

## Physiology creates Psychology

### How do we communicate?

As human beings we are always communicating. We can't NOT communicate, to use a double negative.

Everything we do with our bodies communicates to ourselves and to others.

Notice your own body language right now. Notice how you are holding yourself whether you are sitting or standing. How are you holding your head, your shoulders, your weight. Are you balanced or favouring one hip? Is your head tilted up or down?

The thing we can learn to appreciate about body language is that it talks to ourselves and it talks to others, without us uttering a word.

It is said that non-verbal communication makes up the vast majority of the message we send in communication, and the wonderful thing we can learn is that while our emotional state influences our physiology, so we can use our body language to create or enhance an emotional state we want to experience more often.

Think now to when you might feel sad or unhappy or unsure – how do you hold your body?

Now notice or think about how you hold yourself when you feel confident and strong, happy or excited.

A large amount of how we communicate with ourselves is through our physiology.

### Motion creates emotion

The way we move can change the way we think, feel and behave. Movement affects our body chemistry including everything from more physical activities (such as running, clapping or jumping) to the smallest movements in the muscles of the face.

How does a sad person look to you? If you've ever felt down, how did your own body look? In order to feel sad or even depressed, don't you have to use your body in a certain way? What must you do with your shoulders, slouch forward or pull them back?

Where is your head when you feel sad or down....down? Where are your eyes....down? Is your breathing shallow? In order to feel depressed it takes effort. You know what you're like when you're feeling low, because you've practiced it at some point in the past, haven't you? We all have.

Here's the interesting thing. While many researchers have studied how the body can be affected by emotions, only recently have they become interested in how emotions are affected by the body. One of the studies concluded that it's not as significant to know that we smile when we feel good or laugh when we're in good spirits as it is to know that smiling and laughing set off biological processes that, in fact, make us feel good. Smiling increases the flow of blood to the brain and changes the level of oxygen, the level of stimulation of the brain's messengers, or neurotransmitters. The same thing happens with other expressions. Put your facial expression in the physiology of fear and anger or disgust or surprise, and that's what you will feel like.

Notice how those around you communicate through their body language. There is real power in knowing how to read what someone is communicating with their body.

## Motion creates Emotion

One of Tony Robbins' most powerful distinctions of the last couple of decades is how we can use our physiology to create the emotions we want to feel more

Even the most minute changes in our facial expressions or our gestures will shift the way we are feeling in any moment, and therefore the way we evaluate our lives – the way we think and the way we act.

Every emotion you ever feel has a specific physiology linked to it: posture, breathing, patterns of movement, facial expressions.

Once you learn how to use your body when in certain emotional states, you can return to those states, or avoid them, simply by changing your physiology. The challenge is that most of us limit ourselves to just a few habitual patterns of physiology. We assume them automatically, not realising how great a role they play in shaping our behaviour from moment to moment.

## Changing your Physiology can change your life

You can change your life by changing the way you move. That either sounds like a big claim or maybe it sounds overly simplistic but it is absolutely true.

The bigger the change in your movement, the bigger the change in your emotions and this can affect your actions every day. Do you know someone who moves in a way that you'd like to? Are there friends, family members, teachers, actors, speakers or other role models that you can model?

Suppose you're a star rugby league player and you've just scored the winning try in a grand final. How would you walk? Would your head be down and your shoulders slumped over? No way! You would be strutting around telling yourself you are awesome! Would that change how you feel and what you do?

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*Smiling increases the flow of blood to the brain and changes the level of oxygen, and the level of stimulation of the brain's messengers, or neurotransmitters.*

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You will find that moving the same way that someone else does, you'll start to have very much the same feelings. Right now, stand up, and think about a goal or desire you have, something you really want to have happen in your life. As you think about it, start *hoping* for it. Stand the way you stand when you hope, when you're not sure if things will work out. *You hope it works. You hope it doesn't get screwed up.* How do you breathe when you're not sure, when you are just hoping? What does your face look like, when you're hoping? Where are your shoulders when you're hoping? Where is the weight in your body? What do you picture when you're just hoping you can achieve a goal? Do you see it working and also not working? Try it now.

Now imagine that you're *worried*. Deliberately start worrying about your goal, just for a few seconds to see what you have to do with your body. What do you do with your hands to get worried? What happens to your shoulders? Do you have any tension in your body? Do you slow down or restrict your breathing? What happens to the muscles in your face? What does your voice sound like when you are worried? What do you picture? Do you see the worst case scenario in your mind? Again, actually put yourself in this state now, and notice what you do with your body in order to feel worried.

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*Model the physiology that you use when you are in a peak state of mind or emotion.*

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Now get out of that state and start feeling certain. Think about your goal and, right now, breathe and stand the way you would if you were absolutely certain you could achieve it. How would you stand if there were no question in your mind whatsoever? What would your posture be? Put yourself in that place now. What kind of look would you put on your face? What do you do with your hands when you're absolutely certain you're going to achieve what you want?

What is your posture like now? Very different from hope and worry, isn't it? Where is the weight in your body? Is it balanced? If you're really certain, you'll probably feel quite grounded and centred. What are you picturing? I bet you only see it working and you are literally looking up a little with your head slightly tilted up. Your chest is out, you're standing tall and true, your chin is up, and your shoulders are back. How does THAT feel?

Model the physiology that you use when you are in a peak state of mind or emotion. Find those who are successful and model the physiology of their confidence, their gestures, their breathing, their walk.

**Exercise:** Write down all the emotional states you feel in an average week and ensure you are generous with the positive emotional states.

You can experience any of these just by changing the way you use your body! You can feel strong, you can smile, you can change anything in a minute just by how you hold your body, and especially by laughing. Once you are aware of how easy it is to change your emotional state through your physiology you will be able to put it in pleasurable states no matter what has happened.

***'Always laugh when you can, it is cheap medicine' Lord Byron***

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If you repeatedly use your body in weak ways, if you drop your shoulders on a regular basis, if you walk around like you're tired, you will feel tired. How could you do otherwise?

Your body leads your emotions. The emotional state you're in then begins to affect your body, and it becomes a sort of endless loop. Notice how you're sitting even now. Sit up right now and create more energy in your body and see how you can continue to be aware of your physiology.

Some of the things you can do immediately to change your state and therefore how you feel and how you perform is take deep breaths in through your nose and exhale strongly through your mouth. Put a huge grin on your face and smile!

If you want to feel passionate, start by speaking more rapidly, moving more rapidly, and take on the physiology of passion.

If you want to feel more confident, stand tall, be grounded breathe fully, speak loudly etc.

Social Psychologist Amy Cuddy shows how "power posing", standing in a posture of confidence even when we don't feel confident, can affect testosterone and cortisol levels in the brain, and can have an impact on our chances for success.

Amy Cuddy's research on body language reveals that we can change other people's perceptions and even our own body chemistry, simply by changing body positions.

Our bodies change our minds, our minds change our behaviours and our behaviour can change our outcomes.

Don't fake it till you make it, fake it till you become it.

**Reference:** A fantastic TED talk by Amy Cuddy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWZluriQUzE>

References: *Tony Robbins; The Coaching Institute, Amy Cuddy*