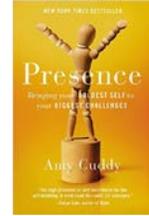


Presence:

Bringing Your Boldest Self to Your Biggest Challenges

Book's Argument: Cuddy claims that presence stems from believing in and trusting ourselves – our real, honest feelings, values, and abilities. That's important, because if we don't trust ourselves, how can others trust us? **Presence refers to the state of being attuned to and able to comfortably express our true thoughts, feelings, values, and potential.** It is not a permanent, transcendent mode of being. It comes and goes. It is a moment-to-moment phenomenon. Presence emerges when we feel personally powerful, which allows us to be acutely attuned to our most sincere selves. It comes through incremental change and is about the everyday. Through self-nudges, small tweaks in our body language and mind-sets, we can achieve presence.



Key Takeaways: True belief – in oneself, in one's ideas – is grounding. As such, *presence manifests as confidence without arrogance.* There is also a component of what Cuddy refers to as synchrony whereby to feel truly present, the elements of the self – emotions, thoughts, physical and facial expressions, behaviors – must be in harmony. Hence, *presence manifests as resonant synchrony.*

The **authentic self** is an experience, a transitory phenomenon, of knowing and feeling that we are being our most sincere and courageous self. It is **autonomously and honestly expressing our values through our actions.** Our boldest self emerges through the experience of having full access to our values, traits, and strengths and knowing that we can autonomously and sincerely express them through our actions and interactions. Further, the way we tell our story to ourselves matters. Our narrative identity captures how we make sense of the events of our lives. There exist four narrative themes:

Agency	people feel they are in control of their lives
Communion	people describe their lives as being about relationships
Redemption	people feel that challenges improve their attitudes or confer wisdom in some way
Contamination	people feel that positive beginnings turn toward negative endings

Becoming present is about how we narrate our story. It is about telling ourselves what matters and taking control of how we share it with ourselves and others.

Presence is the medium through which trust develops and ideas travel. Learning to find presence in the most challenging moments is not only good for us, it can yield great benefits for others as well. Presence gives us the power to help others in *their* most challenging moments. Revealing our true self frees others to reveal theirs. Further, real listening gives others space and safety to be honest. The paradox of listening acknowledges that by relinquishing power, we become more powerful. Just being there and listening forms a **ministry of presence** that allows our presence to speak for itself. By being honest and humble yet confident and strong, presence begets presence.

Power reveals. Personal power brings us closer to our best selves whereby we are bold enough to show who we are without subterfuge and without apology. We have the courage and the confidence to open ourselves to the gaze of others. In that way, the path to personal power is also the path to presence. It is how we, and others, discover and set free who we truly are. Such decisions create confidence. Choosing and succeeding influences how we acquire a sense of our character as our bodies express it, as all of our senses perceive it. How we choose to carry ourselves – our facial expressions, our postures, our breathing – all clearly affect the way we think, feel, and behave. Through “cognitive embodiment”, our cognitive processes can be modified through our body.

Best Quotes: “We convince by our presence.” – Walt Whitman “When you listen to someone, it's the most profound act of human respect.” – William Ury “Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power.” – Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE) “Begin to be now what you will be hereafter.” – William James “I am larger, better than I thought, I did not know I held so much goodness.” – Walt Whitman “...thoughts and feelings shape body language and...body language speaks to others. ...our body language is also speaking to us – to our own inner selves.” – Amy Cuddy

Why it's important: Carrying ourselves in a powerful way directs our feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and body to feel powerful and be present (and even perform better) in situations ranging from the mundane to the most challenging. As our profession continues the search for how best to shape environments in which members of our team are empowered to become their best selves, Cuddy's most important and robust finding should be acknowledged – **by adopting expansive, open postures, we make ourselves feel better and more effective...powerful, confident, and assertive, less stressed and anxious, and happier and more optimistic.** As a result, our behavioral evolution becomes more authentic, lasting, and self-reinforcing.

Amy Cuddy (2015)