

More confidence.

New science reveals simple poses that instantly boost self-worth to put you at ease in any situation

Often, we don't even realize it's happening: We smile and nod politely as our cranky aunt schools us on the proper way to set a table, while our body subconsciously recoils inward—shoulders curve forward, arms cross and eyes cast downward. It's an instinctual response meant for self-protection, but new research suggests this guarded stance only leaves us feeling *more* defeated and small.

"We quickly change the way we feel just by altering our body language," asserts communication expert Susan Constantine, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Reading Body Language*. Crossed arms and hunched shoulders, for example, reinforces feelings of insecurity. But just as slouching saps confidence, holding a "power pose"—a stance that opens up the body—can restore feelings of strength and calm in the time it takes to make a quick trip to the ladies' room.

"You may not feel so confident initially, but after a few minutes of putting on a power pose, you'll have an adrenaline rush as your body starts telling your brain, *I feel powerful. I can do this!*" encourages Constantine. Indeed, a study in the journal *Psychological Science* showed that striking a bold posture boosted testosterone by 20 percent and lowered levels of the stress hormone cortisol by 25 percent, bringing on a spike in courage in just 2 minutes.

And that surge of fearlessness will attract more supportive company. "People gravitate to open body language because it's a source of positive energy," says Constantine. "Your nonverbals are saying, *I'm worthy*, and people treat you accordingly." Read on for easy poses guaranteed to help you channel power and poise when you need it most.

Overcome any insecurity without saying a word

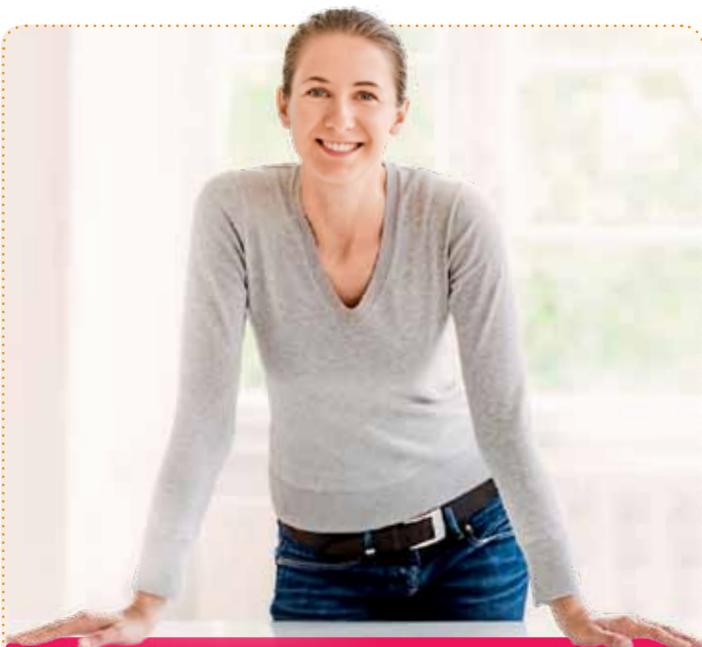
FEELING DEFEATED?

DO THE VICTORY "V"

After a coworker hurts your feelings with a snide comment about your dress at the office cocktail hour, excuse yourself and head to the ladies' room, then bring your hands up over your head and tilt your chin skyward, like a marathon winner crossing the finish line. "Lifting your arms up instantly brings more oxygen-rich blood to your head so you can think clearly," notes Patti Wood, author of *Snap: Making the Most of First Impressions, Body Language & Charisma*. "And that flood of invigorating oxygen is going to give you a whoosh of energy and power in a fraction of a second, plus boost your feelings of joy, happiness, confidence and success."

PHOTOS: GETTY, TEXT: KATIE HYNES

— in seconds!



NERVOUS?

LEAN IN

As you gear up to give a presentation, step into your office, stand in front of your desk and lean slightly forward, placing both hands on the desk's surface. "This is an action stance that signals to your mind you're ready to go," says Constantine. "It's going to wind up the body to feel powerful and in control, releasing endorphins that shift you into 'winning mode.' As a result, words will come easily and you'll be less likely to stammer or trip up."

FEELING UNHEARD?

TAKE UP SPACE

If you keep getting talked over while playing peacekeeper, try standing with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and your fists on your hips. "Holding this position, you're awakening the power in your body, so you'll actually be able to tolerate more pain and emotional distress," says Carol Kinsey Goman, Ph.D., author of *The Silent Language of Leaders*. "Women struggle to claim space because of the ladylike postures we're told to take, but think about it: When you stand with your legs closer together, you're literally a pushover. But by widening your stance and grounding yourself, you'll feel more resilient and more willing to take risks."



FRAZZLED?

KICK UP YOUR FEET

You're feeling harried from all-day party prep but expect guests at the door in 10 minutes. Find your center by reclining in a comfy chair, putting your feet up on a table or desk and linking your hands behind your head. "This position stretches out all your internal organs, allowing you to take deeper breaths, clear your mind and lower your heart rate," says Tonya Reiman, author of *The Power of Body Language*. "It quickly takes you off autopilot, relaxes you and brings you back to the present moment."

