

The Debate On Power Posing Continues: Here's Where We Stand

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Power posing or postural feedback is a technique that suggests how you hold your body influences how you feel and how you behave. Over the last decade, naysayers labeled power posing a pseudoscience, and the intense debate over the validity of power posing research culminated in death threats and bullying. Now, more research has confirmed the effects are real, and a new generation of researchers is honing in on exactly how our posture and stance impacts our thoughts and behavior.

Power posing became popular after Amy Cuddy told a [TED](#) audience about her research which indicated that when people assume an open or expansive stance (make themselves appear taller and wider), they subsequently feel more powerful. In her [studies](#), Cuddy, along with colleagues, had participants assume either an expansive posture or a contractive posture (leaning inward, legs crossed) for a couple of minutes prior to completing tasks. The researchers found that after adopting an expansive pose, study participants felt more powerful, took more risk in a gambling task and performed better in a mock [interview](#) than those who had adopted contracted poses. Other researchers have continued to study this phenomenon, and one [study](#) published in March, found children as young as fourth grade who assumed an expansive pose reported better student-teacher relationships and reported feeling more powerful than those who adopted a contracted pose.

But some researchers were not able to replicate a few of Cuddy's effects, and some scholars began to question if power posing was a real thing. Changes in hormones, for example, that were found to be associated with power posing in Cuddy's original study were not found in a subsequent [study](#). Social psychologist and Northwestern University professor Eli Finkel describes it this way, "Many people were skeptical that power posing had the sorts of positive effects that Cuddy said they did. And, indeed, replication efforts haven't shown the same level of support for the hormonal effects that the initial study showed. But what is weird is that the results—preregistered, rigorous replications from scholars who were deeply skeptical of the effect—kept showing that the core effect is robust. Postural expansiveness versus contractiveness does indeed make people feel more powerful. The effect isn't huge, of course, but it's clearly there."

Mia Skytte O'Toole, a professor at Aarhus University in Denmark agrees that there's a connection between our posture and how we feel. She and her colleagues [published](#) an analysis of all the studies (there were 73) that had been conducted in this area and completed what's called a meta-analysis, or a statistical summary of these studies. Overall, when comparing open poses to closed, the researchers found robust effects for changes in both behavior and mood. "To me, it is non-controversial to say that the way we approach the world with our physical bodies shapes the way we think and feel," O'Toole concludes.

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