

Dunkel (Continued)--

A senile, old person immediately becomes stooped and broken. Nothing gives as much vitality and strength to a character as correct posture." So we find posture helpful in conveying negative impressions as well as positive ones. Have you noticed that those stage people who please us we usually describe with words of approval such as "allure" and "glamour". These words we generally reserve for an expression of personality which the average spectator never even considers as being possible for himself. Now let's look beyond the footlights into the process of making the particular actor what he or she is in physical appeal. Consider that every young actor undergoes rigorous training in dancing, fencing, and general body postures. Why I've seen a theatrical novice practice just sitting down or getting up like a young piano student might practice his scales. Walking, going up and down stairs, and all the hundred and one necessary movements in daily life must be done as an art. Then after this period of work and practice has accomplished its purpose, we who sit out in front admiring actors' ease are wont to sigh and murmur, "God has been good to them, aren't they fortunate!" Don't ever fool yourself that what seems so simple and natural for these artists is divine favor alone. The same formula that works and wonders for them will do just that for any one with the interest and determination to practice it. Just last night I noticed in the paper a description of a word we hear a lot lately --- umph - described as personal dynamics, meaning attractiveness, and kinesthetic vigor. Body posture is a very real part of that personal dynamic impression. I will never forget Jim Bausch, the World's Olympic Decathlon Champion. On the Kansas basketball court or on the track, his power was easily apparent, but even in his casual and relaxed positions he radiated the power and force that was his because of the thrilling way in which he carried himself. He was a neat example of perfect focus in body posture.

Allen -- Yes, and he had that power, too, Miss Dunkel. I remember once on the practice court in the gymnasium, the basketball was thrown into the balcony. Jim Bausch, with a Herculean leap grasped the girders of the gallery and in an instant he pulled his gigantic form up the girder, over the rod, and into the balcony after that ball, with the poise and dexterity of a modern Tarzan. There was grace and efficiency. Miss Dunkel, you have had a great deal of training in the dance. Aren't the problems of the dancer and the actor much the same?

Dunkel - Yes, their problems have much in common. But the actor, of course, has his voice and his speaking lines to help make himself expressive to his audience. Whereas the dancer has to depend entirely on movement for expression. Delsarte spent his life making a study of emotional expression through body position and movement. He discovered and codified the laws that govern the use of the human body as an instrument of expression, and his findings have been invaluable aids in developing the arts of the dancer and actor. Of course, the average individual who isn't trying to tell a story or convey a message to an audience through movement doesn't need to be as skillful as the artist, but he should never forget that his movements and his body positions still retain the same powers of expression, and he conveys many impressions to the public concerning his inner self, his mental attitudes and his emotional traits through the positions and postures of his body. I have noticed, Dr. Allen, when you want your basketball men to suggest an aggressive, militant attitude they immediately assume a posture associated with that feeling. You doubtless have discovered what we have in dancing concerning the relationship of thought and feeling to body position. The two seem to complement one another -- idea or emotion tending to evoke