

Power & Presence

Ideas and inspiration on conflict, communication and creating the life you want

A Clash of Civilizations – By Judy Ringer

My husband and I had a fight about my being late for dinner. It was brief but awful. We both behaved “badly,” and it was hard to say if we were angrier at each other or at ourselves. He was cooking, and I was late. He shouted at me because he’d already called me twice (while I continued working at my computer), and I shouted at him because he shouted at me (and because I knew I should have come to dinner at his first request).

We sat down to eat in silence, still angry, critical, and in our own separate universes (this can’t be good for digestion), each justifying our own reactions, yet trying to find a way to make peace.

Unique Views

In my workshops, I teach that our conflicts are shaped by each participant’s unique view of the problem. The way I see the problem is the way it is, or so I think. A character in the novel *Gilead*, by Marilynne Robinson, expresses just how different these viewpoints can be:

“In every important way we are such secrets from each other, and I do believe that there is a separate language in each of us, also a separate aesthetics and a separate jurisprudence. Every single one of us is a little civilization ...”

And I ask myself how much I truly know about another person, even those closest to me — my husband, mother, siblings, close friends. I think I understand them, but do I? And what about those at the next level of relationship? How well do I know the people with whom I work, go to school, play sports, do yoga. What makes them joyful, angry, sad? What gives them energy or diminishes it? I act as if I know the answers.

Sharing Secrets

At dinner, I remained quiet for a long time, thinking about how to center myself so that I might be receptive instead of resistant, and I finally achieved (more or less) a centered state. I did this by remembering that:

- 1) *I love this person;*
- 2) *I am in pain and don’t want to be; and*
- 3) *he is also in pain.*

I asked: “Can we talk about what just happened?” And then, “I’m sorry I didn’t stop working the first time you called.” He reciprocated with “And I’m sorry I got so angry and behaved like a two year old.” And gradually our separate civilizations began to communicate. “Here’s why I did that,” and “Here’s what that felt like to me.” “Why didn’t you come down right away?” And, “How can we do this differently next time?”

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Becoming Something Different

It’s not easy to let go of righteous indignation. It’s seductive, energizing, and feels good in the way that something familiar feels good. This heady combination is hard to pass up, even when it produces a problematic outcome. If I can recognize the feeling as a temporary high that might do permanent damage, I can begin to operate from another place, one that is connected with a deeper purpose: the centered self.

When I center myself, I can learn from my actions. I wonder, *Why did I do that?* out of curiosity, not self-blame. From the centered state I question, *What was my contribution to this flare-up?* And, *How might he have perceived my actions? What was he thinking and feeling to cause him to act the way he did?* When I’m centered, I’m stable and strong. My self-confidence is intact and not reliant on external feedback. I can be curious without being critical, and I can entertain how and where I might have done things differently, which creates an opening for change.

Why should I change? Because changing myself has a positive effect on the quality of my life and relationships. As author Margaret Wheatley says in her book *A Simpler Way*, we engage in change when “we discover that we might be more of who we are by becoming something different.” I will change myself if I see that doing so will be a congruent and self-affirming act.

Many Selves

I have a little handwritten sign at my desk: “Be Willing To See the Different Parts of People.” It reminds me that we all have many “selves.” My self-righteous self and my centered self are both “me.” My husband has both, too, and we each have many more.

Which self do I aspire to? I’m not saying I always choose the centered self. As you can see, I’m still practicing, too. But each time I practice finding my centered self, I reinforce that state and the process of getting there. And I take action that is powerful and on purpose.

Thus I learn about my civilization and those around me. I watch and learn. Why? Because it’s fun, it’s enlightening, and it’s good for the digestive system!



Human beings are too complex to be taken in whole, to be seen in all their parts, to be assessed in a moment.

– Hugh Prather

**Conflict Management
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Call 603-431-8560 or e-mail Judy@JudyRinger.com or visit us online at www.JudyRinger.com



SEPTEMBER IN THE ROCKIES WITH THOMAS CRUM

What are you doing in September? Consider coming to Colorado for a week of centering, conflict skills training, and personal reflection and rejuvenation. Each year is a gift of new perspective, ideas, and energy.

You'll spend five days in a beautiful mountaintop setting learning to achieve inner balance, powerful relationships, clean communication, and clear goals for daily living.

Thomas Crum's Journey to Center will be held September 11-15, 2006. Fees (\$1950 double occupancy, \$2150 single occupancy) include lodging, healthy meals, materials, and workshop fee.

For more information, visit www.AikiWorks.com, or email Judy at judy@judyringer.com

Book Recommendation:

Three Deep Breaths,

by Thomas Crum

Three Deep Breaths: Finding Power and Purpose in a Stressed-Out World is a beautiful book, outside and in, that delivers simple but effective wisdom, tools, and practice to live a life of power and purpose. The book is a guide that stays with you and supports you through the every day hassles and stress of living, working, and being in the world.

A leading voice in the field of conflict and stress management, Thomas Crum has written a story to help us reconnect with what is important.

From Sarah Nugent, Business Development Manager, Down East Business Alliance

In the process of moving to a new house, I rented a truck, lined up my family members, and found a storage unit. My brother and I headed the rental truck toward the storage unit fifty miles away, where he'd help me unload, then I'd return and clean the old house (with help from two friends). But when we stopped at a local gas station, my brother smelled burning rubber. He took one look under the hood and said, "Call a repairman, your serpentine belt is gone."

My first instinct was panic. But he said that putting a new belt on should be quick. I called the truck company who said they would call a repairman. I wasn't too worried, because I knew there was an excellent repairman just down the road. My brother felt the same way. "We'll be on the road in half an hour."

It was a gorgeous sunny morning, so I sat on the tailgate and enjoyed the sun on my face, breathing deeply.

The truck company called back. A repairman would be there in an hour or so. AN HOUR!?! Who did they call? Turns out, they called someone who was fifty miles away, and there was no negotiating. More deep breaths.

All About Centering and Breathing

I called my friends, and my brother called my sister so Mom wouldn't worry when she saw us camped at the gas station on her way to church.

An hour and half later, a grimy truck pulled up and a little man hopped out, followed by his cute but filthy dog.

Our repairman. More deep breathing. It's a gorgeous day, and I'm getting to rest out in the sun.

He finally got the belt on, and we tried to start the truck—nothing. Centering happening constantly now. He finally got it started, but immediately yelled for my brother to shut it off. "You need a wrecker." It had been three hours since we stopped for gas!

More calls. We got someone in Alabama who asked her boss if we could call a wrecker. Half an hour later, we were told that one would be there in an hour. Eventually, the wrecker arrived and towed us to the storage unit, arriving a mere six hours late. The driver helped us unload, but my friends did not come, which cost me eighteen hours of good labor.

But here's the thing.

My sister visited the station and brought lunch. My brother and I spent a gorgeous day just talking about stuff. A couple from England stopped to ask directions and stayed for half an hour chatting. My brother, sister, and brother-in-law all commented on how calm I was and how well I handled it.

It was all about centering and breathing and realizing that getting stressed would not make things happen faster. Getting mad at the person on the other end of the phone would not make her help me faster. It was a gorgeous day, we were in a safe spot, and I don't often get to visit with my brother, so there were many benefits to this big mess. I think breathing and centering even kept the rain away. :-)

Immediate Help

Looking for help with a current conflict? Visit [judyringer.com](http://www.judyringer.com)'s **Free Articles page** for downloadable articles on:

- FAQs About Conflict
- We Have to Talk: A Step by Step Checklist for Difficult Conversations
- Improve Your Ability to Handle Workplace Conflict: An Interview with Judy Ringer
- Difficult People: 3 Questions to Turn Tormentors Into Teachers
- Are You Worried? 4 Steps to Peace of Mind
- How to Keep a Good Employee: Look, Listen, Learn
- Taking Myself Too Seriously: Suggestions for Reclaiming Perspective
- The Art of Listening, by Brenda Ueland
- When Stage Fright Happens: Use It and Lose It

Visit www.judyringer.com and click on the **Free Articles page**.

KI MOMENTS

Are you a Ki Moments subscriber? Did you know that in addition to *Power & Presence*, Judy Ringer also publishes (by email) an award-winning newsletter, called *Ki Moments*, with monthly articles on how to manage the "key" moments in your work and life? **What's in it for you?**

- It's free
- It arrives once a month by email
- It offers quick tips and advice on workplace and interpersonal conflict, difficult conversations, and the centered state
- You receive advance notice of new workshops and special events
- You can easily print and keep it handy
- *Ki Moments* received the APEX Award for writing excellence two years in a row!

A *Ki Moment* is any moment that requires your full attention, your power, and your presence. **Enjoy a free centering tune up every month. Subscribe at: www.judyringer.com.**

The words Power and Presence are used in numerous and sometimes contradictory ways. In *The Magic of Conflict* and *The Powerful Voice* workshops, power is defined as the life force that connects, engages and flows internally and from one person to another. Presence refers to a quality of being in the world and in the moment, a unity of mind, body and spirit that fosters connection with ourselves and our deepest values, a place of awareness and stillness that promotes appropriate action.

Power and Presence is published three times per year to provide ideas, information, and inspiration on conflict, change, connection and power, and ways to make conscious choices about them. Publisher/Editor: Judy Ringer ©1998 Power and Presence

public workshops

All of our public workshops are offered as open enrollment courses and filled on a first-come first-served basis. Please register early, as each workshop has a minimum and maximum limit.

Public workshops are held in the southern New Hampshire area. However, each is suitable as an in-service training program that can travel to your site and be tailored to meet your organization's goals and mission.

UNLIKELY TEACHERS

Is it possible that our impossible challenges of life might be teachers in disguise? What can you learn through dealings with demanding coworkers, angry siblings, or unexpected setbacks?

This new one-day workshop with Judy Ringer and Joy Jacobs is a way to reframe and manage your most difficult life attacks. You will gain awareness, choice, and power over your reactions. You'll take an in-depth look at where your life energy is stuck and how you can release it for more purposeful uses. And you will leave centered and energized for continued practice. Activities include movement, writing, visualization, reflection, and group discussion to help participants:

- Increase options in habitually stressful situations
- Discover "what is right about what's wrong"
- Develop the skills of awareness, fluidity, and presence
- Unfold your unique potential to face life's daily challenges

WE HAVE TO TALK: MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

What makes difficult conversations so hard? And what attitudes and skills can be developed to improve the process? Based on the text *Difficult Conversations*, by Stone, Patton and Heen of the Harvard Negotiation Project, this program introduces new strategies for dealing with tough topics, sharing difficult information, and managing

interpersonal conflict through inquiry, advocacy and acknowledgment.

You'll practice mental, behavioral and verbal skills to feel more confident expressing yourself, understanding others, and transforming difficult conversations into learning conversations. Workshop objectives:

- Understand best practices for holding difficult conversations
- Practice behavioral and verbal conversation skills
- Apply your new understanding and skills to real life scenarios

Begin to turn your difficult conversations into breakthrough opportunities to develop personally, advance professionally, and improve the quality of your interactions.

THE MAGIC OF CONFLICT

Most of us see conflict as negative, but what if conflict is life's way of offering us new information? Or if conflict is one way we get to know and understand ourselves and our organizations?

Based on Thomas Crum's influential text on the Aiki approach to resolving conflict, this one-day workshop offers mind/body practice in the skills of centering, discovery, appreciation, and the willingness to change ourselves in order to achieve our goals. Workshop objectives:

- Identify your conflict mode and understand its benefits and drawbacks
- Increase awareness, perspective, and responsiveness under pressure
- Recognize the opportunity conflict offers to increase understanding, flexibility, and personal power
- Learn to direct emotional energy toward a useful purpose
- Practice language strategies for powerful communication

Your struggle with life's challenges can change in an instant. It's up to you!

How to Register

The workshops listed on this page are examples of trainings offered periodically throughout the year and open to the public. You may register in the following ways:

- Visit www.judyringer.com to view current offerings and to register online using our secure PayPal connection.
- Email judy@judyringer.com
- Call Judy at 603-431-8560

Workshops are one-day programs (9:00 am to 4:00 pm) unless otherwise stated. Tuition varies, but is generally \$145.00 - \$155.00, including lunch and all training materials.

Subscribers to Judy Ringer's e-newsletter, *Ki Moments*, receive advance notice of new workshops each month. Subscribe at www.judyringer.com.

CUSTOMIZED PROGRAMS

The following are examples of programs designed for organizations.

Descriptions of these and other programs can be found at www.judyringer.com. All trainings are tailored to meet specific goals and objectives.

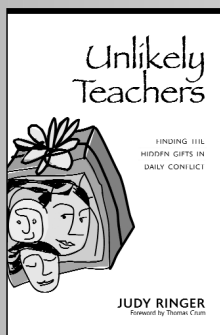
Please call 603-431-8560 or email judy@judyringer.com for additional information.

CORPORATE/BUSINESS SEMINARS

Conflict in the Workplace
Managing Difficult Conversations
Managerial Courage: Addressing Disrespectful Behavior
Creating a Positive Work Environment
Team Building: Working Together Effectively
Powerful Presentations
Principled Negotiation

PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS

The Magic of Conflict
Unlikely Teachers
Violence: Dealing with Anger (for students)
Helping Students Deal with Anger and Conflict (for teachers)
Team Building: Working Together Effectively (staff development)



Unlikely Teachers

Would you like your own book filled with stories like those in *Power & Presence*, including Real Life reflections, great quotations, and practice techniques to integrate the concepts into your life?

Then you'll want to own Judy Ringer's new book — *Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict*.

Unlikely Teachers is a collection of stories, practices, and inspiration on turning the challenges of life into life teachers. More than a "how-to" book on conflict management, *Unlikely Teachers* will help you manage something much more important — yourself.

You can order *Unlikely Teachers* in a variety of ways:

- Send a check for \$15.00 plus \$4.50 (shipping) to: Judy Ringer, 76 Park Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801
- Visit www.JudyRinger.com and click on the *Unlikely Teachers* book cover to purchase online
- Visit RiverRun Bookstore, 7 Commercial Alley, Portsmouth, NH
- Visit Gibson's Bookstore, 27 South Main Street, Concord, NH
- Order *Unlikely Teachers* from Amazon.com

Begin now to find the hidden gifts in your daily conflicts.

This book is deliciously wise. It's filled with stories that delight and teach in the same moment. And its wisdom, which is eternal, illuminates the path that leads us out of conflict and into deeper relationship with others and with ourselves.

— Margaret J. Wheatley, author of *Leadership and the New Science* and most recently, *Finding Our Way*



Judy Ringer

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- *September in the Rockies*
- *Unlikely Teachers*
- *Managing Difficult Conversations*
- *The Magic of Conflict*



The impossible challenges of life are the best teachers.

– Amy Mindell

quotables

- *Right on the mark. Judy Ringer was great! She gave useful information on how to create a good environment by centering ourselves and provided steps, examples, and answers.*
- *Judy taught us that to be centered really works! Breathe. Center.*
- *Great activities and information about how to manage difficult conversations.*
- *Best speaker I have experienced so far.*
- *I left the workshop with new information that is helpful and will be utilized. I will use the skills.*

solutions

question

What if I am willing to make peace — ask the right questions, apologize where appropriate, and so on, but the other person isn't? What if he says thanks for the apology but offers nothing in return?

answer

First, all you can do is take responsibility for your part in the conflict. Second, it will help if you don't expect the other person to have your skill or level of awareness. That said, I usually find that when I lead the way, my opponent-partner follows.

If a pattern has been established in the way the two of you communicate (or don't), change may take time. You may have to repeat the new dance moves before your partner catches on. You can also invite him more directly. For example, "I notice I'm willing to apologize for my part in our flare-up, but you are not. Maybe you don't see yourself contributing to it?" If your partner doesn't see his contribution, you can help by stating how certain actions affected you and asking him to consider alternatives. If you maintain a respectful, curious stance and invite participation, your partner will be more open to hearing your view and examining his own.

Visit: www.judyringer.com for other FAQs and free downloadable articles about difficult people and situations.



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Judy Ringer

76 Park Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801-5031
phone: 603-431-8560
e-mail: Judy@JudyRinger.com
www.JudyRinger.com

