"Executive Presence: Deconstructing ‘Gravitas’"
Diagnostic Check Sheet and Resources

**EXECUTIVE PRESENCE = CREDIBILITY + EASE / EGO**

**Credibility:**
- Preparation; Depth and Breadth of Expertise
- Voice:
  - Inflection (Upward inflection? Monotone?)
  - Speed (Rushing? Any breathlessness? Pauses used?)
  - Pitch (Tone and resonance of voice—using their full voice? Mumbling or Trailing?)
- Unnecessary Qualifiers, Fillers or “Diminishers” in Speech
  - What are the patterns you see, specifically? E.g. “I’m not an expert, but…”
    “Just,” “Actually,” or “Sorry” as reflexive, generic opening, etc.
- Props or Fidgets
  - Device distraction?
  - Lost in tracking details and data in meetings? Riffling through binders/papers/files?
  - “Low status” gestures? (Excessive nodding, tugging at clothing, clicking/fiddling with pen, twirling hair, etc.)

**Ease:**
- Ease and Congruence: external: words and affect match occasion appropriately; internal: your words match your emotional affect (micro-expressions)
- Ease and Stability: Grace under Fire
  - What are triggers? Being questioned? Different audience levels/constituents? Impatience? Bad news?
  - What is the observable response to these triggers?
- Ease and Connection with Others
  - Eye contact; open emotional affect in facial expressions

**Ego:**
- Is “true confidence” exhibited? Contributes; but open to others’ ideas; demonstrates strong capacity to listen.
- Shrinking? If so, how does this manifest? Hesitancy to speak up? Sentences trailing off? See credibility above—these are often linked.
- Puffery? E.g. Overly dominant or aggressive? Overly casual in speech? (This is a problem, especially, if young). Cuts others off? Frequent tune outs, interruptions or routine impatience with others?
Resources

Professional Presence:
- See Sylvia Ann Hewlett’s *Executive Presence*, which has sections on image.
- There are many excellent organizations that focus on “new hire” and professional presence issues (etiquette, first impressions, etc). They often add a boost in presentations, but also internal confidence.

Credibility:
- *Leadership Presence* by Kathy Lubar and Belle Linda Halpern has an excellent series of exercises that discuss voice, story and emotion and their role in effective presentations (works for “ease” category as well).
- To understand better *unconscious bias* and how it impacts perceptions of credibility, attribution and first impressions, see Harvard’s Implicit Assumption Test (where you can test your own biases) [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html) and Facebook’s *excellent* (and efficient!) training series: [https://managingbias.fb.com](https://managingbias.fb.com)
- There are many excellent presentation skills training organizations and programs that can work to specifically refine formal presentation skills, or meeting management skills. Most professionals cite these as exceptional investments in boosting both their credibility and ease.
- On learning to balance authenticity and credibility, see Rosh and Offermann’s “Be Yourself, but Carefully,” (HBR 2013) and Ibarra’s, “The Authenticity Paradox.” (HBR, Jan 2015).

Ease:
- Exercise and sleep are among the most well established interventions for overall physical and mental health—key for regulating stress, anxiety and reactivity, which play into “grace under fire.” If you need any convincing, read *Spark* by James Ratey (MD, Harvard). Another classic is “The Making of the Corporate Athlete.” (2001, HBR).
- *Own the Room* by Amy Jen Su and Muriel Maignan Wilkins—focuses on connection with other people and developing a signature “style” with one’s presence.
- Article “Emotional Agility” by Susan David and Christina Congleton (*HBR* November 2013) for an overview of the importance of regulating negative emotions in the workplace.
- *Search Inside Yourself* by Chade-Meng Tan (the popular mindfulness/meditation course made famous at Google). Excellent guide on focus, ease, and emotional intelligence.
- For staying steady in the face of difficult feedback, see: “Find the Coaching in Criticism” by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone (HBR, Jan-Feb 2014) and “Receiving (and Truly Hearing) Radical Candor from The First Round Review.

Ego:
- [For Women] *Playing Big* by Tara Mohr; *Confidence Code* by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman.
- “Be Seen as Leader,” by Galinsky and Kilduff (HBR, December 2013). Discusses internal practices for “priming” to be seen as a leader
- “Power Posing” Extremely popular TED Video by Amy Cuddy (HBS).