

What Leaders Can Learn From Tarzan

By Dragan Milicevic on December 6, 2016

As a child, I loved watching Tarzan, the kid raised by apes who grew up to become the hero of the jungle. He was always there when someone needed to be protected from harm. Before saving the day, he would belt out his Tarzan call and pound his chest - radiating sheer power and strength. Well, if you think the call and the chest pounding were invented out of the blue by some bored Hollywood executives, think again.



Many of the executives I coach lack the self-confidence to act powerfully and effectively. Take Charles, a successful CEO who has mastered the ins and outs of the business, successfully managed mergers and acquisitions and led his company to sustained success for 10 years. But when he has to give his board members or even his assistant negative feedback, he gets anxious. And when he has to take a tough personnel decision, he feels insecure. What can he do to get his self-confidence and power back up where they belong?

Tarzan's secret

You probably know that our mind influences our body and how we behave. But did you know that social psychologist Amy Cuddy (Harvard Business School) has proven that our body influences our mind, thoughts and feelings as well? That's right, it's a two-way street. Dr. Cuddy found that interviewers rated people who adopted a high-power pose before walking into a job interview higher in terms of performance and hireability than people who adopted a low-power pose before the interview (The interviewers had no knowledge of the interviewee's preparation).

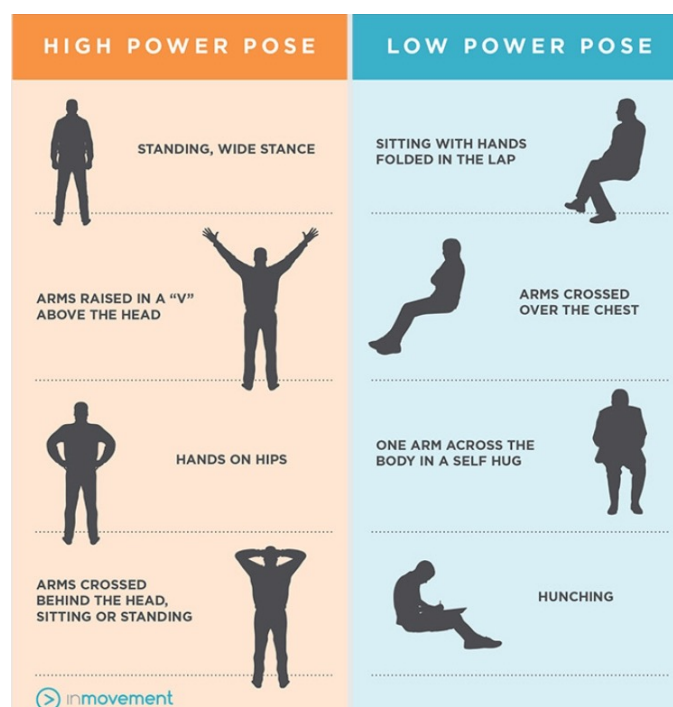
What's interesting: Interviewees also felt more powerful. How is that? Cuddy proved that body posture triggers two key hormones that influence self-confidence. Interviewees who adopted the high-power pose before the interview had a 20% increase in the dominance hormone testosterone, while the testosterone level of interviewees who adopted the low-

power pose decreased by 10%. Likewise, the stress hormone cortisol decreased by 25% among high-power pose interviewees but increased by 15% among low-power pose interviewees. So, which pose will you adopt before your next meeting?

It only takes two minutes

Before your next important conversation or meeting, find a private space and take two minutes to increase your confidence: First, stand up straight with your feet more than shoulder-width apart, open your upper body, hold your head up high and open your arms while continuing to breath.

While in this position you can additionally thump your breastbone for a while making humming. Thumping the chest activates the thymus gland, stimulates the immune system, and increases overall energy levels. At first, this may feel awkward, but would you rather feel awkward for two minutes and be the hero of the meeting - or feel half as confident as you really are?



But what if you are already in a challenging situation? How can you increase your confidence on the spot? Try this... sit up straight, open your chest, hold your head up, maintain eye contact, breath slowly, speak evenly with a deep voice, and use short sentences with few qualifiers.

Tarzan has been using these technique for decades, and now, thanks to Amy Cuddy, there's scientific evidence that they work. So the next time you're headed for the jungle, follow these tips and lead like Tarzan!

