situation? If so, what would that look like?
- Spend some time trying out the different power poses and see how you feel afterwards. What do you notice?
- Next time you are out in public, take a look around you and observe them. Do they have a more expansive posture or more, contracted posture?

- Think about the people in your life and how they carry themselves. Is there body posture in line with their overall positivity and happiness? (More expansive, more positive and less expansive, less positive). Maybe you can share some of this research with them in a LOVING way.
- The research shows that when we feel powerful and present, we are less likely to worry about what other people think of us. In what kinds of situations might you use this research to your advantage? (Perhaps, when doing a video in the book circle....)
- What do you think of this idea of imagining your way to power. How might you use this in your life?
- Like the woman with her starfish necklace, what daily reminder could you create to pay more attention to your body posture?
- What else might you take away from this chapter and apply to your life?

## **Chapter Nine: How to Pose for Presence**

### **Summary:**

This chapter gives us practical ways in which we can implement the ideas of the book. What a great resource!

### **General whens..**

- before new anxiety including situations
- before speaking up for self
- when asking for help
- when initiating a breakup or quitting a job
- before giving or receiving constructive feedback

### **Pre-Event Posing...**

- In the morning, right after you wake up.
- Where you feel comfortable.
- When you can find privacy in public spaces.
- Stand in waiting rooms, rather than sitting.
- Imagine yourself posing
- Sit with arms clasped behind back and chest open
- Arrive early

### **Presenting with Presence...**

- Sit up or stand tall, with shoulders back and chest open
- Breathe slowly and deeply
- Keep chin up and level (though not too high)
- Keep feet grounded (no ankle wrapping)
- Move around
- Take steps, pause, speak. Take more steps, pause, speak.
- Use props
- Move arms at the shoulders, not just the elbows
- Slow down and pause
- Relax your throat muscles
- Move through your mistakes

### **Daily Posture Reminders:**

- Be self-aware. Know when you collapse.
- Set posture reminders
- Optimize space to prevent slouching
- Stretch in bed
- Combine with other daily routines
- Use a headset when on calls
- Walk around and/or have walking meetings
- Expand through exercise
- Ask for an accountability buddy to remind you

### **Question:**

- Which one(s) do you plan to implement TODAY?

## **Chapter Ten: Self-Nudging: How Tiny Tweaks Lead to Big Changes**

### **Summary:**

Slowing down is its own way of expanding and showing our power. Most moments don't require an action right away. Sleeping on things allows us to be proactive, rather than reactive.

Presence and personal power is not about winning anything. It's about taking action with poise, confidence, and grace, regardless of what the outcome could be.

When we celebrate the tiny victories, we nudge ourselves in the direction of more courage later on. Behavior reinforces behavior (in either direction.) Remembering past success, or moments of courage and confidence make it easier the next time.

So what is a nudge? A nudge is a small way of creating change, that do not require too much psychological and physical commitment. It's also about how you architect your choices, and setting yourself up for success from the beginning. Knowing our need to belong and fit in can also be a social nudge.

(This isn't in the book, but I read the book that Amy references, "Nudge", by Thaler and Sunstein, and wanted to share a bit more. When they talk about choice architecture, the mean creating an environment where you are more likely to take the "better choice." For example, the fruit bowl that you see each day on the counter, and the cookies stashed in the back cupboard, or left at the grocery store.)

When we focus on the process, rather than the result, it can also lead to greater success. We develop more of a growth mindset (as per researcher Carol Dweck.) We are more likely to see challenging situations as opportunities for growth.

According to Amy, body-mind connections work better than verbal affirmations because you aren't arguing with yourself about whether what you are saying is BS.

Our prejudices come through in our body language, and other people's prejudices towards us may affect our behavior. Pay attention to how people's body's are affecting your own.

Excitement and nervousness manifest in the body in the same way. You can call it what you want. Choose the one that most empowers you. (hint...it's excitement.)

## **Key Ideas:**

- Set yourself up for success by thinking about how you set up your choices.
- Focus on incremental changes. Baby steps lead to big gains.
- Celebrate!!
- Nudges focus on the how, not the what.
- Practice mindfulness when interacting with others, as you may unconsciously mimic their body language.
- Connecting with your older self, allows you to make “better” decisions in the present.

### **Questions:**

- When someone pushes your buttons or you are triggered, how do you typically respond? How might you respond differently, using the idea that slowing down is more powerful?
- How could you setup your environment in a way that allows you to self-nudge towards a more expansive body posture?
- What small victories can you celebrate right now? How can you make celebrating a more permanent part of your life?
- What is one of our BIG goals? What are some of the incremental steps to get there? How might you focus on those more regularly?
- What are some of the situations that make you feel nervous? What do you think of this idea that anxiety and excitement are the same in the body and you can trick yourself one way or another?
- Is there anything else from this chapter that stands out, or was a big Ah-ha?

## **Chapter Eleven: Fake it Til You Become It**

### **Summary:**

In this chapter, Amy gives examples from some of her readers and TED Talk watchers on how they used her ideas in their own lives..

- Will, who power posed in the bathroom before a movie audition and got the part.
- An unemployed woman who took to power-posing before interviews and landed a new job.
- An university student who never participated in class.

- A 4th grade girl who was scared to give a 30 minute presentation, let alone speak for 3 minutes in class.
- Several high school students with test anxiety, that was affecting their grades.
- A girl with nightmares and anxiety after watching a scary movie
- A 5th grade student with selective mutism
- Swimmers and volleyball players, who wanted to win
- A combat veteran with PTS
- Inmates in a women's prison
- A homeless man
- A woman in an abusive relationship, who left and rebuilt her life
- People with disabilities looking for mainstream employment
- Horses...(yes, horses.)

**Questions:**

- Which of these stories most resonated with you? Why?
- Who might you want to teach power-posing to?
- Anything else???