

# POWER & INFLUENCE

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### KEY POINTS

People decide how competent you are in a fraction of a second.

Factors used to determine your competence: 7% words, 38% presentation, and 55% body language.

There is a body language of power.

Body language communicates power and status — who is leading and who is following. It also communicates psychological distance — feeling close or feeling remote.

Body language can shift the dynamics of relationships, interactions, and outcomes.

To be perceived as authoritative, act high. To be perceived as approachable, act low. Do not try to act high and low at the same time. Match your body language to the message or intention.

Change your body language to change how you feel.

Changing your body position changes how powerfully you behave. Hold an expansive pose or constricted pose for two minutes to change your body chemistry. An expansive pose will make you feel dominant, or authoritative. A constrictive pose releases stress hormones.

Male and female leaders may behave the same but they're perceived differently.

Women who appear competent are often perceived as less likable. Women considered likable are often thought to be less competent. Men don't face this trade-off. Women can begin to address this dynamic by knowing when to act high and when to act low.

Women can find success in knowing when and how to use different power styles.

Effective women are comfortable moving between authoritative and approachable states, depending on the situation and goal.

## Personal Inventory

*First 5 minutes: Fill out this inventory.*

When do you feel authoritative? With whom and how? You Act High while being authoritative.

When do you feel approachable? With whom and how? You Act Low while being approachable.

➔ **Share with your Circle.** *2 minutes each. 20 minutes total. Share one.*

1. When and with whom are you authoritative?
2. When and with whom are you approachable?
3. Share one example from the past month when you acted authoritative or acted approachable? What happened?

## Practicing Skills

This has two parts, so make sure you stick to the time allotted so everyone gets a turn.

*First 6 minutes:*

Break into pairs. Share with your partner how you would like to shift the dynamic in a situation or a relationship — when you want to be seen as more authoritative or as more approachable.

- What is your goal for the situation or relationship?
- What is the current power dynamic?
  - 0 How do you act?
  - 0 How do others act?
- Practice what you might do to be seen as more authoritative or more approachable?
- Practice moving between playing high and playing low during a single conversation — but don't do both simultaneously.

*After 6 minutes:* Switch and let your partner share.

➔ **Share with your Circle.** *1 minute each. 10 minutes total.*

1. What is the goal?
2. What is the current situation?
3. What did you see or learn in practicing with your partner?

This concludes the meeting.

NOTES

## One Action

In the next week, try Acting High or Acting Low in a new way.  
Remember, you can start with small adjustments. Note any differences in how you feel.

**Share with your Circle your One Action in your next meeting.**

NOTES

## Bringing It Home

Think of something important coming up. This could be either a positive or stressful situation where you want to shift the power dynamic.

Write down all the details of this upcoming situation. What is your ideal outcome?

Imagine ways of strategically moving between Being Authoritative and Being Approachable in this situation. How will you use Acting High? How will you use Acting Low?

Will it be effective to use these approaches in achieving your goal? What feels comfortable? What feels new?

## Appendix

### Playing High

This is the basis of being authoritative.

- Still head
- Speak in complete sentences
- Hold eye contact while talking
- Move smoothly
- Occupy maximum space
- Lean back
- Slow down
- Spread body to full comfort
- Look down (tilt head back a bit)

### Playing Low

This is the basis of being approachable.

- Nodding in agreement
- Smile even when it's not funny (fake smile showing top teeth)
- Hands near face while speaking
- Sound breathless or start sentences with "um"
- Speak haltingly and in incomplete sentences, edit as you go, trail off
- Adjust what you are saying to make others understand, explain yourself
- Yield to the higher status person in speaking – let them take the lead and drive the conversation
- Take up as little space as possible; space constrains body
- When walking, move out of other's path
- Briefly check others' eyes looking for understanding and acknowledgement
- Look up at other, tilt head down
- Lean forward to check other person's responsiveness