

Enhancing Personal Presence

When speaking about personal presence, it is important to differentiate between organizational hierarchy and personal presence. Your personal presence is independent of your position within the organization. You can learn and practice skills and behaviors to feel and seem more confident in all your interactions. For example, just taking a deep breath and holding your head steady can create an inner sense of calm and an outer presence of confidence.



Take a moment to evaluate your personal presence. Check those behaviors you demonstrate frequently. Acknowledge those high personal presence behaviors you demonstrate (your strengths). Good job—you're on the right track! Then take a moment to look at those high personal presence behaviors you did not check (your learning edges). How could you improve yourself in these areas?

Our behavior—
reinforced by our
appearance—signals
our importance or
lack of importance.

Keith Johnstone

Signals of Low Personal Presence

- Have unsteady eye contact
- Speak in fragments and use many qualifiers
- Sound out of breath when speaking and do not pause
- Move the head around a lot while speaking
- Speak while touching the face
- Stand with toes turned in
- Move body in stiff and constricted way and allow feet to wander
- Sound stressed with voice going up at the end of sentences
- Avoid or fill silences

Signals of High Personal Presence

- Maintain steady eye contact
- Use grammatically complete sentences and few qualifiers
- Take full deep breaths when speaking and use pauses
- Move head very little when speaking
- Speak without touching the face
- Stand with feet planted beneath hips
- Own the space and use deliberate gestures
- Sound warm and confident with voice going down at the end of sentences
- Use silences

Enhancing Personal Presence *continued*

Think back to the last group event you attended (meeting, party, conference, convention, etc.). Review the above list and think about what signals you probably gave out.

How you look at and evaluate other people is probably not unlike how others are evaluating you. They use the same signals to determine your status.

So, think back to another event where you walked into a room full of people you didn't know. What assumptions did you make about other people's status? Why did you assume this? What were they signaling to you that caused you to make this assumption?

Ask one of your colleagues to watch you at your next meeting or presentation and evaluate your personal presence using the form on the following page. They should indicate where you fall on each of the dimensions by placing an "X" on the scale (these dimensions are described on the previous page).

Enhancing Personal Presence *continued*

Watch your colleague and evaluate his or her personal presence in each of the following dimensions. Indicate where he or she falls by placing an “X” on the scale.

	Signals Low Presence	Signals High Presence
What Can Change		
Eye contact		
Sentence structure		
Breath		
Use of pauses		
Head movement		
Touching face		
Stance		
Owning space		
Gestures		
Sound of voice		
Ending sentences		
Use of silence		

No behavior is insignificant. When we interact together, our brains are counting the blink rate and registering even the tiniest movement.

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