

# Book Review

## **Presence: Bringing your boldest self to your biggest challenges**

**Cuddy, A. (2016). Orion Publishing Group Ltd.**

Author Amy Cuddy is an American social psychologist at Harvard Business School. When she was a teenager she was involved in a car accident that left her with a serious head injury. Doctors told her she may never fully recover and to not expect to graduate high school.

"I felt like an imposter in my body," she says. This experience led her to study how confidence and doubt can affect a person's life. "Our bodies change our minds, and our minds change our behaviour, and our behaviour changes our outcomes". This is the mantra that sets the tone for her book.

Presence has six key elements – being confident, passionate, enthusiastic, captivating, comfortable and authentic. By researching people's behaviour, Cuddy developed a series of "power poses". Power poses are about physically opening yourself up, taking up space and feeling powerful and there are aptly named poses such as "starfish" and "wonder-woman".

In the chapter "Slouching, Steepling, and the Language of Body", she discusses the All Blacks' haka and how showing such power to others can make us feel strong. She suggests that by regularly "power posing" before stressful events such as a job interview or an important meeting, your body is telling your mind to, "believe in yourself and be powerful". Instead of approaching an opportunity with anxiety, power posing can help you feel more confident and help you be your true self.

The book has many practical tips about projecting confidence even when you don't feel it. At times, the ideas are overshadowed by her own research findings and personal stories from people who have been using power poses. However, I think the concepts of feeling powerful to become powerful, and that lots of "tiny tweaks make big changes", are wonderful take-home messages that many of us will find helpful.

So, before my next big challenge, you might find me in a corner somewhere doing my two minutes of power posing before bringing my true presence to the situation.

**Reviewed by Sarah Cahill, registered nurse and medical writer.**

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