**Stand Tall**

If you’re a football fan, what do you do when your team scores a goal? What do you do if you win when playing a game or listening to your favourite band? For most people, the answer is to stand up tall with arms outstretched.

Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist at Harvard University, has looked at why people adopt this pose and the effects it can have on your physiology. She found that by changing your physiology (or your posture) you can have a profound effect on how you feel. In her 2012 TED talk, ‘Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are’, she argues that by standing in a certain ‘power pose’ you can increase your confidence and self-esteem, enhance your memory and reduce feelings of fear.

Cuddy goes on to argue that weaker postures (such as curling up, making yourself small or moving into defensive positions) triggers other psychological responses - feelings of imminent danger, stress or threat. And yet nervous students often hunch over their notes or hide on a corner in the last few moments before an exam.

Instead, it is worth trying more confident and powerful postures before taking your final exams or important assessments.

**Power Pose 1**
Stand tall with your hands on your hips and elbows pointing out. Your feet should be approximately 30 cm apart. Look straight ahead and think of a time you felt confident, strong and in control. Hold the pose for as long as you can. Aim for five minutes. You may need to begin with two minutes and build up.

**Power Pose 2**
You will need a little more space for this one. Stand as above, but this time put your arms above your head, stretched out like the arms of a clock at the 10 to 2 position. Again hold your head high, stick your chest out and think about a time you felt really confident. Again, if you can, hold the pose for five minutes.

These poses are positive and confident building - but not ones that you might feel comfortable doing in public. Therefore, don’t think of this as an activity you can only do outside an exam hall. Standing tall can also benefit students when they hit a block in their revision.

So, next time you are working away in your room and you hit a block, don’t hunch yourself over your notes. Take a break and stand in the power pose!