

Present a Powerful Impression – and Shine in the Spotlight!

By Ruth Bonetti

Have you noticed how presenters' body language, words and gestures create a poised impression – or the opposite!

These simple tips will ensure your audiences are **positively** impressed by your powerful presentation.

Research by Professor Albert Mehrabian found that the brains of audiences focus more on presenters' body language, expression and tone, than on actual spoken words. Meaning is perceived via:

- 7% - the spoken words
- 38% - how the words are said (paralinguistic)
- 55% - facial expression

Thus 93% of meaning consists of the “Right Brain” style aspects of facial expression, body language, rhythm and imagery.

When we're threatened in a presentation situation our fight-or-flight reaction affects body posture. An instinct is to protectively hunch our shoulders, which constricts and shortens our spine – and also inhibits breathing.

What is “correct” posture? Rather than over-compensate at the word, let's find your natural, comfortable balance:

Stand up against a wall, with head and feet about ten centimetres away from the wall. Lightly press your torso, from shoulders to buttocks, against the wall as much as possible, given the inherent S-bend of the spine. Bend your knees slightly, which unlocks their tension and tilts your pelvis forward a little. Notice how your chest has expanded out into that barrel shape common to good singers?

BUILD THAT UPRIGHT HABIT!

At first, this may seem forced and unnatural, but stand against the wall a few times each day until it's a habit. Speak a few words in this posture, and you will note the improved projection, depth and quality of your tone.

Similarly, we need balance for positive presentation. Our audience reads our poise – or lack of it – from the feet up.

That commanding stance we hope to project needs balance evenly on both feet (as our main stance; feel free to move throughout the presentation). Then we are centred, grounded, and give a positive, confident impression. Place the feet comfortably apart in a V-shape, at an angle similar to a clock face's 10 to 2. Men's feet should be about 20 - 25 cm apart at the heels, depending on their height; women look more natural with heels about 10 cm apart.

Especially, avoid that lop-sided look of excessive leaning all your weight on one leg.

Before you walk onto a platform to speak, or into that board-room meeting or interview, stand against the wall in the bathroom or corridor and immediately your poise will increase. Balance your weight evenly on both feet.

In this stance, you look poised, commanding, successful. Your presentation will shine.

(400 words)

BYLINE

Keynote and seminar presenter, Ruth Bonetti is author of 10 books including *Don't Freak Out – Speak Out; Public speaking with confidence* (published by Words and Music), which is also available on CD and E-Book.

This, and Ruth's complimentary fortnightly E-Zine *Crisp Confidence Communiqué* is available on her website <http://www.ruthbonetti.com>

Ruth learned to conquer the platform jitters in her long international career, presenting in Europe (she speaks German, Swedish and French), Australia and America, where her seminars were repeated by popular demand.

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