

# *The Charismatic Man*

The Three Elements of Personal Magnetism

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# Introduction

Are you a senior in high school running for Student Council President?

Are you an entrepreneur looking to make a successful pitch and attract investors?

Are you a military officer working to win your men's loyalty?

Are you a salesman trying to land some new clients?

Are you a college professor wanting to get through to your students?

Are you a single guy looking for love?

No matter your situation in life and your individual aims, one of the most important tools for success is your personal charisma. Charisma is what allows you to command a room, draw others to you, and convince people of your ideas. It's an essential part of being the kind of leader who wins devoted followers who are willing to go to the ends of the earth for you. Charismatic men are perceived as both likeable *and* powerful, a dynamic, irresistible combination that opens endless doors to them.

Charisma may seem like a mysterious quality — something that some men are born with and some are not. But this is happily not the case. You don't need to have hit the genetic charisma lottery in order to develop yourself into a man with powerful magnetism.

Far from being a magical and inexplicable trait, charisma can be broken down into a set of concrete, largely nonverbal behaviors that can be learned, practiced, and made natural. Olivia Fox Cabane, author of *The Charisma Myth*, places these behaviors into three categories: Presence, Power, and Warmth. When deftly combined, these three components produce strong personal magnetism.

# Charisma Component #1: Presence



Have you ever been in a conversation with someone and you could tell you didn't have their complete attention?

How did it make you feel?

Probably a bit annoyed.

Sadly, it seems fewer and fewer people are fully present and engaged with the individuals they're interacting with. Being completely engaged in a conversation has likely always been a challenge, as we all have a bit of [the conversational narcissist in us](#).

Now that smartphones have saturated modern life, being fully present is even harder.

People today try to (unsuccessfully) switch their attention between two worlds — the real world populated by the people they are physically present with and the cyber world which sends them dispatches through their phone. Go to any restaurant in America and you're bound to see tables of people staring blankly at their smartphones and hardly engaging with each other. [This video](#) that circulated the intertubes a while back, which shows a woman going through her day having "forgotten" her phone, perfectly captures the way in which technology has created a society of non-present screen gawkers. Pretty poignant.

The good news about all this is that it's now incredibly easy to set yourself apart from the pack simply by being fully present with people and giving them your complete attention.

When you think of charisma, you might think of trying to make yourself seem super awesome to others. But the paradoxical secret of charisma is that it's not about trumpeting *your* good qualities, but making the *other* person feel good about himself. Real charisma makes the other person feel important; when they finish an interaction with you, they feel better about themselves than they did before.

Focusing your mental and emotional energy on someone as you interact is how you create that feeling of importance. People fundamentally want attention – they want to be recognized and acknowledged.

And you don't have to be an outgoing, uber-social extrovert in order to have and display charisma. In [The Charisma Myth](#), Cabane cites tech-entrepreneur Elon Musk as an example of someone who has mastered the art of charismatic presence. He's incredibly intelligent and a pretty quiet guy by nature; however, he counterbalances his introverted inclinations with intense focus and presence. He doesn't need to be the extroverted life of the party to seem magnetic; instead of chatting everybody up and offering a little of himself to a lot of people, he concentrates on giving his full, intense attention to a few; in so doing, he makes them feel incredibly special. Charisma isn't necessarily about quantity, but quality.

Conveying presence is a simple concept, but oftentimes difficult to actually achieve. You can't just fake it. People are surprisingly adept at deciphering your feigned interest. To truly convey presence, you must actually *be* present. It takes a significant amount of willpower to focus all your attention on the person you're with at the moment. But like all things, with practice, it becomes significantly easier.

Below are some tips on developing your charismatic presence:

**Bring yourself to the here and now.** Presence begins in your mind. If you feel like your

mind is off somewhere else while engaging with someone, try this little exercise to bring you back to the here and now: Focus on physical sensations in your body that you often ignore. It could be your breath or it could be the sensation of your feet touching the ground. You don't have to spend very long meditating on these sensations. Just a second or two will bring you back into the moment you're sharing with this person.

**Make sure you're physically comfortable.** It's hard to be fully present with someone when all you're thinking about is how uncomfortably tight your pants are or how hot it is. To that end, do what you can to ensure you're as comfortable as possible. As Antonio Centeno has emphasized numerous times — [wear properly fitting clothes!](#) Besides helping you look better, clothes that fit well make you feel better. Other things you can do to increase your physical comfort include [getting enough sleep](#), [laying off the caffeine](#) (be calm instead of jittery), and adjusting the thermostat (when you can) to a more agreeable temperature.

**Set your devices on silent and put them out of sight.** This serves two purposes: First, it reduces the temptation for you to check them while you're engaging with someone. Second, it sends a strong message to the person you're with that they have your complete attention and they're not sharing it with the smartphone placed on the table. (Here's a complete guide to shaking your smartphone habit.)

**Look the person in the eye when they're talking.** Numerous studies have shown that people who make higher levels of eye contact with others are perceived as possessing a load of desirable traits, including warmth, honesty, sincerity, competency, confidence, and emotional stability. And not only does increased eye contact make you seem more appealing in pretty much every way to those you interact with, it also improves the quality of that interaction. Eye contact imparts a sense of intimacy to your exchanges, and leaves the receiver of your gaze feeling more positive about your interaction and also more connected to you.

It's important to note that while eye contact works well in building intimacy in friendly situations, [recent research](#) suggests it may backfire when you're trying to persuade someone who's skeptical of your point of view.

To learn more about the importance of eye contact, [click here](#). To learn how to make eye contact the *right* way, [click here](#).

**Nod to show that you're listening.** Besides eye contact, an easy way to convey presence is through body language, and more specifically, nodding your head. But be judicious with the noggin nods. An over abundance can indicate you're trying too hard to please and agree with the person, which decreases their perception of your power.

Also, only nod at appropriate times; you'll need to be truly listening to know when a nod makes sense.

**Ask clarifying questions.** An easy way to show someone that you're completely there with them is to ask clarifying questions after he or she has spoken. For example, you could ask, "When you say \_\_\_\_\_, what exactly do you mean?"

Another great clarifying question comes to us from Dr. Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Basically, you paraphrase what the person just said and add, "Am I understanding you correctly?"

In more casual conversations, ask people questions like, "What was your favorite part of that?" or "What was the hardest part of that for you?" People really enjoy reflecting on and answering such questions.

For more info on how to ask questions that show you're really listening, [click here](#).

**Avoid fidgeting.** Fidgeting signals to the other person that you're not comfortable or content and that there's somewhere else you'd rather be. So don't twiddle your thumbs or your phone. And avoid looking around for what else is going on, which signals to the other person that you're searching for a better opportunity than your current one.

**Don't think about how you're going to respond while the person is still talking.** We all have a tendency to do this. Our inner conversational narcissist wants to be ready to jump in and start talking as soon as there's an opening. But if you're thinking about what you're going to say, you're obviously not fully listening to what the other person is saying. It's natural to want to have an idea of what you're going to say before you say it, but it's okay to work through your response as you're giving it; embrace the pause. As we'll discuss in the chapter on Power, it's low-status individuals who talk the most and feel the need to fill every silence.

**Wait two seconds before responding.** Breaking in the very instant a person pauses or stops talking signals to them that you were doing the above -- thinking about what you were going to say instead of fully listening to them. Nonverbal behaviors are more powerful than verbal ones, so use this trick from Cabane to show you're really tuned in:

*When someone has spoken, see if you can let your facial expression react first, showing that you're absorbing what they've just said and giving their brilliant statement the consideration it deserves. Only then, after about two seconds, do you answer.*

*The sequence goes like this:*

- *They finish their sentence*
- *Your face absorbs*
- *Your face reacts*
- *Then, and only then, you answer*

**Bone up on your other listening skills.** Make sure to check out [our post on active listening for more tips on improving this](#) vital skill. Follow them and you'll make vast improvements in your charismatic presence.



# Charisma Component #2: Power

Charismatic individuals are powerful people. However, this doesn't necessarily mean they're the leader of the free world or the chairman of a multi-national corporation. In fact, you can find individuals who convey Power in the humblest walks of life. Power, according to Cabane, simply "means being perceived as able to affect the world around us, whether through influence on or authority over others, large amounts of money, expertise, intelligence, sheer physical strength, or high social status."

*Being able to affect the world around us.* Powerful people can get things done, or at least they give that impression. Charismatic individuals draw people into their orbit like a magnet, and Power is the crux of that magnetic force. It's a primal attraction. Back in our caveman times, our survival could depend on being chummy with the big dogs at the top of the social hierarchy – those who could offer protection, food, and women. To better enable us to seek out and latch onto such people, our brains evolved to cue in on body language and status markers that indicate power.

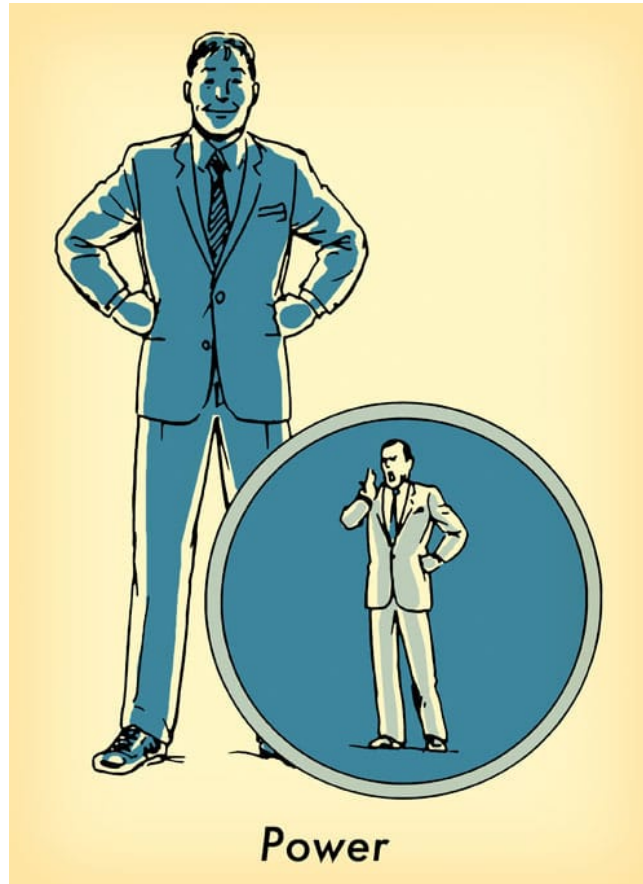
We may have left the savanna thousands of years ago, but people are still incredibly drawn to those who have resources, or simply seem to know how to get them. Our very survival may no longer depend on our connections with such people, but our access to greater personal and professional opportunities can.

It's extremely important to point out here that each of the three components of charisma must be deftly combined in order to produce personal magnetism. You may be the most affable, attentive person in the room, but without Power, people will at best just see a nice guy, and, at worst, someone who's needy and desperate; it may seem harsh, but generally the value people place on your Presence and Warmth depends on the amount of power they perceive you to have. Here's a quick example. If you received a compliment on a job presentation from both a co-worker and the CEO of the company, which compliment would mean more to you? If you're like most people, it'd be the CEO because he's got the power.

On the flip side, Power in the absence of Warmth and Presence is a charisma killer. A powerful man who lacks these tempering qualities can be seen as important and impressive, but will come off as aloof, arrogant, and cold.

The currents of Presence, Power, and Warmth must be harmoniously intertwined to produce truly electric charisma.

## How to Increase Your Charismatic Power



Increasing your charismatic Power may seem difficult; it may feel like applying for a job where you need experience to be hired, but to get that experience, you need to have that job first! Remember, however, that charisma is about how other people *perceive* you, so you don't actually have to have a million dollars or the Pope on speed dial. Nor do you need to be able to "crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentation of their women" (though those things can certainly help). In order to achieve Conan-esque power, you first simply need to offer the impression that you've already got it. Fake it until you make it! As people perceive your charismatic Power and invite you into their circles of influence, you'll gain in real world power, which will make you feel and demonstrate more charismatic Power – setting off a virtuous cycle that leads to greater and greater success.

Offering an impression of power mainly comes down to enhancing the things humans

are wired to home in on when trying to determine someone's level of it: body language and appearance.

Here's how to do that, along with a few other proven Power-boosters:

**Boost your confidence.** Power first begins in the mind. If you feel confident and powerful, others will feel it too. Self-assurance gives you an irresistible aura that draws people in and makes them want to get to know you better. Developing confidence deserves its own post, but for now know that the crux of confidence is *mastery*. Expertise, regardless of the skill or the area of knowledge, marks you as someone with resources, and a man with enough perseverance to plunge to the very depths of a subject. Attaining mastery over something will also fundamentally change the way you feel about and carry yourself.

Putting the rest of these tips into practice will also help boost your confidence.

**Know a little about a lot.** In addition to one area of expertise, you should also seek to know as much about as many subjects as possible. Intelligence is one of the key markers of a man who is able to *affect the world around us*, and the more conversations you can confidently wade into and add onto, the smarter (and more well-liked) you will seem to others. How do you gain a wide breadth of knowledge? Read, read, read. Read every chance you get. *Combined with the above, you'll become the ideal T-shaped man.*

**Become physically fit.** Your body shape is one of, if not the, first thing people take in when they meet you. A fit, muscular physique sends a signal to the most primal parts of other people's brains about your strength and ability to dominate and protect. Fitness also signals to other people that you're disciplined and capable of enduring pain in pursuit of a goal. This is likely why men with an average-to-husky build make more money than both their skinny and obese peers. As reported by *The Wall Street Journal*, one study found that: "Thin guys earned \$8,437 less than average-weight men. But they were consistently rewarded for getting heavier, a trend that tapered off only when their weight hit the obese level. In one study, the highest pay point, on average, was reached for guys who weighed a strapping 207 pounds." *Peruse our extensive Health & Fitness section for more specific tips.*

**Dress for power.** Clothing is one of our strongest power cues. When we see a man in a military uniform with lots of ribbons on his chest and stars on his shoulders, we automatically think "authority." But you don't have to don Dress Blues to garner this instantaneous respect from others. Studies have demonstrated again and again that simply wearing high-status clothing is enough to influence people. For example, in *The*

*Charisma Myth*, Cabane discusses one experiment that showed that people tended to follow a jaywalker sooner and more frequently if he was wearing a well-tailored suit than if he was wearing more schlumpy-looking clothing.

Besides making others perceive you as more powerful, dressing well can actually make *you* feel more powerful and confident as well. By feeling more powerful, you act more powerfully, which makes others see you as more powerful. The virtuous charismatic cycle FTW!

Start taking steps today to dress better. You don't have to buy designer double-breasted pinstripe suits to look more powerful. Just make some small style upgrades that show you have it together. Instead of a t-shirt, shorts, and flip-flops, don a nice button-down shirt, a pair of khakis, and some leather dress boots. Slip on a sport coat or blazer to broaden and heighten your shoulders and create a more masculine silhouette. Another simple (and inexpensive) way to improve your appearance is to take your clothing to a tailor or seamstress to have it adjusted. You'll be amazed how much better (and powerful) you'll look with a dress shirt that isn't all baggy and poofy or a suit that properly accents your shoulders.

Finally, you may be thinking, "But someone like Mark Zuckerberg wears hoodies and sandals and he's super powerful." True, but his success is the exception rather than the rule, in that it was born in a dorm room rather than through having to impress and make connections with other people. A better example would be Steve Jobs. Today we think of him as the quintessential iconoclast, a persona symbolized by his "uniform" of jeans and a black turtleneck. But before Steve Jobs became the Apple wonder-worker of the late 90s, when he was still trying to build his success and convert people to his products and ideas, he dressed in pinstripe suits and even a bow tie. Once you attain the pinnacle of power, you may be able to wear whatever you want. But while you're still trying to gain power, dress like you've already got it.

**Be the Big Gorilla.** After clothing, body language is the second biggest influencer on other people's perception of your power. One nonverbal cue that indicates power is the amount of space an individual uses. As you probably intuited, powerful people take up more space than others. They act, as Cabane describes, like "Big Gorillas."

According to organizational behavioral professor Deborah Gruenfeld, "powerful people sit sideways on chairs, drape their arms over the back, or appropriate two chairs by placing an arm across the back of an adjacent chair. They put their feet on the desk. They sit on the desk."

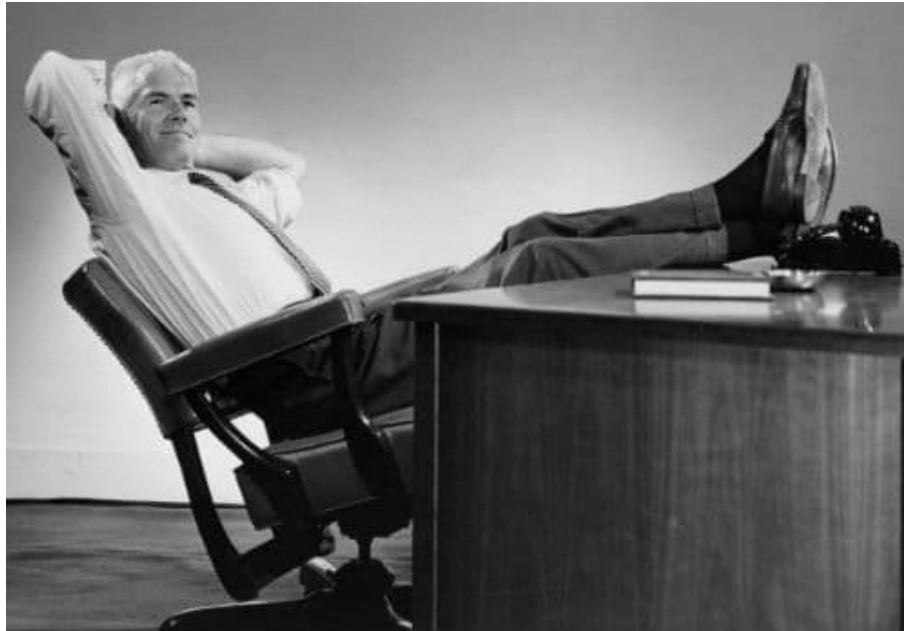
To increase the level of power people perceive you to have, look for ways to subtly

increase the amount of space you take up. Drape an arm over the back of a chair like Don Draper or when a co-worker comes into your office to chat, instead of sitting behind your desk, casually sit on top of it.

Another tip Cabane suggests to help you harness your inner Big Gorilla is to practice getting people to move aside for you in a crowded environment using only your body language. Imagine you're actually a Big Gorilla — inflate your chest and stand up straight. Start walking and see if people will move out of your way as you saunter in this powerful stance. Doing this might seem a bit uncomfortable and weird, but it's a great exercise to help you see the efficacy of body language. If you bump into someone, treat it as an opportunity to convey warmth and kindness by apologizing and making the other person feel comfortable.

**Assume Power Poses.** Related to being the Big Gorilla is using "Power Poses." These are body stances that have been proven to effectively convey power. The most familiar Power Pose is arms akimbo, with the hands resting on the waist. Superheroes are fond of this Power Pose.

Another Power Pose is leaning back in your chair with your hands behind your head like this:



If you're at a meeting and you'd like to convey power to those in the room, simply stand up, lean forward, and rest your hands on the table in front of you. Instant authority!

A final Power Pose: lifting your arms straight up in the air like you've just thrown the game winning touchdown pass. I'm not sure when you could incorporate this pose in your daily life without looking weird, though.

What's interesting about all these different poses is that not only do they make others perceive you as more powerful, but they also make *you* feel more powerful (and manly). Studies have shown that by simply standing in a Power Pose for two minutes, testosterone levels increase, while cortisol levels decrease, making you feel more confident and less stressed. When you feel more confident, you act more powerful. Another charismatic virtuous circle! They're everywhere!

**Take control of your environment.** We feel most self-assured, at ease, and powerful when we're familiar with our surroundings. Familiarity gives us a sense of control, which makes us feel confident. This is why organizations sometimes fight over the location of negotiations before they even start negotiating. Each side wants that home-field advantage.

But how can you be familiar with a room if it's your first time entering it? Author and magician [Steve Cohen](#) suggests doing small things to instantly take control of your surroundings. For example, when you sit down at a table in a restaurant, rearrange things on the table. Move a saltshaker or your water glass. It sounds silly, but by doing this you tell your subconscious that you have control (even if it's nominal) of your surroundings, which in turn makes you more confident and magnetic. Look for small but polite ways in which you can take control of your surroundings in your everyday activities. You might be amazed by the results.

**Speak less and slowly.** Powerful people don't just take up space physically; they also take up space in conversation. Paradoxically, this doesn't mean you should be hogging the speaking time. Powerful people actually tend to speak *less* than low-status individuals. By making their words scarce, powerful people increase the value of their communication. When they do speak, people listen. Harness your inner Spartan by being a bit less chatty and a bit more laconic with your speech.

Powerful people also take up space in the conversation with silence. Unlike most folks, powerful people aren't afraid of "awkward" silence. In fact, they relish it. They understand that people will nervously try to fill the silent gaps. It's usually during these bouts of anxious chatter that the other man gives up some strategic advantage or useful information. This is why interrogators, job interviewers, and negotiators often resort to the silent treatment to suss out the other person's vulnerabilities.

Another way to take up space in the conversation is to speak slowly. Speaking fast conveys nervousness and anxiety. Speaking slowly conveys the intelligence, thoughtfulness, and calmness that powerful people embody. Legendary actor Michael Caine summed it up nicely when he said: "the basic rule of human nature is that powerful people speak slowly and subservient people quickly – because if they don't

“speak fast nobody will listen to them.” You’d be surprised how fast you talk. Summon your inner Sam Elliott and make an effort to slow it down. It may seem like you’re speaking... way... too... slowly at first, but trust me, you’ll sound completely normal, and even a bit regal.

**Boost your poise.** Powerful people are composed people. They have poise, or a certain grace and stillness about them. They don’t excessively nod (a sign of submissiveness), they don’t fidget (a sign of nervousness), and they don’t rely on verbal fillers like um and uh. In your next encounter with someone, act natural but focus on being as still as possible. Nod every now and then to indicate you’re listening, but don’t turn into a bobblehead. Keep your hands still and don’t tap your feet. Read our article on [how to eliminate ums and uhs](#).

## Finding Your Inner Gorilla

I imagine that there’s a good number of you who are thinking, “I don’t know about this. It makes me feel a little uncomfortable. I enjoyed the chapter on Presence more.” I bet you did. Paying attention to people is “nice” and we’re all conditioned and raised to be nice to others. We’re not taught [how to be assertive](#) and act powerful. In fact, we’re often made to apologize and feel bad for wanting to.

Just remember that being powerful doesn’t mean being a jerk – you’ll also need to cultivate your Presence and Warmth in order to be truly magnetic. But just being nice is not the same thing as being charismatic; you might be likeable but not fascinating, not magnetic, not someone people are drawn to as soon as you walk into the room. So work on developing your Power, even if it doesn’t come naturally to you at first. With time and practice, I promise it will.

# Charisma Component #3: Warmth

When you emanate Warmth people see you as being approachable, caring, and empathetic. When they're around you they feel comfortable and at ease. Warmth fulfills the basic human need to be understood, acknowledged, and taken care of — a need rooted in our very being all the way from childhood. Warmth is your mom handing you a cup of hot chocolate as you come inside from playing in the snow or smoothing your hair and giving you medicine as you lie sick in bed. Warmth is your dad pulling you into a bear hug when you show him the A+ on your test. Even though we grow up, leave the nest, and try to be independent, deep down we all still want to feel cared for, accepted, “at home.”

Just like Power and Presence, Warmth is essential for balancing the other elements and also cannot produce true magnetism on its own. A man with Power but not Warmth will come off as cold, arrogant, and aloof. A man with Warmth but not Power will be perceived as weak, eager to please, and desperate for approval. A drip.

## The Real McCoy

Of all the elements of charisma, I think Warmth is the hardest to fake. It's not too hard to convince people you're present with them (even when your mind is wandering a bit), nor to act like a guy who's got it together when you're really still working towards that goal. But people are pretty good at sniffing out fake Warmth, and in fact have a natural tendency to positively recoil when they think you're offering the counterfeit variety.

Warmth backfires when people can tell you're offering it for one reason and one reason only: to get something from them. Hence our distaste for salesmen who lay the Warmth on thick for the sake of trying to close the deal. It's not that you shouldn't want things from other people; pretty much the whole point of charisma is to influence others to do something, whether that's getting them to buy a product, go on a date, or serve a cause with passion. Rather, it's simply that influencing them can't be your *only* motive.

For Warmth to come off as genuine it must be rooted in something deeper than a



purely selfish motive. It must spring from your own contentment with life and a real empathy and curiosity about other people. A man of real Warmth enjoys getting to know folks from all walks of life; he conveys the sense that even if he doesn't get from them what he was looking for, he'd still judge the interaction to have been worthwhile. A man of real Warmth is one who feels that crossing paths with another person is never a true waste.

To be truly effective in creating personal magnetism, the outward behaviors that communicate Warmth to others must arise from that most powerful but ineffable quality: a genuinely good heart. Thus, the foundation for charismatic Warmth begins at your core.

## Developing Warmth Within

There are two main ways to develop your inner warmth:

**Practice gratitude.** A grateful heart is a happy heart. Studies have shown again and again that people who practice gratitude on a daily basis are happier and more optimistic than folks who don't.

To cultivate your gratitude, make it a practice to write down what you're grateful for every day. Better yet, use the [George Bailey Technique](#). As you become a more grateful man, your ability to put your problems into perspective will grow, leading to a sense of relaxed contentment that radiates to other people and puts them at ease.

**Develop your empathy.** Teddy Roosevelt called empathy "fellow-feeling" and argued that it was the most important factor for a healthy political and social life. It's also an important factor in developing charismatic Warmth. People want to feel understood, and empathy is what allows us to put ourselves in their shoes and feel what they feel.

I'll admit that developing empathy isn't easy. You witness forehead-slapping rudeness in public or read the semi-literate vitriol spewed in comments on YouTube and it's easy to grow pretty cynical about the state of the human race. Here are some ways to soften that cynicism and develop greater empathy for your fellow humans:

- **Think of other people as your brothers and sisters.** This perspective may be rooted in a religious belief that says we're all created by the same God, or in science that says we came from one place in Africa, and are even [made of the same stardust](#). Either way, we're all cosmically connected. Sounds a little cheesy maybe, but thinking that we're all family members making the same hard journey together has often helped me be more compassionate when I was feeling anything but.
- **Interact with people face-to-face.** [According to studies that have been tracking](#)

this since 1979, college students are 40% less empathetic than their counterparts 30 years ago. Why the decline? I would argue it can be traced to the fact that [we're interacting less face-to-face and more as disembodied selves online](#). Seeing each other's facial expressions in person is what literally triggers empathy in our brains. In the absence of these cues, we're more likely to impute nefarious motives to others and feel an unchecked anger towards them. So get out from behind your computer screen more often and interact with people in the real world; as you do so, the general feeling that people are freakin' terrible that can come from spending time online will often melt into, "Folks ain't so bad after all."

- **Read more fiction.** [Studies show that reading fictional literature exercises the mental muscles that strengthen empathy](#). If you're looking for ideas on books to read, check out our [men's fiction list](#).
- **Imagine a different story about the people who annoy you.** When *you* cut someone off while driving, you think to yourself, "I hate to have done that but if I don't get to this interview on time, I won't get the job." But when *someone else* cuts you off, you think, "What a complete asshole." We chalk our own misbehaviors up to circumstances, but blame the foibles of others on some inherent character flaw. Try offering the same compassion you give yourself to others by imagining possible reasons for why someone else might have done something rude or annoying. In my opinion, the best explanation of this exercise and how transformative it can be was given by author David Foster Wallace in [a commencement address from 2005](#). I strongly encourage you to take time to read it.
- **Be curious about people.** You can't get inside another person's shoes unless you really get to know them. Ask people clarifying questions so you can figure out where they're coming from and understand what makes them tick. You can truly learn something about life and the human condition from every single person you meet.

The more you develop your empathy, the more you realize that everybody has hard stuff in their life that they're grappling with, and the more you'll want to become an oasis for other people – someone who lightens their burden by making them feel understood, safe, and rejuvenated even in the briefest of interactions.

## Conveying Warmth To Others



So if Warmth is hard to fake, and must be developed from within, what role do outward behaviors play?

First, it's possible to have a good heart but be terrible at conveying this kindness to others. You may not even be aware that you're coming off as aloof to others, since you think of yourself as a good dude. It's important to not only have inner warmth, but to be able to communicate this warmth to those around you.

Second, acting warm outwardly enhances how warm you feel inwardly. It's a virtuous cycle: you act warmly towards others, so you feel warm inside, which makes you act more warmly, and so on. In fact, acting warmly will develop your inner warmth more quickly and effectively than thinking your way to empathy ever will. Don't wait until you feel like an empathetic person before you start acting like it. By acting, you become. Work on both your behavior and mindset at the same time – they go hand in hand.

If you're worried about coming off as fake by acting warmly before you feel it inside, don't be. As long as you at least have a good motive for your interactions you'll be fine. The following behaviors, unless you do them awkwardly or exaggeratedly, are very easy to pull off quite naturally. They're small ways to simply put your best foot forward with people. And if they do come off as stilted the very first time you try them, well, don't

worry about that either – you’ve got to start somewhere! Once you kick off the virtuous charismatic Warmth cycle, it’s just a matter of time before it registers as wholly genuine.

**Think of yourself as the host.** When you have people over to your house, what do you do? Hopefully you look for ways to make them feel comfortable in your home. Bring this same mentality to all your interactions. When you think of yourself as the host in every situation, figuring out what to do to put others at ease will come more naturally.

**Lead with a sincere compliment.** Nothing can strengthen a good relationship or melt the ice in a bad one like a sincere compliment. Sadly, we have a tendency to be pretty stingy with our kindly words. To learn how and why to give an effective compliment, [check out the post we wrote last year on the subject](#). It’s not a bad idea to brush up on [how to best accept a compliment](#), too.

**Put more warmth in your voice.** Our voice conveys emotion not only through the words we speak, but the tone and pitch we use. We communicate anger with a loud, harsh tone and we communicate kindness and warmth with a softer, richer tone. An easy way to imbue warmth into your voice is to simply smile when you speak. Instantaneous warmth. This tip is especially useful for when you’re talking to someone on the phone. Without body language and facial expressions at your disposal, your voice is your only tool to communicate Warmth.

**Mirror their body language.** Research has shown that by simply mirroring a person’s body language and manner of speaking, they’ll trust you and find you more attractive. Psychologists speculate that mirroring creates limbic resonance between two individuals, making them more empathetic to one another.

The key to mirroring body language is to not make it too obvious. Don’t match your conversation partner tic for tic, but if they speak softly, bring your own voice down a notch; if they lean back in their chair, lean back just a bit too. Another tactic to make mirroring look less obvious is to let a few seconds lapse before you move into a mirrored position.

Author Olivia Fox Cabane notes in *The Charisma Myth* that there are instances when mirroring body language can have the opposite effect. The most obvious one is when the other person is angry. Mirroring an angry person’s angry body language and tone of voice will just make them angrier. When you’re dealing with an angry or defensive person, Cabane suggests using a bit of psychological jiu-jitsu to get the person in a state where they’ll be more receptive to your Warmth-inducing techniques:

*“Rather than mirroring, try breaking him out of his posture by handing him*

*something: a piece of paper or a pen — whatever works. And then, as soon as he's in a new position, distract him by giving him new information or changing the subject while you mirror his posture to reestablish rapport."*

Manipulative? I don't think so. You're just using solid social skills to get someone in a better frame of mind.

**Relax your posture.** While an erect posture creates the perception of power and confidence, it can also make you seem stiff, cold, and haughty in certain situations. When you're trying to create Warmth, relax your posture a bit. Instead of throwing your shoulders back and sticking your chest out, let your shoulders, back, and chest assume a natural, comfortable position. The goal is to look like an affable and approachable everyday-Joe instead of a regal king.

**Open up your body.** Besides relaxing your posture, using "open body language" will also help you communicate Warmth to others. Instead of crossing your arms across your body, keep them by your side; instead of crossing your legs, leave them open; instead of having a desk or podium between you and the other person, remove barriers. You get the idea.

**Give them your "kind" eyes.** Kate often describes people as having "kind eyes." It's a gaze that some people give that makes others feel warm, accepted, and understood. I had a church leader when I was in high school who had "kind eyes," and yet the man was a beast. Despite being in his 50s, he could bench 350+ lbs and looked like he could rip your head off. But, he had the kindest eyes. Even when you felt like the world was falling down around you, he'd look at you and you'd instantly feel like everything was going to be okay.

Eyes are the window to your soul, and kind eyes are rooted in the goodness of your heart. But there is also a way to enhance the kindness of your eyes to make sure your inner warmth is shining through.

You do it by switching to a softer focus. Instead of squinting and staring a person down like you're about to punch them, relax your face and open up your focus. If your face feels relaxed around your eyes, you likely have achieved "kind eyes."

**Smile, damnit.** Smiling is an easy way to not only convey Warmth to others, but also feel warm and fuzzy yourself, which helps you in conveying Warmth. The charismatic cycle!

Studies show that smiling, even when you don't actually feel happy, will instantly make

you feel happier. It's one of those instances when psychology follows physiology. So to help put yourself in a Warmth mindset, go ahead and grin.

Besides making you feel good, your smile makes you more attractive and approachable to others. Research has shown that people who smile more are rated as more attractive than those who don't. Psychologists and anthropologists also speculate that smiling is a way for us to signify to others that we have good intentions.

Also, as mentioned above, smiling can help you sound warmer. Studies have shown that individuals can discern who is smiling while speaking just by listening to the sound of their voice.

**Anticipate needs.** Giving someone something they might need without them having to ask shows that you're thinking about them. "I put together this graph for you. I thought it might be helpful for your presentation tomorrow." "I knew you'd be up all night studying, so I brought you this pack of 5-hour Energy." "It's getting cold out here, would you like to wear my jacket?"

**Offer something warm to drink.** Warm drinks give people warm feelings – [seriously!](#) Take advantage of this psychological quirk by offering people coffee or a mug of hot chocolate to generate Warmth towards you. This may explain why coffee shops are a great place for first dates and business meetings.

**Give a good handshake.** Touch is one of the best ways we can generate Warmth in another person. You want to respect people's personal space though, and not touch them a ton right off the bat (the rules are a little different when you're trying to flirt, but that's another topic). That only really gives you the handshake as a chance to make skin-to-skin contact. [So make it a good one!](#)

To give your handshake an extra boost of Warmth, extend your index finger onto the inside of the person's wrist as you clasp hands. Some communication experts believe that by touching someone's pulse point as you shake hands, they will feel more connected to you.

**Give people a chance to let you know the effort they put into something.**

Everyone's got a mini-martyr inside. We want people to acknowledge the trouble we went through to do something, but it isn't polite to detail it. So invite someone to tell you by asking questions that let them talk about it. For example, if someone has flown in to see you, ask things like, "Did you have to wake up really early to catch the flight? Was there a lot of turbulence? Any delays?"

**Make them feel comfortable.** People are eternally grateful for the person who saves

them from standing awkwardly alone. One of the best ways to show warmth is to **introduce people to those you are with** and invite them into the conversation. Also, be able to carry the burden of a conversation in any situation by **becoming a master of small talk**. People love having someone over to a gathering who they know will keep the conversation going.

**Remember dates, anniversaries, and details.** It's amazing how far simply remembering someone's birthday will go with people. And I don't mean simply adding to the herd of well wishes on someone's Facebook wall. Send a card or even an email – take it as a chance not only to wish them happy birthday but to say hello and ask how they are. Ditto for other anniversaries and milestones.

Another easy way to convey Warmth is by remembering the details – **starting with a person's name** (and their kids' names as well). "How is little Gus? Has he started preschool yet?"

**Give thoughtful gifts.** No, gift cards don't count. Doesn't have to be big stuff – just things that show you pay attention to them. When people mention things they like or are interested in, file these ideas away in your head (**or in a pocket notebook!**). They'll be delighted six months later when you say, "I know you mentioned awhile back that you collect vintage men's magazines. I saw a box full of them when I was at a garage sale and picked it up for you."

**Take care of things.** If someone has a problem and you can take care of it for them, do so. If they have a question, but you don't know the answer, say, "I don't know, but I'll find out for you." If they have a problem you can assist with yourself, lend a hand. "I know you've been having problems with the moles in your yard. I'll come over and set one of my traps and see if we can catch 'em."

Remember, conveying Warmth isn't about being a pushover. But if you have both the time and expertise to take care of something for a friend, do what you can to take at least one thing off his mind.

**Ask for help.** Ironically, it isn't just helping others that builds Warmth, but getting helped yourself. When Ben Franklin was a state legislator in Pennsylvania, there was a rival legislator that had badmouthed Franklin in a speech. Franklin understood that if he was to get anything done during his term, he'd have to work with this guy. To get in this grumpy gentleman's good graces, Franklin did something really counter-intuitive — he asked his rival for a favor.

Franklin recounts what happened in his autobiography:

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*“Having heard that he had in his library a certain very scarce and curious book, I wrote a note to him, expressing my desire of perusing that book, and requesting he would do me the favor of lending it to me for a few days. He sent it immediately, and I returned it in about a week with another note, expressing strongly my sense of the favor. When we next met in the House, he spoke to me (which he had never done before), and with great civility; and he ever after manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we became great friends, and our friendship continued to his death.”*

From this experience, Franklin coined the maxim: “He that has once done you a Kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged.”

Franklin had unwittingly discovered the psychological power of cognitive dissonance to change people’s minds. Our brains don’t like disagreement between our actions and beliefs. If we do a favor for somebody we don’t particularly like, it creates “dissonance” in our brain. To counteract that, our brain shifts our attitude towards the person we dislike. “Hmmm... I did something nice for this guy. I guess I do like him.”

If you want folks to have warm feelings towards you, use the Ben Franklin Effect. Ask for a small favor and reap charismatic Warmth.

**Be liberal with the thank you note**. It’s possible to convey Warmth even when you’re not around someone, and sending a thank you note is one of the best ways to do that. There’s never a bad time to write a thank you note. They tell people you noticed and took the time to acknowledge something worthy they did or are. Write them by hand and [follow this guide](#). Warmth in an envelope.



# Conclusion

We hope you enjoyed this ebook on how to develop personal charisma. Charisma isn't something you're born with – it's something you work to cultivate — and we hope we have provided you with the tools to do so. You'll need to practice the recommended behaviors until they become natural. As you do so, you will learn how to balance and mix the three elements to produce the most magnetic effect possible.

Charisma is a neutral trait – it can be used for either good or ill. Use yours both for enjoyment – for drawing people to you when you enter a party and for making friends — and for worthy endeavors as well, like getting people to sign on to fight in a worthy cause. Both professionally and socially, charisma can open many doors for you that might have been otherwise closed.

If there's one thing to take away from this book, it's the importance of the “act-to-become” principle. Our modern culture is often obsessed with the idea of “authenticity” (even though when pressed, they're probably not sure what it means), and the idea of acting in a way you might not really be feeling is criticized as fake or manipulative. But the best way to change your feelings is to first change your behavior – **and this is even true for manhood**. I came across a great quote from W.H. Auden on this subject:

*“Human beings are by nature actors, who cannot become something until first they have pretended to be it. They are therefore not to be divided into the hypocritical and the sincere, but into the sane, who know they are acting, and the mad who do not.”*

Men who intentionally cultivate their charisma are not fake nor manipulative, just realistic. Doing whatever comes naturally is given a lot of lip service these days, but it won't actually get you far in life — always seeking to intentionally put your best foot forward will.

# Bonus: A Case Study in Charisma from *Tender Is the Night*



*Author's Note: Though the character falls apart in the end, at the start of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel [Tender Is the Night](#), Dick Diver (and his wife as well) is described as the very embodiment of charisma. I wanted to offer some excerpts from the book as a kind of case study in charisma. While we've been covering the nuts and bolts of charisma, Fitzgerald's prose is able to convey what charisma looks like in its ideal form, and more importantly, what it feels like. There are a bunch of little nuggets here I'm still pondering over. Let's have a conversation with the text, going through each of the three components. You'll find my commentary labeled "Brett," with Fitzgerald's text labeled "TItN."*

**Presence**

**Brett:** *Presence involves focusing all your mental and emotional energy on the person you're interacting with. The effect is to make them feel like the most important person in the world when you're with them.*

**Tender Is the Night:** But Dick Diver—he was all complete there. Silently she admired him. His complexion was reddish and weather-burned, so was his short hair—a light growth of it rolled down his arms and hands. His eyes were of a bright, hard blue. His nose was somewhat pointed and there was never any doubt at whom he was looking or talking—and this is a flattering attention, for who looks at us?—glances fall upon us, curious or disinterested, nothing more.

## Warmth

**Brett:** *Warmth makes people feel acknowledged, special, and taken care of.*

**TitN:** He seemed kind and charming—his voice promised that he would take care of her, and that a little later he would open up whole new worlds for her, unroll an endless succession of magnificent possibilities.

**TitN:** But to be included in Dick Diver's world for a while was a remarkable experience: people believed he made special reservations about them, recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies, buried under the compromises of how many years. He won everyone quickly with an exquisite consideration and a politeness that moved so fast and intuitively that it could be examined only in its effect. Then, without caution, lest the first bloom of the relation wither, he opened the gate to his amusing world.

**TitN:** His voice, with some faint Irish melody running through it, wooed the world, yet she felt the layer of hardness in him, of self-control and of self-discipline.

**Brett:** *That Diver's voice was soothing, while at the same time conveying mastery, shows the way he was able to combine Warmth with Power.*

**TitN:** It was characteristic that after greeting Rosemary and her mother he waited for them to speak first, as if to allow them the reassurance of their own voices in new surroundings.

**Brett:** *I thought this was a neat tip for making people feel comfortable.*

**TitN:** [upon the arrival of new guests that Dick's friends aren't sure about] Rosemary had a sharp feeling of disappointment—she looked quickly at Dick, as though to ask an explanation of this incongruous mingling. But there was nothing unusual in his expression. He greeted his new guests with a proud bearing and an obvious deference

to their infinite and unknown possibilities.

**TitN:** Then came Dick, with his arms full of the slack he had taken up from others, deeply merged in his own party.

**TitN:** Rosemary was quite sure of it and Dick, realizing that he never had a better audience, made the group into so bright a unit that Rosemary felt an impatient disregard for all who were not at their table. They had been two days in Paris but actually they were still under the beach umbrella. When, as at the ball of the Corps des Pages the night before, the surroundings seemed formidable to Rosemary, who had yet to attend a Mayfair party in Hollywood, Dick would bring the scene within range by greeting a few people, a sort of selection—the Divers seemed to have a large acquaintance, but it was always as if the person had not seen them for a long, long time, and was utterly bowled over, “Why, where do you keep yourselves?”—and then re-create the unity of his own party by destroying the outsiders softly but permanently with an ironic coup de grâce.

**Brett:** *This to me was one of the most interesting passages, as it describes a very cool charismatic skill I had not thought of: the ability to be friendly with acquaintances while at the same time making your group of friends or a date feel like they belong to a special, exclusive unit.*

## Power

**Brett:** *A man with Power is perceived as someone who can influence others and affect the world around him. Part of this confidence is communicated in the way you talk: Diver is described as having a “strong mouth,” that speaks “thoughtfully and deliberately.”*

**TitN:** Alongside his hard, neat brightness everything faded into the surety that he knew everything.

**TitN:** [after an awkward moment between guests] The interchange filled a pause and Rosemary’s instinct was that something tactful should be said by somebody, but Dick made no attempt to break up the grouping formed by these late arrivals, not even to disarm Mrs. McKisco of her air of supercilious amusement. He did not solve this social problem because he knew it was not of importance at the moment and would solve itself. He was saving his newness for a larger effort, waiting for a more significant moment for his guests to be conscious of a good time.

**Brett:** *This is an awesome Power move. Part of true Power is knowing when stepping in will actually make things worse than letting the problem resolve itself.*

**Brett:** *Part of conveying Power is learning the art of repose. Men with Power have poise, a certain grace and stillness about them that communicates to others a complete command of their being. My favorite part of Fitzgerald's portrait of Diver's charisma is a little section where Diver's friends compare his supreme repose to the lack of poise in other men:*

**TitN:** They were at Voisins waiting for Nicole, six of them, Rosemary, the Norths, Dick Diver and two young French musicians. They were looking over the other patrons of the restaurant to see if they had repose—Dick said no American men had any repose, except himself, and they were seeking an example to confront him with. Things looked black for them—not a man had come into the restaurant for ten minutes without raising his hand to his face. “We ought never to have given up waxed mustaches,” said Abe. “Nevertheless Dick isn’t the only man with repose—” “Oh, yes, I am.” “—but he may be the only sober man with repose.” A well-dressed American had come in with two women who swooped and fluttered unselfconsciously around a table. Suddenly, he perceived that he was being watched—whereupon his hand rose spasmodically and arranged a phantom bulge in his necktie. In another unseated party a man endlessly patted his shaven cheek with his palm, and his companion mechanically raised and lowered the stub of a cold cigar. The luckier ones fingered eyeglasses and facial hair, the unequipped stroked blank mouths, or even pulled desperately at the lobes of their ears.

A well-known general came in, and Abe, counting on the man’s first year at West Point—that year during which no cadet can resign and from which none ever recovers—made a bet with Dick of five dollars. His hands hanging naturally at his sides, the general waited to be seated. Once his arms swung suddenly backward like a jumper’s and Dick said, “Ah!” supposing he had lost control, but the general recovered and they breathed again—the agony was nearly over, the garçon was pulling out his chair . . . With a touch of fury the conqueror shot up his hand and scratched his gray immaculate head. “You see,” said Dick smugly, “I’m the only one.”

## Putting the 3 Elements of Charisma Together

**Brett:** *When you deftly combine all 3 elements of charisma, you will elicit in others, as Diver did, a truly “electric response.”*

**TitN:** Save among a few of the tough-minded and perennially suspicious, he had the power of arousing a fascinated and uncritical love.

**TitN:** They had been at the table half an hour and a perceptible change had set in—person by person had given up something, a preoccupation, an anxiety, a suspicion, and now they were only their best selves and the Divers’ guests. Not to have been

friendly and interested would have seemed to reflect on the Divers, so now they were all trying, and seeing this, Rosemary liked everyone.

**Brett:** *Charismatic people make others feel so good, other people want to act like their best selves in gratitude. And as more people up their game, a virtuous cycle is ignited, turning your gathering into something almost magical.*

**TitN:** The table seemed to have risen a little toward the sky like a mechanical dancing platform, giving the people around it a sense of being alone with each other in the dark universe, nourished by its only food, warmed by its only lights. And, as if a curious hushed laugh from Mrs. McKisco were a signal that such a detachment from the world had been attained, the two Divers began suddenly to warm and glow and expand, as if to make up to their guests, already so subtly assured of their importance, so flattered with politeness, for anything they might still miss from that country well left behind. Just for a moment they seemed to speak to every one at the table, singly and together, assuring them of their friendliness, their affection. And for a moment the faces turned up toward them were like the faces of poor children at a Christmas tree. Then abruptly the table broke up—the moment when the guests had been daringly lifted conviviality into the rarer atmosphere of sentiment, was over before it could be irreverently breathed, before they had half realized it was there.

But the diffused magic of the hot sweet South had withdrawn into them—the soft-pawed night and the ghostly wash of the Mediterranean far below—the magic left these things and melted into the two Divers and became part of them.