

# Confidence building with body language

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of this strategy is to make a client aware of their body language.

## **Description**

It is interesting that the mind, body and voice all work as one complete unit, which means that if we change one of these factors, the others cannot help but change also. This strategy is demanding of you as a coach as you must be very aware of your own body language. You will be demonstrating to the client their gestures, stance, posture and movement.

## **Process**

### ***Exercise 1***

First, assume a ‘confident posture’ yourself. If sitting, ensure that your body, legs and head are facing the client. Both feet should be firmly on the floor in a ‘grounded’ position (or if your legs are crossed at least one foot should be firmly on the floor). If standing, your feet should be slightly apart, with weight evenly distributed. Imagine a thread pulling you up from the back of your head to be as tall as you can, giving you a straight spine. Your torso should be very slightly inclined towards your client. Your shoulders should be down and back; feel your shoulders getting wider – ‘taking up

space'. Your arms and hands should be uncrossed and open. Your head should be upright with your chin parallel to the floor. *Smile*. Ask the client what they would assume about your level of confidence (and notice your own feelings).

Next, demonstrate what you see your client doing. You might slightly exaggerate and tell them you are exaggerating their gestures (you don't want to knock their confidence further!). Look out for a curved spine, a torso leaning back, a chin lowered, arms that cover the body, a part of their body (feet, legs, face, torso) not directly pointing towards you. As before, ask them what they would feel about your level of confidence – and notice your own feelings.

Direct them to assume the confident body language as detailed above. You should see a big difference; give them appropriate encouragement. It is particularly helpful if you have a mirror or video recording equipment to hand, allowing the client to see the differences you have seen. Ask them how they feel.

If your client has ever studied martial arts, the 'confident posture' will be familiar to them and they will remember it as the 'xyz stance'. Your client will need to practise regularly so you might need to ask them where, when and what will remind them to do this.

## ***Exercise 2***

Watch your client walking both towards and away from you. To raise both the appearance and feeling of confidence, encourage them to walk with the confident posture (above), without rushing and with a slight swing to the arm(s). Weight should be quite centred, creating an effect of a 'glide'. Ask them how they feel and feed back what you see.

## ***Example***

Janet was due to start a new job, having had two years at home with her baby. She had been in her previous position for several years and was terrified of meeting new people. She was also terrified of travelling into London, being surrounded by 'all those strangers looking at her'. She admitted

that she had hated the travel to and from work in the last job for the same reason. Janet agreed to leave our office with the ‘new walk’, including looking at the people around rather than looking at the pavement. Six months after our coaching finished, Janet emailed me and said that her ‘life was changed’. Now, she always walks with a swing in her arm, looks at people around her – and she loves her job.

### **Pitfalls**

- Check out your own natural body language with a mirror first, ensuring that it is consistently confident before advising others.
- When asking the client how they feel in the confident position, they may say that it feels strange or even uncomfortable. That is fine. Holding the body differently does feel strange, but with lots of practice it will feel very empowering. The key is for them to see what a difference it makes, so if a mirror is not available at the coaching session, get their commitment to checking it out at home.

### **Bibliography**

Kuhnke, E. (2007) *Body Language for Dummies*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.