

TOM CRUISE'S SECRETS OF YOUTH

The Mission Impossible star belies his 53 years with a dedicated nutrition and training plan



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Presence

When the 5ft7in Cruise was cast to play the 6ft5in airport-novel hard-arse Jack Reacher, author Lee Childs had this to say: "[The character's] size in my books is a metaphor for an unstoppable force. Cruise portrays that in his own way."

He certainly does, considering his ex-wife only started wearing heels when their divorce came through. "Watch him in any interview: he sits with elbows wide and never hangs back," says Dianna Booher, a communication consultant. "Fill space and people conceive you as a large person. Gesture from the shoulder, not the wrist. Creating more space between your trunk and your arms creates the illusion of size. Facial emoting also conveys charisma and presence; the easy way is to simply lift your eyebrows while talking. And approach people purposefully. It's simple perspective – if you move towards someone, you get bigger. You're optically carrying gravitas." Though if you're going for the full Cruise effect, **you should run.**

Inter-personal skills

"Yes, I'll spend two hours with fans. People are really kind to come out, so I want to say hello."

Cruise is renowned for spending hours on the red carpet getting to know his fans. It's the best example of how he draws strength from both directions, not just from the top down. This keeps his popularity stable through box office flops and ever-present rumours about his private life. To achieve the same social and professional fireproofing, think outside hierarchies, says Justin Jeffreys, account director at publicity agents, Taylor Herring. "Working with people on lower rungs ensures you get what you need whilst simultaneously generating a powerbase." Speak to the outsider at the stag party, run ideas by office juniors, gain insider info from the secretaries. "Communicating up down flatters the former and your more rounded knowledge will impress the latter." Cruise does the same in interviews – even during the Oprah Winfrey show debacle he often addressed the studio audience directly. Just try not to ruin the furniture.

The Work Ethic

Interviewer: "Did you learn a bit of German for the part?" Cruise: "I learn! German."

That was for Valkyrie. For The Color of Money, Cruise played pool for 12 hours a day to prep. "Being super-informed bestows subtle confidence," says career consultant and strategist, Sherridan Hughes. "Everyone else will feel at ease working with you and for you. You're more flexible and adaptable than your peers because whatever happens, you've covered it." Every week that it's possible, fit in 'research time' for 96 minutes every Tuesday and Wednesday, starting at 9am: research has shown these are the most productive times when you retain the most info. "Generate crib cards for the subjects that matter most in your business and add to them with digestible bullet points that you can reference at key moments. "I'll keep brain space free," adds Hughes. "A good rule: research something as if you were going for an initial, 20-minute interview about it. This stops you going too in depth but covers the key bases." Think Rain Man in a hurry.

The Body

When asked how he stays young, Cruise responded: "Sea-kayaking, caving... fencing, treadmill, weights... rock-climbing, hiking... I jog... I do so many different activities."

Cruise doesn't just have the body of a man half his age – he moves like one (remember the Mission Impossible: II opening scene?). Variety is the secret for those of us for whom David Beckham isn't a training buddy. "How we move conveys energy and youth – not how buff we are," says Anne Elliott, a sports scientist at Middlesex University. "Regularly switching up cardio and strength work with something like fencing or climbing – like Cruise – maintains flexibility and balance: the first two things that give your age away." Drop unusual practices into your workout, such as one-armed barbell presses – it'll help unearth your physical weak spots. You can then work on them which will mean you maintain a more youthfully functioning body overall.

Style

Like his body, Cruise maintains a youthful style without ever looking like he's dressing too young. He still regularly appears in best-dressed lists.

His style choices identify Cruise as 'well dressed', rather than 'short', says Alan Au of Jimmy Au's menswear of Beverly Hills, a known haunt of Cruise's stylist. "The right fit conveys power and shows you've accepted who you are, physically. Cruise always wears a well tailored coat (lapels not too big or small) whether smart casual and his 'relaxed' is only just loose enough (too loose looks hand-me-down). Avoid boxy cuts and styles and bring attention up to the face and chest with a lighter top. Make sure only a quarter-inch of sleeve hem is showing from jackets." Cruise favours turtle-necks and Au agrees they work – "but avoid the chunkier styles. The three-quarter-necks are better. They are shorter and give the same effect – while still leaving you with a neck."

The Mind-set

"I don't invalidate it when I can't do something...I say, 'that's interesting' and go with it. It's from there you get your energy."

Failures don't floor Cruise; he uses them to reboot momentum and uncover more of his personal skill set. "Never avoid looking at why something went wrong – list all the reasons why it did as soon as you can," says clinical psychologist Dr Abigail San. It could be a relationship or weight loss plan as much as the movie Vanilla Sky. "Failure leads to inaction. Planning goals as soon as possible restores a feeling of power and control. If you didn't get a promotion, do all you can to find out why." Write notes in a special document or folder on your computer, analysing everything in detail. "Physicalising the reasons snaps us out of negativity. Now consider three things you can do immediately with this situation." Set yourself a deadline of three months to action what you come up with. "Each little success along the way – a new responsibility at work; a date with somebody new – will reframe that initial 'fail' as a catalyst to self-development."

The Diet

Recent reports have Cruise on a Beckham devised diet consisting of just 1000 calories, called fresh and a noticeable absence of carbohydrates.