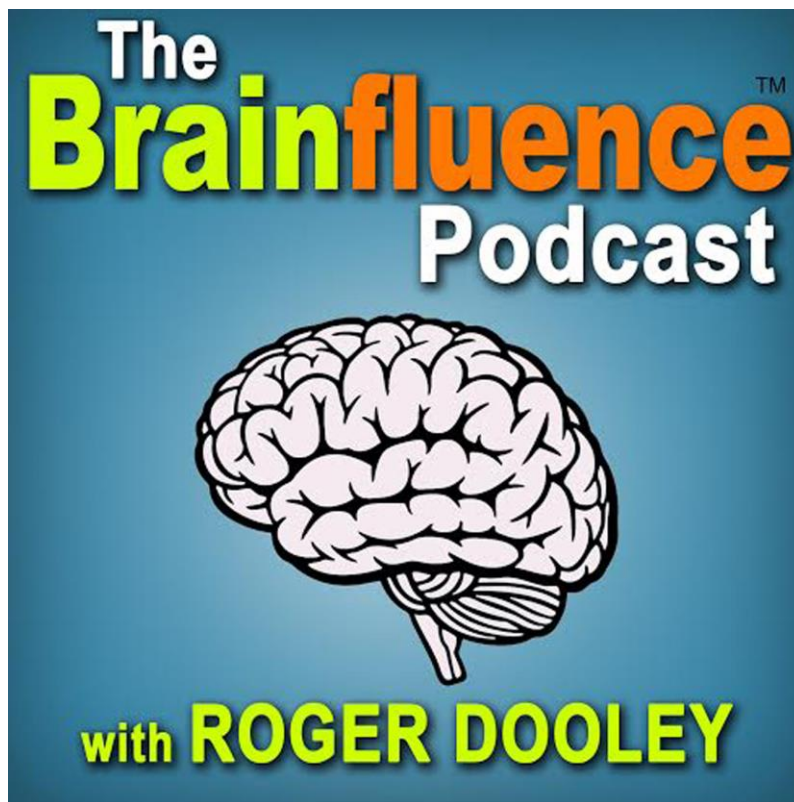


Ep #11: Using Power Cues for Success with Dr Nick Morgan



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Roger Dooley

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Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley, author, speaker and educator on neuromarketing and the psychology of persuasion. Every week, we talk with thought leaders that will help you improve your influence with factual evidence and concrete research. Introducing your host, Roger Dooley.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast. This is Roger Dooley and today we're talking to Nick Morgan. Nick is a communications theorist and coach and is the author of books like the best-selling *Give Your Speech*, *Change the World* and *Trust Me*. Nick's latest book is *Power Cues*, *The Subtle Science of Leading Groups*, *Persuading Others* and *Maximizing Your Personal Impact*. It's great to have Nick with us it's a huge mob what he talks about in *Power Cues* are non-conscious factors that have a huge impact on the way people are perceived and how persuasion happens. Nick, welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast. Anything to add to the intro that our listeners should know?

Nick: Thanks, Roger. It's great to be on the show with you. The only thing that I would add is readers who are looking for a taste of *Power Cues* before plunking down their money can go to our website, www.publicwords.com where I have a blog and give away lots of the advice and insights we put in the book.

Roger Dooley: Great. We'll link that up on the show notes page and also repeated at the end for anybody that might miss that or get so engaged in the rest of the Podcast that they forgot to write it down. For starters, I guess this is a strange thing because power cues deals a whole lot with body language and gesture. It's ironic that we're talking about the book in an audio-only podcast. I probably should have asked you a few days in advance so I could prepare more but sometimes people do have to communicate by audio only, I mean when they have an important sales call that has to be made by telephone or some other kind of persuasion tasks. What do you do when you only have audio?

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Nick: The first thing to understand about audio is that it's narrower bandwidth in effect. There's less information that's getting through to the human on the other end of the line and we are hardwired, our brains, our unconscious minds to be specific pick up all kinds of information about the other person from their body language, from the visual presentation, from the sound of their voice. The only thing that gets through on a telephone call of course is the sound of the voice. Even that is attenuated because the reproduction quality of the phones is such that the bandwidth is compressed.

You miss some of the overtones and undertones in order to make an efficient packet of information to send digitally. Telephone, you may get enough information to identify somebody else's voice. It's not the same thing. In fact, there's research that shows that we need the undertones of people's voices in order to catch their emotional intent. When you cut that out on a telephone, it means it's a much more impoverished form of communication. We get much less emotional reinforcement if you will from the conversation.

Roger Dooley: It's fascinating, today, I wrote a blog post not at all about this but it was about the effect of low-quality comments on blogs and articles and how they affect the perception of the content itself so that if there's a bunch of low-quality comments, they impact how people even perceive the original article written by the author, of course had nothing to do with the comments. One of the things that we talked about in there is how, when people are online, one big, this inhibition factor is that they don't see body language. People can't see, they have anonymity too of course. This really changes the way they communicate and often for the worse.

They end up being more rude, more abrupt and of course misinterpret things that people say because they didn't get the cues that that person was joking or that there were, a more subtle point was being made. It all seems to tie together, let's get back to the Meter Power Cues which is I see where which is in-person presentation speaking and so on.

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You talk a lot about gesture and speaking either to a group or one on one. Define what you mean by gesture and explain why that's important.

Nick: Gesture shows up at two places, it's what we do with our hands and then it's also facial gesture, how we contort our faces and then beyond that of course it's just how we stand or sit, how we move our bodies around and response to what people are saying to us. All those things our gesture really although most people focus to extent they think about it consciously, they focus on facial gestures, the expressions on people's faces and then hand gestures. Those are the most fluid and constantly changing things. The body is important too, we pick up things like anger and happiness from other people's posture and body language quite literally.

Roger Dooley: You recommend method acting as a technique for getting your body language right which, to me, sounds really difficult. I mean even professional actors can't always pull that off. How can regular business folks who don't have any drama training employ this method approach to getting in the frame and what will that do for them?

Nick: You're right. First of all it is difficult. I don't minimize the effort required but I say the alternatives are worst. The way to think about it is to do the following thought experiments. Ask yourself, I'm getting ready to give an important presentation or go into an important meeting. How much time do I spend thinking about the content, what I'm going to say versus my body language? If people are being honest for themselves, they'll say I spend 100% of my time thinking about the content when I'm preparing and just about zero thinking about the body language, how I'm going to stand or sit. Maybe it's 97, three, but most people, when I ask them that and they're being honest, that's what they say, it's a 100 to zip.

Then I say, okay, think about it this way, every face-to-face communication is two conversations. It's the content on the one hand and the body language on the other. Now, when those two are aligned, you can be effective but when those two are not aligned, what happens? The body language trumps the content every time and to make that simple for your

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listeners, let me give you a very quick, easy example. Let's say, I'm at work. My spouse and I communicate during the day. My spouse tells me to bring home milk, eggs and butter and I forget because I've had a busy day.

When I walk in the door and I see my spouse standing there with arms folded and a scowl on his or her face, then I suddenly remember, darn, I forgot the milk, butter and eggs and I ask my spouse, how are you? Here she says, fine, because that's what adults do. They don't, very few adults will say, I'm really angry at you for forgetting the one thing I asked you to do today.

Roger Dooley: My spouse might actually do that. I understand the point that even though the language doesn't match, there's a real point being made there.

Nick: Yes, by the body language. You, of course, immediately understand if you have a head in your shoulders at all that you're in trouble that the body language is the crossed arms and the scowl are signaling that your spouse is not fine even though the words are saying that. That's a very common, that situation is very common. That's an example of how the body language always trumps the content. To take that back into our speech or to our important meeting, if you then don't spend any time thinking about your body language, you're leaving it up to chance. In effect, you're leaving it up to whatever happens to be top of mind, whatever emotion, you happened to be evincing at that point.

Typically, before an important meeting or a conversation, it's edginess, nervousness, it may be even full-blown panic. We leak our emotions to other people when we walk in. What's going to trump whatever you say then at that point is your nervousness. That's what you're going to signal to the other people in the room whether it's a speech or a meeting. That's why there's a lot at stake if you don't worry about your body language or your emotions. When I say to people, you need to start acting like a method actor and focusing your emotions. That's why it's worth doing.

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That's what the game is. Otherwise, you're leaving it to chance and the chances are good that your body language will telegraph something you don't want it to telegraph, people will pick up unconsciously and it will sabotage your performance just at that very simple level of if you walk in and say, hey, it's great to have this opportunity to speak to each other and the body language is saying, I'm nervous as a cat in front of a parade of great danes here. Then which message are people going to get, they're going to get the nervous message.

The work of being a method actor in effect is to spend a few minutes before that key meeting, before that important speech, getting yourself into the proper emotion, whatever that is. If it's excitement, then spend some time remembering a moment when you actually were excited, when you won a big prize or got a big promotion. Remember that feeling, remember that day, remember what you were wearing, remember what the scene looks like when you got the news. That's what method actors do, they put themselves with all five senses back into a moment when they just naturally felt that emotion.

That enables them to conjure up the emotion for the present moment. That's what I'm suggesting people do before an important meeting or speech or some really key stakes moment like that when you want to show up with real clarity of intention and you don't want your body language to betray you.

Roger Dooley: Visualize the emotion that you want to project and then recall that emotion if you can, if you had a moment like that or, if not, if you haven't then at least imagine it and try to get into that mood before you walk out in front of the crowd.

Nick: Yeah, it takes a little practice but I will tell you, I've worked this with a number of clients and they, it get better and better. The people learn how to do it and it makes a huge difference. The other thing it does by the way for people who are nervous speakers or who get a lot of stage fright before important meetings or negotiations or speeches, it distracts you, it keeps

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you from getting nervous because you're spending a lot of time trying to get into this other emotion, whatever it is. It has that beneficial effect even if you don't perfectly achieve the Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie moment.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I think probably all of our listeners would like to be considered charismatic. You make the statement that surprise me that charisma can be learned. How does one, go by, I mean we think about people who are gifted with charisma like someone like Bill Clinton who's probably the classic example of that, how can a regular folks become more charismatic. The first thing to understand is that we all have been charismatic at key moments in our lives. Perhaps it was when you were six and you came running home from school and you had a fabulous day and you won some prize and you were just brimming over with the excitement and the thrill of the day.

You walk in the door and your mama said to you, what happened? Because she immediately sensed that you were just full of this excitement so she knew something happened, we're all very good at recognizing strong, focused, emotions like that in other people, that's charisma. At those moments, we're naturally charismatic. The way you can learn charisma is to practice becoming focused. I first saw this at work when I was in the political world writing speeches for the governor of Virginia and I saw the governor which spend a few minutes focusing before he would go into a meeting or an important speech of press conference.

I asked him at one point, what are you doing? He said, I'm focusing, don't bother me. What he related to me then and what I realized was that that kind of focus really helps not only get you ready for what you're about to do but it helps make you more charismatic because you'll be the only person in the room, let me guarantee you, virtually 100% guarantee, you'll be the only person in the room who's emotionally focused.

Roger Dooley: Interesting. You mentioned authenticity is a component of charisma too which I find as a recurring theme these days, brands have to be authentic, people have to be authentic and part of that is because of the

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transparency enforced by social media and other communications today. You simply can't fool people anymore whether you're a company or an individual. Authenticity is key but in the context of being more charismatic, what do you mean by authenticity?

Nick: Just like actors consider themselves authentic in the sense that they're calling up a genuine emotion even though if you asked actors what they do for a living, the honest ones will say, well, we lie for a living. We pretend to be somebody else but the emotions at least are honest. They're honestly angry at that moment or honestly happy at that moment or honestly in love or honestly breaking their hearts, whatever it is. I say, in the business world, it's the same procedure. It's too hard for you to spend a lot of time pretending if you're really good at that, you might as well be an actor.

Roger Dooley: It's a full authenticity which, that sounds a contradiction but it's truly authentic but it's created by the individual.

Nick: Yes. It's practiced or focused authenticity. It's taking the best of you emotionally and saying, I'm going to show up with that emotion. People often ask me as you just indicated this, that's fake, how is that authentic? Then I will say, well, if you were getting ready to give an important speech or have an important negotiation or going to an important meeting with your boss, would you prepare your content? They say, well, sure, of course I would. I say, is that inauthentic? Then you're presenting your best self, you're marshalling your thoughts and creating your PowerPoint slides or whatever it is you're doing to get ready. How is that inauthentic?

That's not inauthentic, that's just the work to get ready. I'm saying the same thing is true with your emotions. It's just the work to get ready so you're fully present, fully focused there in the meeting.

Roger Dooley: Right. That makes a lot of sense. Let's switch to a topic that probably just thought everybody who's listening has some contact with either as a viewer or as a presenter and that's PowerPoint. We use

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PowerPoint as a shorthand for any other type of slide presentation system. Everybody talks about death by PowerPoint and obviously there are some major failures that you see a lot in slides that have way too much information, slides that simply repeat in text what the speaker is saying and all of those obvious errors but it's still a staple in just about every presentation or speech that we see. What's your take on PowerPoint?

Nick: I have a number of strong feelings about it. I should warn you, I'm not neutral on PowerPoint at all on the whole.

Roger Dooley: Reading the book, I didn't get that impression.

Nick: On the whole, I think it's a bad idea for most people but I fully recognize that what's happened unfortunately in many, many organizations is that PowerPoint has become to use to your point, slide software, we don't really need to pick on PowerPoint as a brand but that's just the one that's become the noun of choice, if you will. A PowerPoint, in many organizations, is the way in which people record their intellectual capital is. The way they record their thoughts and their proposal and whatnot and so we ask it to do double duty.

On the one hand, people create these 300-slide decks because they wanted to write down everything that they know about this topic and record it in depth. It used to be, back in the day that was done on things called pieces of paper in prose and maybe with the occasional chart thrown in. Then we made this big switch to PowerPoint. We're really asking to do that and then on the other hand, we're asking it to be an accompaniment to a speech or presentation. That's a very different activity.

That's where my strong feelings come in because what you're asking people to do especially when you show them those slides that you eluded to that have a lot of words on them is to pay attention to two things at once. All the research that we see says that people are not very good at multitasking, what's more, there's information, there's a cause to switching back and forth between one task and the other. When they're listening to

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you, they get, let's say 90% of it, as soon as they start to switch over to the slide, then there's that cause of switching.

They lose a little bit of what you said, what's more, it takes them a while to get up to speed as they're looking at the slide, same thing happens when the switch back. They may do that several times over the course of you talking to a slide. What you're doing is putting an enormous pressure on your audience to work much harder than you should have to ask them to do. It's very rare that I see PowerPoint being a value-add in that situation. The only times are obviously when you're presenting financial information that's so complicated that it's much clearer on a chart or a graph, if you can show it as a picture, then it could be easier to understand. That kind of thing can be very helpful.

Then I have seen people who use PowerPoint essentially as a humorous accompaniment to what they're doing, they'll say something and then they'll show a funny picture and the PowerPoint slide will actually be the punch line to the joke. I've seen people do that quite effectively but usually what they do is they tell it like a joke, they'll do the set up and then they'll click to the slide and the audience will get that rhythm and know to look over to that slide, see the picture, have a good laugh and then come back to the speaker.

I've got no problem with that. I've seen that done very well by some greats of the world stage like Seth Godin and others who know how to use PowerPoint very effectively that way but for most people, they use it as speaker notes. To me, that's just lazy and it's also very distracting for the audience and finally leads to inefficient listening.

Roger Dooley: I guess there's that conflict when you're talking about, people remembering what you're saying where on one hand is you suggest that when people are bouncing back and forth and trying to interpret two data streams at once, they may end comprehending or remembering neither. A few years ago, I went to a panel at south by south west, very fascinating on presenting directly to the brain and there was an

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experienced trial lawyer there that found a use for a PowerPoint. In particular, they created these very simple animations.

PowerPoint isn't really an animation tool at all but you can do something simple like showing two cars meeting head on or yet little car figures that they would bang together and maybe even have a sound of them banging together and they're research show that juries remembered that data presented that way far better than if they simply have the attorney explained what happened to them and also of course in a trial situation, there's always two versions of the story and they tend to remember the one that was expressed visually.

Maybe that's an exception too but it's a real balancing act, I guess. I've seen some others that where, I don't know if you've seen Lawrence Lessig's approach where he'll do hundreds of slides in presentation but they'll all be images or single word or something like that that it punctuates that talk. I can see where it could work both ways. It can emphasize the point but it could also, if the timing was less than perfect, be a distraction.

Nick: Yeah. I think Lawrence, like Seth Godin, have learned, those kind of folks have learned how to do it well so they get the rhythm going and they get the rhythm going and they get the audience used to the rhythm of switching back and forth and looking to the picture for the punch line for the humor. I would say about the lawyer is the chances are good they're not talking when they're showing that animation, in other words, they probably cue it up, explain to the jury what they're about to see and then stand there silently while they're showing it hoping very much that the jury pays attention to that animation and remembers it.

I would say that's a slightly different thing than what we're talking about when we talk about death by PowerPoint where there are a lot of words ...

Roger Dooley: That's a good point.

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Nick: There's a lot of words going on. Sorry.

Roger Dooley: No, those are extremely short animations like probably two or three seconds or something as opposed to a complex explanation. Definitely, they're probably just to shut up and let the jury watch it and then resume their explanation. While we're on the topic of speaking, sometimes the conditions are less than ideal may be you've got a, you'd like to use the right expressive body language but you've maybe got a have a PowerPoint clicker in your hand if you happen to have slides at the company what you're doing.

You get to the venue and all I have is a handheld microphone that you have to hold on your hand up by your face and you talk directly into it or even gee, the only thing we've got is a podium and a mic, sorry, how do you cope with those kinds of issues? I'm sure you've run into them or your clients have run into them. Do you have any good recommendations for coping with those kind of mishaps that, they're going to happen to them for sure.

Nick: They're absolutely going to happen. My clients and I have all experienced that thing many times. You never quite know what you're going to run into. You can ask all you want for the lavalier mic and the perfect stage set up but you won't necessarily get it and then you just have to cope with what you've got. The handheld microphone is a particular bat... of mine because then that means what you're going to be doing is holding your hand in front of your torso. You have to get the microphone to your mouth; as a result, you look defensive. You look like you're blocking off your torso which is something we do when we're nervous when we're getting ready to protect ourselves against attack.

What you have to do then in that particular instance is work very hard with the other hand to make open gestures to show that you are open and comfortable with that audience. In fact, it's good to switch back and forth, so that you don't just spend the whole time with one hand or one side of your body shut off in effect because say, you're standing center stage and

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you're holding the microphone in your left hand then that whole side of the audience is going to feel like you're cutting yourself off to them. It's very important that you switch hands. There are techniques in each of these situations you can do to mitigate the circumstances but you are just mitigating them. It's not ideal.

The podium is a classic example. If you're hiding behind a podium, that's what it looks like to the audience, unconsciously, they can see less of you, their unconscious minds pick up less information so you're just less interesting to them. On the other hand, you feel, perhaps, more secure because you got something to hide behind.

Roger Dooley: You can even hang on with your hand.

Nick: That's right. Some people, you see them hanging on for their life. The best thing to do in that situation when you got a podium is to find opportunities to walk out from around the podium, perhaps when you say, do you please to take questions then you could go out and even though you're leaving the microphone, it's the audience's turn to ask questions. You can grab the questions standing away from the podium, facing the audience, open to the audience and then go back to the podium if you have to, to answer it. There are tricks you can use to mitigate almost any of those circumstances.

Roger Dooley: Now we've been focused almost completely on what we're doing with our bodies and how other people are viewing that but there's a lot of information in the book on observing the people that you're interacting with and reading them so that you can, if necessary, adjust what you're doing. Because of the time constraint, we really can't go into that in too much depth but one of the things you talked about is fake listening and how to spot it. What is fake listening?

Nick: I think we have an epidemic of it these days. It's people who are really not listening to but they're preparing the thing they're going to say or their mind is just elsewhere entirely. We've all probably been guilty of that

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trying to think of something clever while the other person is droning on, waiting for a moment or a chance. Typically, what happens in fake listening is the person fixes their eyes on you and stops moving. It's natural in human listening to still have a little bit of movement. You switch in your chair as you're excited by something the person says or as your bored, you move forward a little bit, you move back a little bit.

You can spot fake listening by the wide-open eyes and the fixed expression on the face because what the person is doing, just forcing themselves to park their face on yours while you're talking but they're not actually, they're not actually engaged.

Roger Dooley: They're doing their background processing. What you should look for perhaps if somebody looks like they're frozen that may indicate is their mind is someplace else and be a good time to do something, shake them up a little bit and get their attention back.

Nick: Exactly, you're either really, you've got them transfixed but that you only see typically on faces of four year olds when you're telling them a really exciting fairy tale or something like that. Adults don't typically pay that kind of attention. If they're really fixed, if their eyes are unwavering and their face is not moving then that's a good sign that they're fake listening. As you say, the best thing to do in that situation is to stop and to take questions and say, let's see how you're doing? How are you finding this? How are you taking this in? What are your thoughts so far? Just take a break and let the audience have a moment or speed up or slow down or change topics or something in order to get their real attention back.

Roger Dooley: Nick, you mentioned using intuition. I just have some really fascinating data about executives who probably used too much intuition where they're presented with a question of, you're presented with data that does not agree with your gut intuition on particular decision of what you do and only 10% went with the data. The others would do things like trying to collect more data or reanalyze the data and perhaps until they got the answer they like or just ignore the data.

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With that kind of struck me as a little bit amusing when I saw in your book that you recommend that there are situations where people should use their intuition which sure is absolutely the case but it is ironic that there's excessive reliance on intuition seems to be endemic. When are those situations when people should use, follow their intuition and not just rely on objective measures?

Nick: It's a great place to start with that warning, a very proper warning that you're giving because most of us are very bad reasoners and we're very bad in taking in data and instead, as you know, we operate on anecdotal information, our brains are much better constructed to remember the emotional powerful story which is why I recommend telling them than we are able to analyze reams of data and come to a solid conclusion that's based on the facts. We're just simply not very good at that. With that caveat, then let's talk about the times when intuition is important.

I would say, when I'm talking about it, I'm talking about the trained intuition and I talked in the book about how to train your intuition and I talked in the book about how to train your intuition so that you're open to the right things and not just going to look for things that will reinforce your already held opinions. What I suggest is there's certain times and certain important negotiations or job interviews or conversations. It's good to know how the other person is receiving you is this other personal line, the green with me or not. Is this person a friend or a foe? Is this person ready to close or still needs more persuasion?

You can train your mind to ask those very simple binary questions of your intuition and learn to wait for the answer. Your intuition, if you listen to it closely will give you good data about that because your unconscious mind is incredibly good at picking up all that body language data that you can't think about consciously but you do get an unconscious read on. We've all had that experience with people that we know. In the business world, you just have to get smarter about doing with people that you don't necessarily know all that well.

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Roger Dooley: Very good. We're just a bit out of time, Nick. Let me remind the audience that we've been speaking with Nick Morgan, author of Power Cues, The Subtle Science of Leading Groups, Persuading Others and Maximizing Your Personal Impact. It's a great book whether you're in sales or speaker or really engaged in any kind of business communication. The emphasis of course is on non-verbal cues both giving and receiving which; I think that from the standpoint of this audience is really right up their alley. We will have links to the book on our show notes page. Nick, how can our listeners find your stuff online and connect with you if they'd want to?

Nick: The website is in my blog. It's to be found on the website is Public Words, www.publicwords.com and anybody with questions, I always invite to email me at nick@publicwords.com and I welcome questions about body language and communications in general.

Roger Dooley: That's great, Nick. I really appreciate you're joining us and I know that I'm going to be trying some other things that I've been reading in your book on my next gig.

Nick: Excellent.

Roger Dooley: Thanks very much for being with us.

Nick: A pleasure. Thanks for having me. It's great to chat with you about this subject that we're both passionate.

Roger Dooley: Thanks, Nick. This has been the Brainfluence Podcast and I'm Roger Dooley. Thanks for listening.

Thank you for joining me for this episode of the Brainfluence Podcast. To continue the discussion and to find your own path to brainy success, please visit us at RogerDooley.com.