

**"This book will help you craft, visualize, and deliver your big ideas by honing the most powerful presentation tool in your communication arsenal—you."**

—**JOSH LINKNER**, founder and former CEO of ePrize and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Disciplined Dreaming*

THE  
**BIG FISH**  
EXPERIENCE

**CREATE MEMORABLE PRESENTATIONS  
THAT REEL IN YOUR AUDIENCE**

**KENNY NGUYEN • GUS MURILLO • ROBERT KILLEEN • LUKE JONES**  
of Big Fish Presentations

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# BODY LANGUAGE



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Consider this scenario: A speaker is delivering her speech standing still. Her arms are folded, and she is staring blankly into the crowd.

How would that make you feel? Uncomfortable? Unsure whether the speaker even believes what she is saying? You may seriously question her credentials before you lose interest.

This is why matching body language to your content is extremely important when building a bond with your audience. It shows that you care. It shows your passion. It shows that you're human, not an autonomous robot reciting a script.

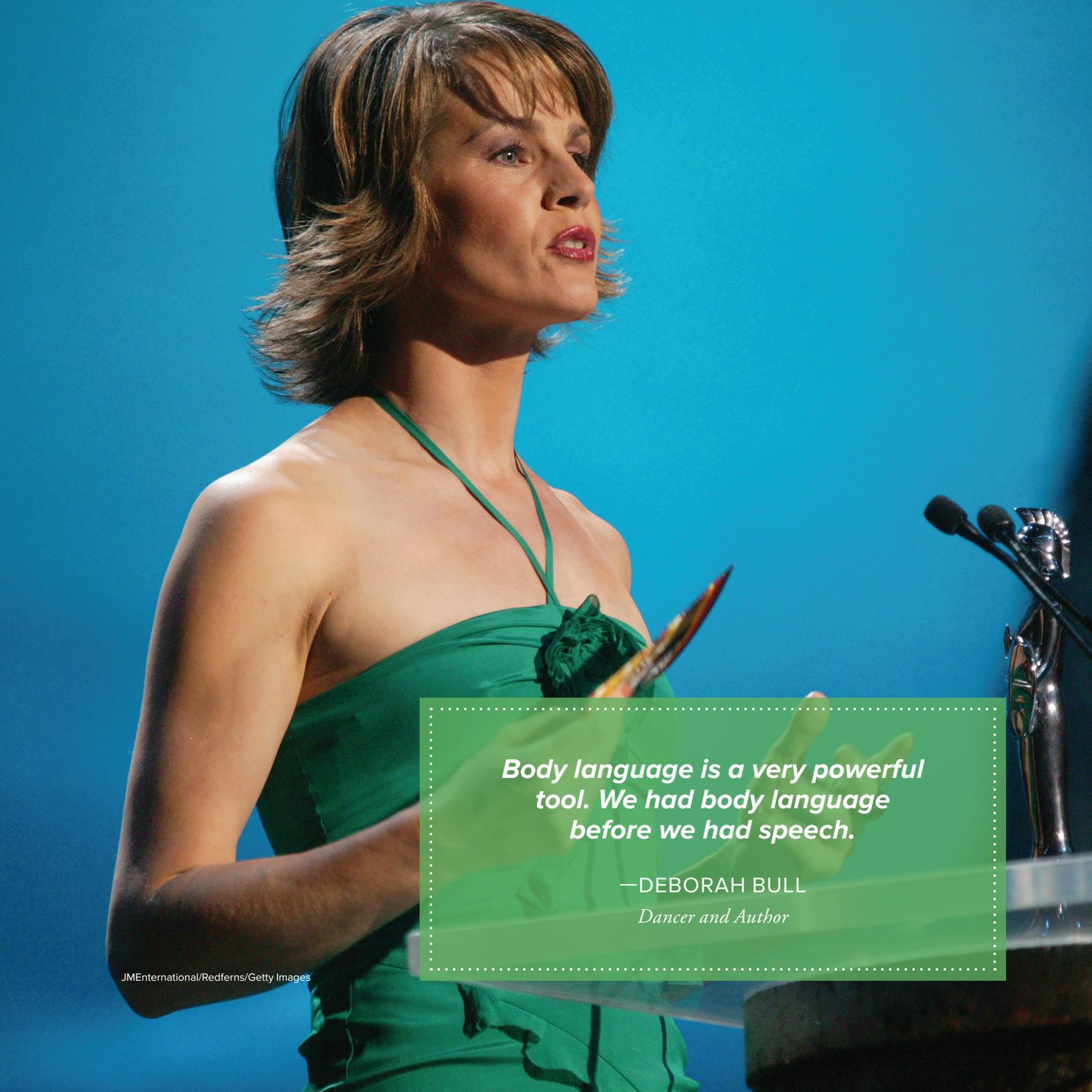
How do you convey emotion and elevate content through body language?

## Facial Expressions

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Your face is the first point of focus for your audience. Most of the time, your face matches your mood, so it's important that it matches your content, too. Your audience will associate your facial expressions and, therefore, your mood with whatever you're saying at the time. Your facial expressions can leave your audience with a specific impression of your content.

Always start and end your presentation with a genuine smile. Even a subtle smile can go a long way. It shows your audience not only that you're friendly and approachable but that you're happy to be there.

A photograph of Deborah Bull, a dancer and author, speaking at a podium. She is wearing a green halter-neck dress and has short brown hair. She is looking to the right of the frame. The background is a solid blue color. A microphone is visible on the podium to her right.

***Body language is a very powerful tool. We had body language before we had speech.***

—DEBORAH BULL  
*Dancer and Author*

## Eye Contact

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Creating eye contact is crucial. Think of it as a giant handshake with your audience. It's an effective and powerful way to build trust and confidence. Avoid it and you risk making your audience feel as if you aren't being sincere or genuine. Creating eye contact helps to reel in the audience. It's also an excellent way to gauge feedback and read the room so you can adjust your presentation accordingly.

Look at different members of the audience in different parts of the room. Find specific individuals who look interested and make you feel comfortable. Also, focus more on the delivery of the presentation rather than filling your slides with content. This will help you resist the urge to look away from your audience to read the slides.

If you're having a hard time making eye contact, just focus on people's foreheads. It'll seem like you're looking at their faces.

## Hand Gestures

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Hand gestures are a great way to help your audience remember important parts of your presentation while enabling you to articulate and communicate thoughts more effectively.

New presenters usually don't know what to do with their hands. If you're not careful, your body language and gestures can create a sense of mistrust between you and your audience.

- Putting your hands behind your back
- Fiddling with items on hand (jewelry such as watches or rings, change in pockets, or a presentation clicker)
- Placing one hand on the other wrist
- Twiddling your fingers
- Touching your face repeatedly

A default gesture we recommend is to hold your hands together in front of your body. Move them to express various points as needed. Use certain gestures for specific statements. When done, return to the default position.

The best tip is to be natural. Don't force your gestures or overgesticulate. You aren't playing charades.

## Open Posture

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Take your hands out of your pockets, stand up straight, keep your arms extended, and make sure your feet are aligned and shoulder-width apart, with your toes



**LISTING POINTS:** match points with fingers.



**EMPHASIZING POINTS:** make a slashing motion with your hand.



**A BIG CHANGE:** pull your hands wide apart.



**A REDUCTION:** use your index finger and thumb to indicate the degree of change.

pointed toward the crowd. This creates an open posture that welcomes your audience. Having your arms folded and your head down will shut them out. Don't erect a barrier between you and your audience. Avoid positioning one leg behind the other. This posture can come across as insecure or untrustworthy.

Having an open posture creates a genial, positive energy that will put people at ease and make them receptive to your message.

## Fluid Movements

Walk around the stage while combining all these elements. Use them to emphasize points and reengage parts of the room. Moving around can draw attention and interest, but remember that too much can be distracting.

As with all aspects of your presentation, constant practice will smooth out any rough edges.

It's just as important to focus on what's not being said as what's actually being said. Body language is powerful. People don't consciously take note of it, but it sends subliminal signals to an audience. How you move influences how your listeners absorb and understand the words and the emotions you are conveying.

Imagine if Walt Disney introduced the concept of Disneyland with a frown on his face, pointing to mock-ups with a curved finger and limp posture.

The happiest place on earth has just made me sad.

Be natural and be sincere. Just as you rehearse your words and your timing, practice the way you will use your body to speak to your audience. It's not called body language for nothing.



### Kenny's Tip

Before rehearsing with us, I ask clients to write down a list of things that annoy them in presentations that they've seen. This is a test to see if they know what makes for great body language.

I can call them out later, saying, "You know what's wrong, so why are you doing it?" What are the most common answers? Swaying left and right. Fiddling with a watch or clothing to the point of distraction.

Standing with arms crossed. Hiding behind a podium. Putting hands in pockets or behind the back. Positioning one leg behind the other.

While we know nervousness can subconsciously cause these physical outcomes, be sure to check yourself often when on stage.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**KENNY NGUYEN** is the founder and CEO of Big Fish Presentations, a company whose mantra is “turning presentations into experiences.” Kenny and his team work daily with clients nationwide, from startups to

Fortune 100 companies, providing high-quality presentation design, presentation training, and creative video production. He was named the 2012 CEO Student Entrepreneur of the Year by Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO). Under his leadership, Big Fish Presentations was recognized as one of the top 50 student-led startups in the world by the Kairos Society and one of *Inc. Magazine’s* “Coolest College Start-Ups of 2012.” Kenny has been featured in popular news outlets such as *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, *Yahoo*, *Business Insider*, *Mashable*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *Washington Post*. He has spoken at TEDxLSU and HubSpot Inbound and has taught presentation workshops at General Assembly. A curator of 99u Baton Rouge, he is a member of AIGA New Orleans and the host of the online cooking channel You’ve Got Meal. Kenny is passionate about helping his home city of Baton Rouge become a hub for creative talent in the South. He dreams of owning a corgi one day.



**GUS MURILLO** is the cofounder, president, and COO of Big Fish Presentations. Since he and Kenny attended the “worst presentation they had ever seen” together, they have been working to rid the world

of such experiences. His work at Big Fish includes producing and directing commercial videos. Before graduating from Louisiana State University with a degree in biological sciences, he was recognized as a Kairos50 member for his innovative college startup and was awarded for this achievement at the New York Stock Exchange.



**ROBERT KILLEEN** is the lead copywriter and creative director at Big Fish Presentations. He has been writing his entire life—short stories and fake TV scripts that will never see the light of day, journals that

are best kept private, and blog posts for public consumption. This, however, is his first book. He has a bachelor's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University and serves as Student Outreach Committee Chair for the American Advertising Federation of Baton Rouge and Marketing Coordinator for 99u Local: Baton Rouge.



**LUKE JONES** has the distinction of being the first copywriter of Big Fish Presentations. He is now a copywriting associate at DEVENEY Communication. A born entrepreneur, he started a T-shirt company

and a neighborhood newspaper in his youth. He has worked at production studios, design firms, and advertising agencies. Luke received his bachelor's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University. He loves words, movies, cream soda, and his miniature schnauzer, Albus—not necessarily in that order.

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