

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL 2015

PERSONAL POWER AND THE LIBERATED SELF:
THE SCIENCE OF INDIVIDUALITY

Hotel Jerome
Aspen, Colorado

Friday, July 03, 2015

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PERSONAL POWER AND THE LIBERATED SELF: THE SCIENCE OF
INDIVIDUALITY

MS. JOHNSON: Good afternoon everyone. Think we're ready to get started, if you could please come in and have a seat.

I am Tricia Johnson with the Aspen Institute. And it is my pleasure to welcome you to personal power and the liberated self with Amy Cuddy and Todd Rose. Amy is a social scientist and professor at Harvard Business School, and you may know her from her famous TED Talk in which she demonstrates the power pose. Does that look familiar? Her research among other things documents the transformative power of body language on our brains.

Todd Rose is the founder and president of the Centre for Individual Opportunity which is focused on the new science of the individual. He's also a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education where he teaches educational neuroscience. The structure today is that Todd and Amy are both going to kind of layout a few ideas together and then go into greater detail individually and then toward the end there will be an opportunity for you to ask questions.

So hold tight and then when it is time for questioning we do have mikes circulating around the room and we'd like to capture everybody so that the entire audience can hear. Thank you Todd and Amy, enjoy. Thank you.

MS. CUDDY: Thank you. So we are both at Harvard and we are both social scientists, and that's not why we're here together though, we're here together because Todd and I share an understanding, a fundamental understanding of the society that we live in now and the society that we could live in.

MR. ROSS: Yeah, so we realize we have this belief essentially the sort of industrial society that we've built over the last century comes with a basic assumption about individuals that in a sense they can't be trusted, right? We don't -- we talk about individuality but we don't actually want to understand it, you know, individuals are something to manage and that if you don't

do that something feels very chaotic, right, and that you can't trust people with power.

MS. CUDDY: So we are going to talk about our own research, how that speaks to this issue, how we might be able to build that kind of society, but really let's focus on treating people with dignity and trusting them to actually have power. And to begin to see power not as zero-sum power over but to see it as personal power, as powered to and what that brings, you know, what that creates, how that creates value for all of us. So Todd will be talking first.

MR. ROSS: Thanks. And by the way neither one of us can sit still for very long enough to talk, so I'm pretty certain I'm going to trip over my chord at some point.

But, okay, so when we think about this idea of what would it mean, what would it require to have a society that actually understood individuals and focused on ceding power to them to make choices for themselves and have responsibility to each other. It pretty quickly it starts with, well, you would have to actually understand individuals, and so my work deals with that. And I would start by saying we have a slight problem because since the very birth of social science we've had a basic assumption about how we're going to understand people through research which is so basic and fundamental that we often don't even question it.

But it is basically this. We assume when we do research that we can take individuals and mush them together and create an average result and that at some level that average is going to be representative of all of you, right, because that is the assumption. If that weren't true then why would we be using averages. But this is what we do, right. So a really basic question is how close does the average get us to understanding you as individuals, right. And so again the bad news is, as we'll see, not nearly close enough. And I will tell you, the beginning of my research and the field that I am in called the science of the individual really started with this what I call like a thundercloud moment in 2002 where I was trained in brain imaging and, you know, it's great line of research, I love it. But my colleague Michael Miller (phonetic), he also was a neuroscientist and he focuses on

how the brain retrieves memory which really is a pretty straightforward question or we thought.

So we've done hundreds of studies on this, and if you would ask me 10 years ago like what's the one thing that we know for sure from neuroscience. I would have said, you know, we know for sure the areas of the brain that are involved in memory retrieval. So Mike Miller, he's doing his study and he's doing it like everyone always did, you know, you get some people you teach them some new words, you put them in a scanner, you scan their brain while they are recalling words, combine their brains, produce an average brain.

But Mike actually had this great insight which was we have individual brains, I wonder how close the individuals in my study were to the average that I've just produced that I am about to publish. Look, we would have said, and I probably would have said, well, most of them are going to be pretty close. I mean, some of them, some weird brains, you know, might be a little outlier but so he starts looking at these individual brains, zero. And it wasn't even close. Like these individual brains looked nothing like the average that was made out of those individual brains.

And so he gets a little nervous, right, and he's like, well, maybe I shouldn't publish this and like maybe I have done something wrong. So he waits for about six months, brings the same people back, gives them the same task, puts them in the same scanner gets the exact same result. The average still didn't represent even a single person, but what was really cool is that the individual brains signature for each individual was stable. So we had started to find, wait a minute, there might be a better way of thinking about individuality here that is not just random or chaotic.

So it turns out it is not just about the brain. Now that we have started this wave of big data over the last decade or so in every single field that deals with the individuals at any level we found the exact same thing. So for example, there is no such thing as an average cell, there is not. There is no such thing as an average genome, there is no such thing as average cancer. And for those of you who care about education, we know for certain there is no such thing as an average student.

So if average doesn't work you get a little nervous, like, well, what's it is, it just raw snowflakes and like that's it, right, it sounds nice but it's, you know, not particularly useful from a scientific standpoint. So the field that I am involved in, the science of the individual has said, okay, well, if we want to understand individuals on their own terms what are the patterns, what do we look for?

And so today I just want to touch on -- there is three big kinds of patterns that we look for when we want to understand individuals and what we call jaggedness, context and pathways. And I'm going to really focus on the last two, the first one jaggedness which the quick definition is pretty straightforward. You cannot understand human beings in one-dimensional terms. You know body size is not small, medium, large, right? It's lots of dimensions. You know, intelligence is not, you know, one IQ score on a line.

I actually gave a talk on this that's linked on my Aspen page. So if you want to know more about jaggedness, over there. But I want to focus on these two, context and pathways. And try to show you that far from being chaos if you actually start to look at individuals you can start to find patterns that reveal and are very empowering for individuals and generalizable for science.

So let's starts with context. We have this kind of, not kind of, a big tendency as human beings to try to kind of take everything that's complex about people and turn it into this very essentialist thing, like personality is a great example. If I asked you right know how many of you think you are extroverts, by the way I would say how many think you are introverts but that just seems mean to make you raise your hand, right, but --

MS. CUDDY: No, that's changed.

MR. ROSS: That's -- so the thing is I feel that way too, okay, I am an extrovert. It feels like it is something essential about who we are so we build billion-dollar assessment industries for personality tests. You are not getting a job at most Fortune 100 companies without taking a personality test to figure out what type of person you are. Most federal agencies use these tests. So here

is the problem, they don't actually predict individuals very well at all. And that would be awful if that was the end of the story. But we have actually discovered something better about knowing who you are, your behavior, your personality, which is from this new science there is no such thing as behavior independent of the immediate context in which you are behaving or performing.

Now, that sounds like a good bumper sticker slogan, right, except for we the can take it for that we actually know far from just being like chaotic that when you dig into that contextualized nature of behavior it reveals some hidden patterns. And then I'm going to give you an example of this.

My colleague, Yuichi Shoda, from the University of Washington did this early groundbreaking work on this and it had to do with young children's aggression, right, so right now the usual way we do it, so a kid is aggressive we gave them an aggression questionnaire. I took it just for fun which is kind of weird, but that is a different talk. And you get a rank score, I won't tell you what rank score was but you get a rank score. So we see these kids that have some aggression problems and we say, oh, we have some cut-off, you are now an aggressive type of kid.

So Shoda had this great insight to feel like, well, wait a minute something doesn't quite seem right about that. So he did this groundbreaking study at this Wediko Camp in New Hampshire where he said, let's look at the contextualized nature of these kids. And this was a camp for kids that had some social adjustment problems. And what they did was they actually had like dense datasets on every kid, they -- they video tape, they had audio, they had, you know, reports in all these different meaningful contexts, in every classroom, on the playground, in the cafeteria and they just said let's see, let's rate how is their behavior, let's measure their aggression levels in these different contexts. And what he found was amazing.

So it turns out context really matters. But what was so stable about the individual was that the way you changed in different contexts was really, really stable and predictive. Let me give an example of what I mean. So there were two kids in the study that both got the exact same rank order score of aggression, 79%. And they said, okay, you are highly aggressive kids, here is the therapy

kind of thing. What Shoda found was that for one of the kids he was only like really highly aggressive with mental teachers but completely docile with his peers. The other kid was the exact opposite, aggressive with peers docile with teachers. The problem was when we lump together into one decontextualized score you lose completely the essence of who this kid really is either way. And you lose the ability to help them, right?

So what is interesting about what we called these if-then signatures which is now the kind of the push to replace sort of traits and stuff like this is that it's not just about kid's aggression, we start to see this everywhere. So, for example, when we go into the workplace you see, and this seems like common sense, right, you may be really good at your job when the context is highly collaborative and you may actually not be very good at it when it is individualistic in an isolation or vice versa, right? These if-then signatures are very stable and they allow you to know yourself and predict your own behavior.

So the second type of pattern that we are looking at, that I want to talk about today is what we call pathways. So when we use averages we always arrive at the conclusion that there is one best pathway to get to an outcome. And think about this, this is true in everything, we've built our whole education system on the idea that there is one right sequence, one best way, one set of time. How long does it take you to learn, what order do you learn these things in. But we have done this in all our research.

You know, 30 years ago we were convinced that colon cancer had one sequence and then we thought that's how it was for everyone and, you know, when we start to dig into the individual data turns out it's exactly opposite. There is never just one pathway ever, ever, ever. In fact it's the only law that we have in this new science, it's called equifinality. For any outcome there is always more than one pathway. And when we started applying this principle to different fields we've made major breakthroughs whether it is cancer research or we do it in learning, whether we do it a human development.

And one of my favorite in terms of the practical implications of this, when you get away from one pathway is in mental health. So if you think about depression and how

we treat depression. So in cognitive therapy when you average all the data together you always get one recovery pathway for depression treatment with cognitive therapy. Basically you start out, you make some pretty good recovery then you slowly start to plateau but you are still making a little bit of recovery, and you get to a positive outcome.

We were so sure that that's the only pathway to recovery, that a lot of healthcare providers actually make decisions about whether to stop treatment based on whether you are following that one best pathway. But when researchers from this new science of individuality start to look at individual pathways instead of averages, it turns out there are three stable pathways that gets you to full recovery. The one that we thought was for everyone only covers 30 percent of people.

There is another pathway that's stable where you don't make any progress for about half the time and then it almost overnight you make these incredible like one-step big recovery and then you plateau again, but you end up with the same kind of positive outcomes. And then the biggest pathway is just this slow gradual recovery.

But what makes this such almost like a moral imperative to me is that here you have someone who could be well on their way to recovery and because they are not fitting this average pathway you are actually going to do harm, right? So this shows up everywhere. So when we know there is more than one pathway, so, you know fine.

Now, one of the things that people get a little nervous about when we say okay, well, we deal with jaggedness, we deal with context and pathways, we say well that's great. You might know one person. But isn't science about generalisability and trying to find the universals. And surely if you focused on individuality that can get you there. But in fact it's the exact opposite.

By using averages we ended up having the illusion of knowledge that often applied to nobody like in these Michael Miller's brains. But when we focus on individuality first we actually have found amazing breakthroughs and actually universal insights. And I want to tell you my absolute favorite here in closing. So I

don't know how many of you have kids, had kids. Great.
That you know of like --

(Laughter)

MR. ROSS: Sorry, I couldn't resist. The -- I have an impulse problem, so it's me. So you know when kids are -- little kids are born, if you hold them upright they actually do this little stepping reflex where it looks like they can walk, if not go borrow a kid and see, it is really cool. When our oldest son was born I thought I literally held him up, I was like to my wife come here, hurry, look, he's amazing, he can walk. And I called my mom who is a nurse and she is like, Todd, look it's just a reflex everybody has it, it will go away.

And I was like, what. And sure enough two months later it goes away and it comes back right before they learn to walk. And I thought, huh, that's weird. It turns out I wasn't the only one who said huh. This thing had puzzled scientists for 50 years. Why would a reflex disappear only to come back under voluntary control later?

So scientists were, we just how do you understand that. Well, using averages we came to the conclusion in the 1960s that it was about brain development which as a neuroscientist I always love that answer because it gives me a job.

(Laughter)

MR. ROSS: This assumption was, and it's a little convoluted but this was the working theory. You have a reflex, the prefrontal cortex myelinates and it gets very mature and it can suppress a reflex and then hey when it is time to walk you can control yourself. And you know what, on average it did shake out that way. Now, here is the thing, that got baked into pediatrics and things. We started making assessments about kids.

So about two months if your kids still has their stepping reflex, that's neurological delay. We send kids to therapy. And then they get better and we say, wow, look how good we are at this. And it reinforces the theory that its brain maturation, right? So one of my absolute academic heroes, which I guess we're not supposed to have as scientists. But one of the pioneers of the science of

the individual is that -- she has since passed away, Esther Thelen, amazing. So she is looking at this kid and says something doesn't add up. Now, I actually think it is pretty cool that she actually had kids of her own and she was like this does not seem right. So she did these groundbreaking studies where she said why are we averaging kids together, this just makes no sense. It is individual kids that we are talking about and putting into therapy.

So she looked at individual kids in context with all the dimensions, the whole child, and she discovered it wasn't the brain, it was chubby thighs. Kids get this burst of subcutaneous fat and they just can't lift their legs, like you hold them up like this. And so she said, well, I can prove this, she puts them in water the stepping reflex comes back, buoyancy. She takes kids that have the reflex puts precise weights on their legs, it goes away. She was able to discover a precise mathematical relationship between chubby thighs and your stature, your kid's thing to predict when you lose a reflex when it comes back.

And I think that's awesome first of all but you think about the practical like we send kids to therapy -- we -- think about as a parent you are worried my kid's brain isn't developing. And then again, hey, look, they fixed my kid. You know, so the thing is for me what this means is, look, we have the ability to understand individuality, to understand you on your own terms, it's not chaos, it's not everyone is a snowflake, but we can't do it on average, right? We need to look at different patterns.

And you can imagine, it's not very hard to realize, this has huge implications for the way we design our institutions, whether it is healthcare. But education, whether you realize it or not, no matter what we say about personalized learning we still encourage product developers to design on average. We fix the time that kids have to learn, which by the way is based on what the average -- how long the average kid takes to learn, we fix the sequence. You know in the workplace we still use these personality assessments to hire you, we do these other things.

So there is big implications. This is part of my work that I care about is taking the science and translating it for institutions. But I think if you really

want to live in a world in which we trust individuals that this insight of knowing you like for you to have power, for you to understand instead of I am a type A person to understand your own if-then signatures, to understand your own jaggedness, to understand the right pathway to get you to the outcome you want, that to me is the biggest win of this kind of approach, the kind of self-knowledge that is required to enable personal power.

So I am excited about this, and I am even more excited now to hear Amy's talk about it. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. CUDDY: Thank you. So you are at like the 80th percentile on not being able to control impulses but only in this situation.

MR. ROSS: That's right.

MS. CUDDY: Okay.

MR. ROSS: When I get attention.

MS. CUDDY: All right. So I'm going to talk about a particular context, so we will talk about a specific if-then and I'm going to have you each kind of personalize it and talk about how we allow our own sense of powerlessness to prevent us from actually being our best selves, our best versions of ourselves, the selves that we know our best.

So I want to ask you to think about a situation that is high stakes, that to you feel is very stressful. This might be the thing at work that you most hate to do, might be in your personal life. You approach it with a sense of dread. You already are borrowing trouble from a future that hasn't unfolded. You've decided that it's going to go poorly, right?

You get there and you execute it with anxiety, you are not there because you are stuck in your head worrying about everything that you should have said or what if this and what if that and trying to read what they think of you. And then you leave it with a sense of regret backwards projecting going if only I had done this or that. So I want you to think about what that situation is for

you. And I actually -- can anyone volunteer a situation?
Okay.

SPEAKER: Just to get really prudent.

MS. CUDDY: Just --

SPEAKER: I have a situation with my daughter-in-law that makes it hard to communicate with her.

MS. CUDDY: Okay, all right. Oh we're going to a mike, alright, sorry to complicate things here we go. Hold on. You are going to get a mike real fast.

SPEAKER: Oh, my God.

MS. CUDDY: Yeah, there you go.

SPEAKER: All right. Hi, Amy.

MR. ROSS: Hi. Thank you. So go ahead again.

SPEAKER: I have a situation with a daughter-in-law where my communication is not serving me.

MS. CUDDY: Okay. And you dread the interaction.

SPEAKER: I don't look forward to the conversations.

MS. CUDDY: And you leave going why didn't that go better.

SPEAKER: We actually have -- we're not communicating well right now if at all.

MS. CUDDY: Okay. So everyone has these situations. Thank you for sharing that. And they are often in our personal lives, they often are around difficult conversations, they are not just about giving speeches to big groups of people. I'm going to tell you mine and -- or one of mine because it is worse than everyone else's, it's really incredibly embarrassing.

So when I finished my Ph.D. in 2005 in my field social psychology, if you are a competitive student and you are lucky and you have a thoughtful advisor, your

advisor will take you to this special conferences, it's a very elite conference and its almost all senior people, the best people in the field. And then every year there is this fresh crop of outstanding fifth-year grad students brought there by their advisers, it's like a debutante party.

The problem is that the senior people don't really want to be, in having these interactions they want to be having a lobby cocktails with their friends. And the fifth-year grad students are there to give their elevator pitch that we have been rehearsing for four years, right, leading up to this. And, now this is your pitch about the research you've been thinking about all the time for four-and-a-half years, and you're supposed to boil it down to 90 seconds, so we memorize these things, we are ready to explain everything we do, what's the future of it and we get there totally prepared.

But I was dreading this, like my anxiety about this event defied all reasonable proportions. So I get there and it's just some mid-size conference hotel, mid-size conference city like I don't even remember the city that it was in. It begins with a dinner. And so I get into the elevator and I've got my giant nametag on and there are three men in the elevator who are all senior people in my field, I've never met them but I have cited their research and they are like research heroes to me.

And, you know, I immediately felt myself get smaller, and my heart started to race, and one of them looked up and said, I mean, with the least expressive face imaginable. I can barely even replicate it, his level of boredom, but it was this, okay, we're in an elevator give us your pitch. So that's my first experience at the conference. I just -- I don't know what happened but everything, the gears got all screwed up and nothing, words were tumbling out of my mouth, I couldn't -- it was like a different person was talking. It was total panic and am I'm going, oh, my gosh, I'm not going to get a job anywhere, I'm doomed, I'm going to -- what am I going to do with my life. I'm going to -- we're going to move to the country. And I mean it really, it was like all these things happening in my mind.

But I'm like my eyes are darting from person to person for some sign of reassurance and I'm not like

getting any. The two of them are looking down like this and the one who had asked me to give it is looking amused. So he gets to the top and the elevator door opens and two of them flee quickly and the one that had goaded me to do this steps out of the, across the threshold of the elevator, here, I will do it, he steps across the threshold, he turns around and he goes, and I'm still in their elevator, he goes, that was the worst elevator pitch I have ever heard. And the doors close.

(Laughter)

MS. CUDDY: And I just got tiny. I just felt myself shrink into the corner which now felt like a cell, a prison cell, and went back down to the lobby and felt like a fleeting moment of relief and then just total panic again. You know, I was like, oh, I want to -- eventually the 90 second thing back to me and I thought I'm going to run up, I need a do-over, I'm going to try to -- you know, so the next three days I was not present for any second of the next three days because I was just, you know, I was going over these 90 seconds again and again trying to figure out what I could have done differently. And it was gone, it was done, like there was nothing I could have done differently.

So I was not present walking in, I wasn't present when I was there, and I was not present when I left. And I felt utterly powerless but think about this. No one in the world could have talked more about the research that I do than me, right? So this is not about confidence or knowledge, it wasn't that I was not smart enough to be there, I know this stuff, what happened, how did I allow myself to feel so powerless and as if I didn't deserve to be in this situation. You know my advisor had brought me there. I had studied hard, I had published.

This situation is so common, I see it in my students again and again, students who will come into my office, I know how smart they are but I cannot get them to raise their hand in class, they are terrified. It is all about fear of being kicked out, right? We're so afraid of being really being ourselves and then we're going to get kicked out of the club, that's what it is about. So I started to realize that this kind of idea of feeling small is not just a metaphor it is a reality that our bodies actually make us feel powerless or powerful. So I'm going

to step back for a minute to tell you about some research that inspire this. When you look at what people do when they are powerful, when they are dominant, when they have status in a hierarchy, in the animal world in the human world they expand their bodies, they spread out, they take up space. When you win first place what do you do, you throw your arms in the air in a V, I can't -- here -- that's what everyone does, around the world in more than two dozen cultures, that's what people do when they win first place.

This is what primates do, they pound their chest, you know, cats will, you know, raise their backs and idle sideways to look bigger when they have a potential predator coming in. So all animals and people do this when they feel powerful or want to project power. The thing is our body language isn't just an expression of how we feel, it also shapes how we feel. And so I started to look at, well, if this, you know, V pose is so associated with victory and winning and pride and power what if I get people to fake it, to do it when they feel powerless, will it actually trick their brains into thinking they feel powerful? So that's the research that we did, and I'm just going to quickly summarize that.

We call that power posing, any kind of expansive posture, what we find is by having people do this in the lab for just 2 minutes and for as little as 30 seconds, we see changes in a wide variety of things. First of all, they just simply feel much more powerful and confident, they feel much better about themselves, they feel much happier, they remember more positive things about themselves, they actually talk about themselves less, they are less threatened, they are more open to other people. We also see that their testosterone levels rise and their cortisol fall falls making them feel confident and not stress reactive, we even see that it increases their pain threshold and it changes their behavior.

And if people do this before they walk into a stressful situation like a job interview, they are much more likely to get the job. Why is it? These are all experimental data, this is not, you know, this is not anecdotal, it's not what they do in the interviews, it's what they did before, it is like they are optimizing their brains to deal well in these high-stress social-judgment situations and to bring their best selves forward.

What happens is that they are becoming present,

they are able to be there without fear, they are not worried about everything else, they're just being themselves, they're not focused on the outcome, they are just in there in the process. If you talk to venture capitalists and say, I love this sort of thought exercise, you have five great ideas, they are equally good and you are going to see five pitches, what are you going to be watching for. So many of them tell me something like this, I want to know if they believe their story because if sense for a second that they don't believe their story, there is no way that I am going to believe their story. Why would I invest in something that they don't even themselves believe in.

The thing is often they do believe their story, but they somehow they're so scared and they feel so unentitled to be there that they start doubting their story right before they walk in. Feeling powerful personally, not power over, but not power over others, but power to bring forth your best qualities allows you to tell the story you believe and it actually makes you more generous as well. So I want to end with a story because I think that it's really too bad that people see power as a word has so much baggage and I think that's partly because we have sort of allowed a few small group of people to own it.

We all should be feeling powerful and it's not zero-sum, we all can be powerful and all of the research on power shows that when people feel powerful they are more creative, they are more open, they are less anxious, they do all of these things better. So I get a lot of people who come up to me and tell me stories about how my TED Talk on power posing affected them. And I have to tell you I am shocked because when I gave the talk I was talking about students speaking up in class, I did not have any sense of the range of ways in which people would apply this.

So it was based on average data, but people applied it to their own situation, I mean, it was idiosyncratic, so the way it manifested was different even if the general mechanisms are basically the same. So I have gotten about 15,000 e-mails with these stories, every time I give a talk many people come and share a story. But one I heard recently here was, I am just finishing a book and I -- this is the story that to me tells it all.

So a young woman came up to me and said, I want to tell you how your talk affected me. She said, I was in a job where it was being sexually harassed every day by my

boss, it was bad. And I kept going back, I needed the job and I kept doubting myself and I felt myself getting smaller and smaller, he was big but I just felt myself get smaller and smaller. And I started thinking, maybe it's not a big deal, maybe I am oversensitive, you know, I felt like I needed everybody's affirmation and then after about a month some things happened that were so bad that she knew it was time to do something. She also got some support from some of her male friends, which was really affirming, you know, that -- who said this is not okay and the male friends that will go talk to this guy, and she said, no, I have to do this for myself and for everybody else, I have to do this.

So she prepared that morning, she said she played a song that she loved, she dressed well and then she stood there like Wonder Woman, and she said for more than two minutes because I really wanted it to stick. And she said she walked over there feeling powerful and she walked in and she saw this big guy who had made her feel so small and suddenly he didn't look big anymore, he didn't look powerful anymore. She said I wasn't taking his power away, I was taking my power back and I felt myself get bigger. And she said, now, I thought this would be -- lead to this confrontation, it didn't, what she said was what you've been doing is wrong and I want you to understand why, you are a father and I know that you don't want your daughters to be treated this way and I don't think this is the person that you want to be. I think that you want to be a better person and I really want you to understand this. And I'm doing this for myself and for everybody else who works with you and for all of the other women, that's why I'm doing this.

And so he broke down and said you're right and he said I can't believe I've been doing this and it really changed -- so that could have gone a different way, it could have been, he could've been angry and defensive because she could've gone in on the attack, she said, I don't want to shut your business down, I don't want to hurt your family, I just want you to learn and get better and I want to protect other people from having to experience this.

He changed, she left the job and she said every time something challenging comes up, and she said usually it is not that big, she remembers that she did that and she can do it again, right, so it's easier, a habit starts to form. But one of the things getting back to the

individuals specifically that she said that I think was so -- that really moved me, she said, when I was in there talking to him I just felt like it wasn't even me talking, it was this divine voice. And I said, it was your divine voice, it was a 100 percent you, that's what it was, that was the 100 percent best you that you were hearing. And we hear it so infrequently from ourselves that we don't -- when we hear it, we are like what's happening, is God coming in here or something, so that was her voice, she became her best self.

And her presence in that moment, her power allowed him to the present, right, it have them the power to change instead of the fear that would have caused him to shut down.

One of my favorite quotes about power is by Robert Caro who's LBJ's biographer for 30 years who said, power does not necessarily corrupt, the power always reveals, it unlocks us. We have it in there, we have to figure out how to let it out. And so I am going to leave you with this thought from Maya Angelou, "Stand up straight and realize who you are, that you tower over your circumstances." Thanks.

(Applause)

MR. ROSS: So if you're -- you may be feeling what we felt the first time we were to each other which is interesting, how does this actually relate like we got so excited as we started to jam and we end up spending hours talking when we only have 30 minutes to talk. But we realized that even in the society that we are trying to leave now and trying to get to this, what we think of is like the age of individuals, that it is possible to build a society in which you can trust people, you can see power to them, but it's just not something you just snap your fingers and it happens but it has huge implications for everything from the kind of research we conduct to the way we create institutions and what we expect of them.

And, you know, we each have our own individual work, but we are so committed to seeing this new future, like we both realize we are betting our careers on this for better or for worse, right. We think that there are certain kinds of knowledge that need to be had both for individuals about themselves and for institutions to make good on the society. And so this is the selfish part for us which is we are trying to find this way forward to a

society that we want to live in, but we need your help not just to go preach the good gospel but like to actually challenge and ask questions, whatever is on your mind, to have a conversation, to help us keep thinking through these ideas. So I would like spend the remainder of our time just Q&A and having questions and talking about these things.

MS. CUDDY: All right, so woman in the back with the black shirt and then other woman in the back with the black shirt, second.

MS. KENYUNG: Hi, I am Lisa Kenyung (phonetic). And my question is, when -- oh, I am getting it, I am going to get -- do it, do it. When you go forth with what might appear to be a confrontation and the Buddhist happen to be dealing with somebody that's well practiced in Buddhism that reflects it back and says, it's not me, it's you, like you are the one with the problem.

MR. ROSS: I don't know, that's your thing, right?

MS. CUDDY: So you're saying -- can you rephrase just a bit, sorry.

MS. KENYUNG: In wanting to confront and injustice.

MS. CUDDY: Yes.

MS. KENYUNG: And the person that you're challenging or bringing forth doesn't want to confront it. But uses the mirror and says it's not me, it's you.

MS. CUDDY: Yeah, that's a nasty trick, isn't it, I hate that one. But the thing is it's not always -- this is not quite the same situation, but let me give you a similar situation. Not everything is going to be winnable. And I think part of the thing is that we think about situations as winnable and then if they don't -- if we don't win them the first time, we start to feel like it's not ever winnable. I had a student walk up to me who had been an ER doctor before going to business school and said, I want to know how to do this because this is my biggest challenge, it's delivering the worst news to families, how do you do that right. And we started talking about it and, you know, there is all this stuff on physician empathy and it's great research, but I suddenly realize like there is

no way to do it right, like these people are going to hate you or be really -- so like there's no way, I know this is not, these are not, they are not the enemy, but you're not going to leave feeling like everything's okay, you are delivering this news, but you have to do it with the greatest dignity, right?

So you just to treat yourself with the greatest respect and also, and I know this is so hard, but to channel some kind of generosity and to see when they're responding that that way that is all fear and threat, so to see them as so power, feeling so powerless when they are responding to you that way, they are not powerful, they are feeling utterly terrified and powerless. You stay calm, stick with your message, go back again, do it again.

But I think that, you know, to think of it as not winnable but you need to walk away from that situation feeling like I brought my best self forward and that's all I could do.

MS. NERO: Hi, I am Sheryl Nero (phonetic). I have found that whenever you have a passion for moving things from the status quo, the fear and the challenge that you're confronted with even when it is in people's best interest is we can't and part of it is that they don't have the power or the willingness to visualize the change. And I think that's what would impede, for example, taking the science of individualism into an educational setting, a teacher who is already overwhelmed is going to say, I can't even though deep down inside the teacher would say my mission is in fact to treat each child like an individual.

So it seems that the impediment in implementing this on a grander scale is always going to be the fear of the unknown, the fear to fail and the fear that the things that are overwhelming now will prevent you from ever being able to accomplish it.

MR. ROSS: That's a great question, and it's interesting too because people say, oh, well, when we try this, like even in education or in other places and it doesn't work the first time, it's like, see people can't be give this and it's like, no, they have been born into a whole world view in which they are not supposed to be able to do this or they work in a environment where frankly teachers, like I have almost never met a teacher who didn't say of course I am trying to reach every individual kid, right, but the system was structured not to do that, like

it's literally designed to batch process, right?

And so the tough part and I had to come to terms with this too is there are things that we actually have to do in the system that in some ways you almost don't want to say, we are going to empower because that is someone else giving power, but you actually have to create conditions, even when it's a place they want to be, it still is terrifying and you get to this state. So we spent a lot of time thinking about mindset change and the kinds of conditions that you can create that allow people to not tip into threat even when they want to get to the outcome. So that's exactly right, it's the stuff that we think about all the time right now for systems change.

MS. NERO: But the status quo bias is overwhelming. Right, so --

MR. ROSS: Yeah, even -- even for us --.

MS. NERO: Yeah.

MR. ROSS: Let's see. The gentleman in the green and the gentleman in the blue there.

MR. DUDEB: Thank you. My name is Richard Duben (phonetic). I wanted to say that my experience is -- would support your research, okay. When I started out in business I thought I had to have all the answers or as a leader or a manager, whatever, I had to have the solutions, you know. But as I rose up in the ranks and that didn't work out that often, I started creating an environment whereby I empowered the people, okay. What I always said to people that work for me is that the worker bees have the answers, you have to create an environment that allows those answers to come out. And once I did that, I will tell you, it worked unbelievable magic not only in my city but in other cities that I had companies in, in other cultures, in Europe. Every time I went into a difficult situation, it was so simple, it was unbelievable.

I would say, what's wrong here or what do you like about this company and what don't you like, you know, questioning groups and they would respond, they would start talking. And I would say, well, would you like to fix what's wrong, and they would say, yes. And then we would say, okay, what we put up on a white board, here is the things that need fixing, okay, now you are going to do it, I am not going to do it. I am going to create an

environment for you to do it, but you are going to it. And it's unbelievable, so.

MR. ROSS: I love this because, you know, you have brought up something that I think is important because, look the truth is both like people in this room and you are leaders, you are in a position not only to internalize this but you are more likely than others to have an opportunity to actually put this through to the people who normally you might think you can have to control, right, and then if you can give up on that and realize it is even in your best interest, but let's put this ability to lead this way, this is remarkable.

MS. CUDDY: These are the companies Todd and I talk about, they are like the companies we have crushes on, and there are some others too, but it is phenomenally a powerful and successful way to do things, so thanks for sharing.

MR. DINGER: Hello, my name is Tane Dinger (phonetic), I am from Minneapolis, the home of target, which made a lot of news a couple of years ago for being able to predict whether or not you are pregnant based on your shopping list. And I wanted to probe sort of some of this laws of averages with that and also, people look at something like 538 and say Nate Silver was able to predict 50-50 states in two last presidential elections. And the big data seems to be moving more and more towards we are very predictable, we are very understandable and that challenges I feel like this notion of individuality.

MR. ROSS: So I would actually say it absolutely re-enforces it because there is a fundamental difference in the methodology here. Nate silver and target, which I will say something about in just a minute because that is terrifying, they are not starting out by averaging data and then saying let's see if we can type you and bin you, they are modeling your patterns and then finding common patterns in other people and grouping that way.

And when you do that, yeah, it turns out, hey we are all part of humanity and we are all like other people in some ways, right, but if you start by averaging, you never get there. Target was one of the first to realize, yes, you model individual patterns, which by the way that all blew up because you started sending stuff about congratulations before spouses actually know and realize there was no possible way.

MS. CUDDY: Or not spouses --

MR. ROSS: Yes, or not spouses.

MS. CUDDY: Parents --

MR. ROSS: It was -- so I actually think you are getting to the point which is we are actually incredibly predictable creatures, but you've got to model it the right way to be able to get to that predictability. But I do think just one thing about this and why, so I am the director of Mind, Brain and Education at Harvard, but I have a non-profit that's meant to get to the public and we are working with Hollywood and stuff to take this message and get people to understand so that they can have some control because the upside of this modeling individuality, there is a huge downside, right? Whoever gets this data, gets this has a lot of power. And so we care a lot about making sure the general public understands it's your data, it's your models, things like that. By the way I am happy to talk more with you about it.

MS. CUDDY: Okay. Woman in the blue shirt in the back and then gentleman in the front here.

MS. ROSENFELT: Michelle Rosenfelt (phonetic). How do we apply this to our families? Many of us here have been very successful in business and it's sort of a difficult thing for people to follow in our footsteps. And even if they do, sometimes suggestions that I could give you that you would be so grateful for, they take as criticism. So do you keep going back and either apologizing or ignoring the negative comments --

MR. ROSS: Sorry, I was --

MS. ROSENFELT: -- because to me I think the family is really one of the hardest things for successful people in any business, any realm of any of the topics we have talked about.

MR. ROSS: By the way I will take your advice.

MS. CUDDY: That's the kind of the point, it is so hard to give your children your own advice, so it's funny how many kids are using this power posing stuff. My own 13-year-old is like, oh, no, please not that again. But, you know, and I -- sorry, this is not -- this is -- I

do see this as a challenge for traditionally successful people. I mean, how do they nourish their children's individuality, allow them to take their own road, learn from their wisdom, but really do it their way.

And for me teaching at Harvard, I live in Newton, everybody wants their kid to go to Harvard. And my son is, he plays in a rock band, he said I guess I'm supposed to Harvard, and I was like, God, please don't go to Harvard. I mean, it's like do what you want to do. And, you know, I have really sort of stepped back and allow him to figure it out, but my husband is over here and he was reminding me earlier that a couple weeks ago I drove up to New Hampshire and it happened to be biker week like vroom-vroom biker week. And my son, and again, look, we live in Newton, it's very sophisticated. And my son who was incredibly self-aware goes, these are my people, and I was like -- he is very much about being his own person, very much, like he's not a joiner, he gets along great with kids, but he doesn't feel he has to do what they are doing.

And I said, I am like asking him -- my first because the first group you saw were the Hells Angels, he is like that's a pretty cool lifestyle, I am like, okay. Let me just give you a little bit of background, you know, without -- but he eventually, we talked about it more and I said, I get it, I said what it is for you is that you get to express yourself as an individual and still have a community when you want to have it. And he is like, that's exactly right.

But, you know, my first thought was like, he wants to be a Hells Angel, what am I going to do, you know, this is so different. I know it's really, probably the advice that most people would give now, but is that you have to kind of allow them to find their path without your fearful reaction coming through.

MR. ROSS: Yeah, and I want to say one specific piece of advice based on this, the research in this individuality which is most of your advice is going to be true for you and actually may not be true for them depending on their individuality. And I think one of things that's important especially for parents is, when it has worked for you, understanding that it's a map between strategy and advice to your own individuality and making sure that there is enough of a match of the individuality to that kid and if not there is always other strategies that get there.

And I want to give one quick example that's personal. So I -- so my wife and I, we grew up really poor in rural Utah, I never -- I didn't know where Harvard was, like I literally had no idea and worked my way through a \$800 semester open enrollment school and I decided I want to graduate school, no one in family has ever even thought of that before, and you have to take the GRE, this stupid -
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MS. CUDDY: Me too by the way --

MR. ROSS: -- standardized assessment which I'm such a terrible test taker, right. So I decide, I am going to spend 10 weeks every Saturday taking this class that's going to teach you the strategy to ace this test, and I took like, I think, 25 practice tests and I -- there is this three sections, verbal, math and then they used to have this like analytical reasoning, and there was this, it is like if farmer John has four rows and there is corn and beans and corn can't be next to beans and beans can't be my dogs and what's in -- and I was like, how the hell would I know, like, and so I am taking this test I got -- I was doing fine in verbal, fine in quantitative and I am literally in the single digit percentiles in analytical reasoning.

And I think, okay, well, I will get better, and I keep practicing and my teacher keeps giving us this strategy and he got perfect scores, so I was like clearly he knows what he is doing. So I keep doing this and I am not budging, like I am not kidding you, I never got above the ninth percentile. And so I started thinking, I didn't know about power posing, I would have liked that back then because I was like, I am not going to graduate school. Like what am I going to -- like no one is going to accept me.

And this is really embarrassing, I was at my parents' home studying two weeks before the actual test because we had a 400 square foot apartment and two kids and, you know, you can't study there. And I am taking this test and I am still not getting it and I like threw a pencil across the room which again wasn't the great, this thing. My dad happened to walk in and he is an engineer. He was like first of all, what's wrong with you, and I said, I don't get this, and he walked over -- luckily he walked over and he said, this is very -- this what's called the degrees of freedom problem. And I was like, I don't

know what degrees of freedoms means, but if it's easy tell me about it, right? He said your problem is you are trying to do it in your head, and he knew that I didn't have great working memory. He said that's a really bad strategy for you. And I said, but this is what -- I said I don't know if you have got a perfect score on GRE which he -- but he said, look, here is a visual way of doing it and he laid out a grid, he said, this will work for every question. I thought that can't be right, but it was and two weeks later I scored, it was by far my best score, I think I literally missed like one question, right, and then everyone is like Todd is so analytical, right?

But I was thinking like, oh my goodness, like the difference between me being able to demonstrate what I am really capable of or not came down to the right map between a strategy and my own individuality. There is always more than one way and just being really clear about that and looking for that match. Sorry to eat up all your time there.

MR. SPEAKER: No, not a problem.

MR. MCKAY: I am Harvey McKay (phonetic) from Minneapolis, I would like to make a comment and then have you, Amy, respond. There are two times in life when we are totally alone, just before you die and just before you make a five minute speech or if you know the concept of an attorney trying to (inaudible) make a five-minute speech. A lawyer, he or she, doesn't make a summation to the jury before they try it out on their peers and so forth. My question is, had you practiced in front of three prominent people from your industry, like that were in the elevator, would your result have been different?

MS. CUDDY: I practiced so many times in front of the faculty in my department at Princeton. So I think, yes, but it was still a different situation, so it was not -- those were faculty who, one of them was Danny Kahneman, so I practiced in front of Danny Kahneman and did okay.

MR. MCKAY: Was he the one that gave you the --

MS. CUDDY: No, no, no, no, they were from other schools. But it was still a new because these were from schools that I had never been to, they were people I had never met. So still I couldn't quite replicate that exact situation. So I mean I think the -- well, the issue of practice is, I mean there are so -- there is many different

findings and opinions about practice and what works for different people. But again for me I had to get comfortable, I had to stop practicing, I think I practiced too much and I got 2.1, I'm like it's going to go exactly like this because this is how they are going to ask it and I will approach it this way and this is how it will play out.

But I had no control over the way it played out. I didn't know that somebody was just going to say in the elevator do your pitch, you know, I thought I would go introduce myself and do my pitch. So again it's the context was so specific and so much different from anything that I'd done that I really should have stopped practicing and get -- instead focus on getting myself into a space where I could be present and enthusiastic and really believe my story, just really feel like I deserve to be here, I love this stuff and how awesome that I get a captive audience to listen to me talk about it, what a treat that is, but instead I saw it just as a threat.

MR. BELLOWS: My name is Jan Bellows (phonetic). For those that didn't have the benefit of seeing your TED Talk can you tell us the context and show us a power pose?

MS. CUDDY: Okay. Sorry to do with the microphone, but -- so well, the context is, really was that I was watching my students not participate and at HBS half your grade is participation. And I was seeing, the ones who do participate really spread out and get bigger before class and the ones who don't start wrapping up, they coil up, they touch their necks and their faces, they cross their arms, they hunch their shoulders, they make themselves look like a tiny little animal that doesn't want to be eaten by predator.

So a power pose really Wonder Woman, I mean this is just the most simple power pose, your shoulders are back, your arms are open, your feet are open, but you are centered and grounded, your chin is up, so the chest being open is a huge part of it, your limbs expanding is even bigger, but I would say the best and the most universal is definitely the victory, the arms up in the air when you cross the finish line, that's been found even in cultures that had no concept with -- I mean had no contact with the outside world at all. So where the researcher hiked in and talked to these people, watch them win and they did the same thing. And they recognized it when they looked at pictures of other people, they are like that person won.

So that one I think is probably the best, the victory pose.

MR. ROSS: I think we have one last question and then we have to wrap up.

MS. JACKSON: Amy, I am wondering -- my name is Kim Jackson (phonetic) and I am wondering if you have thought about this from a race lens. So as an African-American woman I think I'm often stereotyped as being angry and assertive and aggressive and so what does it mean for me to walk into a room, big and powerful, how does that translate when it comes to trying to get a job or something like that?

MS. CUDDY: So since we have got one minute and there is so much to say about this, but so let me try to be really brief. First, yes, there are definitely race and gender stereotypes that dictate how our posture is perceived by other people for sure. I mean, black men are not allowed to be super dominant in their posture because then they're accused of being overly aggressive, right, and for black women I think it can be the same way.

Asian women though aren't supposed to do it because that's not what Asian women do, Asian women are supposed to be China dolls, right, so you have got all of these stereotypes. The thing is what I am training people to do is not power pose in the situation, you do it alone before you walk in, I call it preparatory power posing, in the bathroom for 2 minutes, in the elevator on the way up if there is nobody else in it, in your office, alone, you know, you do -- there are no cultural norms or stereotypes that can stop you from spreading out as much as you want to spread out and that then sets you up to be yourself when you walk in, you don't need -- because you're not dominating others, you're actually taking control of yourself. So you do it before you walk in. And then when you walk in, you know, you have your shoulders back and your feet square, but you don't have to be like this. I think we are out of time.

MR. ROSS: Yeah. Thank you very much.

MS. CUDDY: Thank you so much.

(Applause)

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