



Myth Busting

Time to do some Myth busting.

“You can only look confident if you are confident.”

Contrary to popular belief, you don't need to be a confident person to project confidence. You simply need to understand the art of perception, and then leverage it to your advantage.

Fortunately, humans are a judgemental lot so it's easy enough to achieve.

Here's how:



The Confidence Puzzle

Too many people, especially in New Zealand, think that confidence is an elusive trait, attainable only by those with a self-assured mindset. This is wrong.

Not only is it wrong, but it perpetuates the idea that one must feel confident internally to be seen that way. The reality, however, lies in perception and how to influence it - a tool that skilled facilitators use at every opportunity.



Confidence as Perception

Whatever you've heard or seen on social media, how others perceive your confidence is just that, a perception.

It can have no basis in reality at all. In fact, it can be determined simply by your audience's understanding of what confidence looks like.



The great news for you is that by using specific and timely physical cues, you can shape how others perceive your confidence, irrespective of how you're actually feeling.

In a practical sense - you can feel like a nervous wreck, yet present yourself as calm and confident.



The Dynamics of Posture

Picture this: you walk into a room, and the facilitator stands tall, feet shoulder-width apart, and shoulders pulled back.

From your viewpoint, this individual radiates confidence. This is the essence of a confident pose—an embodiment of confidence through intentional body language.



The Physiology of Confidence

Studies indicate that adjusting body posture can directly impact mental state. Standing tall with an expansive posture can trigger hormonal changes and create a physiological state that mimics confidence.

This can be done regardless of your internal feelings.

This is where you can start to convince your mind that yes, you are in fact a confident person.



The Facilitator's Power Pose

Power Poses - I hate the term, but it's widely used to describe them, plus, they do project power and confidence, so here goes.

To convey confidence, consider adopting these well-researched poses:



1. Heroic Stance

Stand tall with feet shoulder-width apart and hands on hips or moving freely with elbows away from the rib cage.

This is a classic power pose often used to exhibit authority and strength. I use this often as it also prevents me from crossing my legs, which then arches my back. Or worse, crossing my legs and tripping over myself when I move.

This stance is easy to start with for beginners and experts alike.

2. Executive Pose

Sit with your legs crossed and hands clasped behind your head. This pose also projects a sense of calm and control. As a facilitator, you can use this when seeking to appear relaxed.

3. The Contemplator

Rest your chin on steepled fingers, leaning slightly forward. This pose suggests thoughtfulness and poise.

Have a look at images of world leaders gathered around a table. You'll often see the steeple used, especially when people want to look like they're deep in thought.

Be mindful of when and how you're using each pose. Used in the wrong context, or executed poorly, and it can leave you looking arrogant instead of confident.

That said, practice makes progress. Set yourself realistic expectations of success - it could be simply that you adopt a pose for 3 seconds before moving on to something different.



Mastering Perception

Facilitators tuned into the importance of perception know that projecting confidence involves intentional choices. By understanding the subtleties of nonverbal communication (body language, attire, etc.) they construct a visual that overrides internal uncertainties.

If you've ever put on your favorite shirt and felt a certain way, you already have an understanding of how this works.

Before you facilitate, it definitely pays to know your audience.

Dress appropriately as this will be the first chance to make a lasting impression. It's better to be slightly overdressed, than underdressed, especially if delivering to a corporate audience.



Impact on the Audience

Your audience interprets all of your signals as a measure of your confidence.

How you dress, how you utilize the floor space, your vocal variety, and your knowledge of the content - all of this adds to your credibility. This will in turn influence how confident they believe you to be and how engaged they are.



Activity: Strike a Pose

As a facilitator, you will want to experiment with various poses before your next session.

Observe how each pose influences your internal state and how your posture shapes your perceived confidence. Share your insights with a colleague or mentor.

This small piece of preparation can have large returns on your investment.

The quick win is knowing you don't have to be born confident to look confident. Instead, utilise the audiences perceptions alongside techniques you can use quickly.

By getting the hang of intentional body language you can deeply influence how people see you.

Facilitators can create this confident vibe that really works, making the whole setup perfect for a great session.

Remember, confidence isn't just about what's in your head.

It's a decision you make on how best to leverage other people's perceptions - to your advantage.