

Making Your Voice Heard

Tags: [#managing-up](#) [#executive-presence](#) [#confidence](#)

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Dialogue

There are many books on influence and lots of research that's been done examining why people speak up -- but much less on how to do it successfully.

One night, we had agreed to sit down and discuss the plans for our wedding. But when I was ready to do so, I noticed he was in the middle of watching a movie on TV. I waited for the movie to finish but by then it was late and he said he was too tired. When I expressed my frustration he replied, 'Why didn't you tell me you were waiting for me? I would have turned off the movie – I've seen it before.' Only when he said that did I realize how much I had stifled my own voice.

Point 1: Managing Negative Emotions

If we are to be successful in our upward influence attempts, we must learn to manage our negative emotions.

Journal / Third person

Point 2: Changing Your Attitude Towards Failure

Story of her trying to have a conversation with her parents.

Point 3: Using Deliberate Practice

Distinction: Move away from repetition and towards deliberate practice.

Focus on weak points / change strategy

Strategy when getting interrupted in meetings. 1) Stop 2) Acknowledge/Continue 3) Ignore interruption -- you have a fourth option.

Point 4: Boosting Your Self Confidence

Instead of thinking about the power difference, remind yourself of their role in helping you achieve your goal.

Recall a high power incident beforehand (psychologists use this.) Also, power pose.

Point 5: Generating Positive Emotions

Plan free time around learning a new skill or helping others vs. watching a movie or just going on holiday.

What have you changed your mind on?

Quotes

Next I provide five strategies that , when combined , will help you to build your inner power and give you the courage to speak up . These include managing negative emotions , changing your attitude towards failure , using deliberate practice , boosting your self - confidence and generating positive emotions .

As you might have deduced from the six dimensions , the key to managing negative emotions is not to ignore or stifle them but rather to be aware of them , accept them and devise strategies to make ourselves feel better (talking with friends , for example , or writing in a journal) . Ignoring or suppressing negative emotions can reduce our ability to experience positive emotions or increase obsession with negative moods and even depression .

When you are upset , acknowledge and accept the emotion (' I really feel frustrated ! ') while also controlling any desire to act impulsively (take a deep breath and count to ten) . Instead , do something that makes you feel better : call a friend , write in a journal , take a walk , listen to music . Or talk to yourself in the third person (' why is Connson so upset ? ') and give yourself advice as you would a friend – this not only distances you from the emotion , but also helps you think more clearly about what to do .

In the introduction to this book , I mentioned when , as a university student , I tried to convince my parents to let me make my own decisions . This seemed to me such an obviously legitimate request – after all , my friends were allowed to make decisions without deferring to their parents – that I was completely unprepared for my parents ' obstinate rejection of the proposal . My reaction to the rejection was to give up on ever trying to influence them again . If I could not convince them of something so obviously correct , my younger self concluded , then I would not be able to convince them of anything at all .

To build resilience , do not simply try the same thing again and again . Psychologist Anders Ericsson has found that peak performers such as Olympic athletes and world - class musicians engage in ' deliberate practice ' rather than mere repetition .

TIP : Try to determine which elements of upward influence are your weak points . Do you sound hesitant ? Do you look unsure of yourself ? Is your opening argument weak ? Do you have trouble establishing rapport ? Are you unable to quickly think of responses to the other person's concerns ? Work on those specific elements before making another upward influence attempt .

TIP : Adjust your strategy if it doesn't work the first time . Instead of banging your head against the wall , find a way to climb over that wall . If you get flustered every time you walk into your boss's office , try inviting your boss for coffee outside of the office where you might feel more relaxed . If your boss did not seem interested in your idea the first time , find out what their interests and concerns are so that you can re - think and re - frame the idea .

In fact , psychologist Dacher Keltner and his colleagues at the University of California at Berkeley discovered that in interactions where both parties perceive unequal power (boss – employee , teacher – student or even older – younger or male – female) , awareness of the power difference can affect the behaviours and emotions of both people . The person with less power tends to feel inhibited , second - guessing their actions and worrying about displeasing the other person . The person with more power tends to feel disinhibited , engaging in more spontaneous actions and focusing only on what they want , not how it might affect others .

TIP : When engaging in upward influence , try to avoid thinking about the power difference between you and the other person . Instead of your relationship (' this is my boss ') , remind yourself of their role in helping you achieve your goal (' this is the person who can implement the policy I am proposing ') . Stay focused on your goal to avoid thinking about the power difference and being inhibited by it .

When psychologists run experiments on power and influence , they need to make study participants feel instantly more or less powerful . A widely used method for doing this is a short , ten - minute writing exercise in which participants are asked to describe a time when they had power over others (controlling the ability of the other person to get what they wanted , for example) or a time when others had that same power over them . 18 Writing for ten minutes about this time is enough to trigger feelings of high or low power that then affect their subsequent behaviour , such as (for high - power participants) taking more cookies from a shared plate or taking the initiative in an experiment to move an annoying electric fan . Participants engaging in the high - power writing exercise also reported greater feelings of control , optimism and confidence afterwards .

TRY THIS : Recalling past experiences to boost feelings of confidence Get a piece of paper , set a timer and spend ten minutes recalling and writing about an incident in which you felt powerful or in control . Maybe you were the one who chose the party venue that everyone loved or you complained about the service and managed to get an apology or you changed a process at work that resulted in greater efficiency . Write about the details of the incident and how it made you feel . Exercising control over your job and your life , even in small ways , will help you develop a feeling of personal power . And reflecting on those incidents on a daily basis will amplify their effects on your overall sense of power and feeling of confidence .

TIP : For an extra boost of confidence before an important interview or big presentation , go to the bathroom and hold a power pose for two minutes . When I do

this , I take a wide - legged stance and raise my arms in the air for two minutes , take a few deep breaths , and imagine a white light shining through me towards my audience . This light represents the message I am going to deliver and focuses me on my goal rather than my nervousness .

TIP : When planning your free time , plan eudaimonic activities (such as learning a new skill or helping others) in addition to hedonic activities (like going on holiday or watching a movie) .

Cameron's book , *The Artist's Way* , offers a twelve - week course designed to help readers recover that sense of fun and get back in touch with their creative self . 27 A friend gave me this book when I was in my mid - thirties in Hong Kong . If I had known about eudaimonia and hedonia back then , I would have said that I did too many hedonic activities and not enough eudaimonic activities . I no longer felt a sense of personal growth at work and I had lost sight of my purpose in life . While *The Artist's Way* did not show me my purpose , it did boost my positive emotions and helped me understand myself better . The ' morning pages ' – a stream - of - consciousness daily writing exercise – increased my awareness of those things in my life that were blocking me .

TIP : Creativity is a eudaimonic activity that can boost your sense of purpose in life . Introduce it in a way that works for you . This could mean wandering around art galleries , dancing to music in your living room or inviting friends around for an arts - and - crafts session . Rediscover the joy and fun of being alive , and boost your referent power , making yourself someone that others want to be around.

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