



# Power & Presence

Fall 2000

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

## Letting Go of Perfection

I had the opportunity to co-teach a staff development workshop with my friend Laura Montville of Able 1 Staffing Services. The day before the workshop, when I called to go over the agenda, Laura mentioned she'd been thinking a lot about "letting go of perfection" and that she wanted to practice this tomorrow. I heartily agreed.

We arrived at the York Harbor Inn to begin the day. Almost immediately we both began to be critical — the room was too small, the table wasn't round, a flip chart drawing wasn't exactly right. We caught ourselves and began to laugh. I drew the word DISCOVERY in large letters on a piece of newsprint and put it at the front of the room as a reminder. It turned out to be our motto for the day. Anytime she or I or any of her staff started to be too critical of ourselves, we noticed it, let the perfection go and returned to having a good time — returned to DISCOVERY.



### Discovery vs. Perfection

Discovery is a concept I first learned about in *The Magic of Conflict* by Thomas Crum. It's an attitude that's akin to curiosity. When we're in a discovery mode, we are spontaneous, curious, fascinated, and appreciative of all that happens. Children live in discovery and some lucky adults — Buckminster Fuller, Thomas Edison and Katharine Hepburn come to mind. When we shift into discovery, we treat mistakes as opportunities and stop being afraid to fail because there is no failure, only something new to be learned. We enter a world of wonder, spontaneity, and fun.

However, because we've been taught to live our lives based on certain standards of behavior, our self-esteem is associated with being right, looking right, and saying the right thing. This often means somebody else has to be wrong. We use judgment as a way to control others, validate our opinions and win arguments, often at the expense of our relationships. We also have an inner critic that uses perfection as a yardstick against which we measure ourselves. It keeps us from doing things, from risking, from being truly powerful in the world. In the perfection mode, regardless of our position or income, we often end up feeling that life is a struggle.

Any golf enthusiast can attest to the difference between playing the game from a perspective of discovery vs. perfection. How much of a struggle is it when you are constantly criticizing your technique, and how much fun is it when you're out there to enjoy the day, the view, the

company and to make each swing a chance to learn and experience the thrill of letting go?

A project manager I know turned perfection into discovery during a meeting with a confrontational employee. Every conversation was a struggle, and suggestions were always met with resistance in one form or another. He needed a new approach and decided to use their next meeting as an opportunity to practice discovery. He took a few deep breaths and centered. The employee began by stating with intensity all that was going wrong with their project. The manager's initial reaction was to immediately judge what should be done and to respond with the correct advice. He caught himself, recentered and sat quietly listening for a while, practicing being curious and open-minded. He asked the employee what he thought the real nature of the problem was and how he could help

him solve it. Befuddled at first, the employee nonetheless seized the moment to deliver his plan, and his thoughts flowed with clarity and energy. The manager's shift in attitude opened the way for some fresh ideas on both sides. An exchange began, and the two adversaries became partners in solving issues confronting the project.

### Shifting Gears

It's easy to shift into discovery. The best question I've seen, from *The Magic of Conflict*, goes like this: "What can I learn here?" That's it! When I'm angry because I just missed that putt, "What can I learn here?" changes self-judgment into an opportunity for learning. In the middle of a tough meeting with your department manager, sit back and ask yourself — WCILH? What is it about this issue that's important to each of us? Your spouse is upset. Your first reaction is that it's something you did. But wait! WCILH? "Honey, you seem upset. Anything I can help you with?" "Not really, I'm just worried I won't finish this project in time." Or your teenager is exhibiting new habits that don't meet with your approval. It's worth checking out the world from her perspective before reaching a judgment about how she needs to change.

We've all experienced moments of living in discovery — wonderful, childlike moments when we break through to new understanding. The challenge is to choose to go there more often, especially in difficult moments. Katharine Hepburn has been quoted as saying, "Wouldn't it be great if people could get to live suddenly as often as they die suddenly?" Shifting from perfection into discovery is one way. Try it. See for yourself.

*I have not failed.*

*I have just found*

*10,000 ways that*

*won't work.*

*-Thomas Edison*

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## real life

### **Discovery comes in many forms. . . .**

*Maureen Wallace, RN, Path Leader,  
York Hospital Adult Health Care*

I say aikido you say "Oh oh." I was at a workshop with Judy on the power of aikido. She stood in front of us and talked about being centered, about the Magic of Conflict that comes from aikido. Dutifully we observed and then stood up and practiced the positioning, the centering — yes, the magic. I was quite impressed to look around the room and hear some very skeptical folks expressing their intrigue in this "martial art." So practically speaking how do you move from a stance of centering for control to a stance of embracing the conflict. If aikido is able to turn volatile gas into a beautiful blue flame, now that would be magic. Here is my simple example of doing just that.

Let us say it is a customer of mine and they are coming to inform me of all that is wrong with the service we have provided. This is a very angry person, nothing has gone right, and they are expressing a lot of passion about this issue. It has clearly made a big impact on them and some one has to fix it. They are positioning for a battle and you find yourself caught

**So you arm yourself by listening, really listening.**

without any armor. So you arm yourself by listening, really listening. The first thing I find myself doing is taking it all in and almost pretending it's not about me or us. It's just a situation that needs to be remedied. With the skill of aikido you position yourself at the side of the "complainer." When I do this, in every single instance there is something that has been stated that has given me an opportunity to improve our service. It may be that everything that was done was appropriate for the situation, but the person in front of me had a different image or expectation of what the service would be. It is amazing how the picture in front of you changes when you view it as it being described instead of viewing it as you see it.

### **And centering has many uses . . . .**

*Laurie Davis, Human Resources, Maine Medical Center*

I enjoyed your class and I'm using the concepts a lot. I was in a road race — my third ever — and was kind of nervous getting started. I used centering to get my heart rate down or at least get me calmed down so I could focus. As a result I managed to shave 2 minutes off my previous 5K time.

## poetics by A.R. Ammons

I look for the way things will turn out spiraling from a center, the shape things will take to come forth in

so that the birch tree white touched black at branches will stand out wind-glittering totally its apparent self:

I look for the forms things want to come as

from what black wells of possibility, how a thing will unfold:

not the shape on paper — though that, too — but the uninterfering means on paper:

not so much looking for the shape as being available to any shape that may be summoning itself through me from the self not mine but ours.

## resources

### **Aikido — The Way of Harmony**

Many of the principles incorporated in *The Magic of Conflict* and *The Powerful Voice* come from aikido, the Japanese martial art which means "The Way of Harmony." In aikido, students learn to blend with an attack and redirect energy without harming the attacker. There are excellent schools in Portsmouth, Portland and Cambridge that belong to the United States Aikido Federation and whose teachers are well-known throughout the U.S. and the world.

**Portsmouth Aikido** was founded in 1995 and meets three times a week at the Seacoast Family Y, 550 Peaverly Hill Road, Portsmouth. On Tuesdays and Thursdays practice runs from 7:45 - 9:00 p.m. and on Sundays from 2:15 to 3:30 p.m. Dues are \$40.00 per month, and there is a \$25.00 registration fee. You may come by at anytime and watch a class, which is the best way to see if this martial art is for you. Information on Portland and Cambridge is available there also.

### **Conflict Cookbook!**

If you work or live with adolescents, you'll find **The New Conflict Cookbook** by Thomas Crum, Judith Warner and Christine Steerman a wonderful addition to your library. This "parent/teacher guide for helping young people deal with anger and conflict" is filled

with aikido exercises, educational stories, and articles by professionals in the field of conflict resolution and counseling. The exercises are presented in modules, each with a brief overview of the message, desired learning objectives and an array of activities you can use to present the material. You'll find the skills easy to teach and beneficial to teacher and student alike.

### **Be Your Own Resource**

Many organizations ask me how to keep their new skills fresh once a workshop is over. After their staff workshop on *The Magic of Conflict*, I received this message from Laura Montville at Able 1 Staffing Services: "Thought you might like to know that we are having a book discussion on Friday morning about our readings of the *Magic of Conflict* book. This was totally inspired by Louise, Tanya and Lynn. I am so proud of them. Again, thanks so much for that special day, it seems to be lasting nicely!"

### **Private Coaching Sessions**

If you prefer working on your own to working in a group, or if you have employees who would benefit from personal coaching, private sessions are available to build skills in conflict management, presentations, speaking, and singing. Call Judy at 431-8560 or Email [judyringer@rcn.com](mailto:judyringer@rcn.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.

## workshops

### Powerful Presentations

This empowering workshop combines training in good vocal technique with practice in giving clear, effective, and compelling presentations. Sponsored by the Women's Business Center, and co-facilitated by Judy Ringer and Susan Losapio, participants will learn techniques to develop a more powerful voice, enhance confidence and presence, and connect with an audience. You'll practice kinesthetic exercises and be guided in the Four Defining Characteristics of a Powerful Presentation. Each participant will have the opportunity to deliver a presentation on tape and receive individual coaching to fine tune skills. Enrollment limited. Tuition discount for WBC members. See Calendar for registration.

### The Magic of Conflict — An Introduction

Does conflict throw you for a loop? This introductory workshop on The Magic of Conflict is about discovering how to live the life you want. You'll gain a different perspective on conflict, learn concrete skills that engage the body as well as the mind, and practice ways to feel more confident, calm, and present in all aspects of life. Bring a friend, treat yourself or someone else and register today. Offered in cooperation with the Kittery

Recreation Department. Enrollment limited to twelve participants. See Calendar for registration.

### Conflict in the Workplace

Most of us see conflict as negative, and this perception has a profound impact on how we manage it as individuals and organizations. The purpose of this one-day program is to provide perspective, tools, and training in self-management and conflict resolution in the workplace, using principles and techniques from aikido, the Japanese art of reconciliation. You will identify your typical reactions to conflict, increase your options in difficult situations, appreciate the value of listening and curiosity in conflict, and learn specific strategies to communicate more effectively. This workshop can be customized as an in-service training for your workplace.

*The power of discovery encourages us to explore solutions rather than spend excess energy on blame and justification.*  
—Thomas Crum

## registration

#### Yes, I want more information about:

The Magic of Conflict  The Powerful Voice  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please add me/my colleague to your mailing list:

Please call to discuss creating a program for my organization:

Please reserve space for me in your upcoming workshop:

Title of Workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Cost: \_\_\_\_\_ Deposit enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ (minimum \$50)\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ (night): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Discounts available for multiple participants from the same family or company as well as some partial scholarships.

**Please take a minute** to let me know if you'd like to continue receiving this newsletter. Please return this form, call, or e-mail indicating Yes or No. Thanks!

**Yes, please keep me on.**  No, please take my name off the list.

MAIL TO: Judy Ringer • 76 Park Street • Portsmouth, NH • 03801-5031

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## calendar

October 11 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### POWERFUL PRESENTATIONS

Tuition: \$125.00 per person

WBC Members: \$75.00

(lunch and materials provided)

Location: Manchester, NH

Register with Women's Business Center:

603-623-7383

October 14 • 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

### THE MAGIC OF CONFLICT — AN INTRODUCTION

Tuition: \$45.00 per person

Kittery Recreation Department

To register, call 207-439-3800

October 25 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

Tuition: \$135.00 per person

(lunch and workbook provided)

The Courtyard Marriott, Portsmouth, NH

Call 431-8560 or return Registration Form

*Please register early.*

*All workshops have minimum and maximum participant requirements.*

### CUSTOMIZED PROGRAMS

The following are examples of programs designed for organizations. All trainings are tailored to meet specific goals and objectives. Please call for additional information.

### CORPORATE/BUSINESS SEMINARS

- Conflict in the Workplace
- Team Building: Working Together Effectively
  - Principled Negotiation
  - Powerful Presentations
- Difficult People: Tormentors or Teachers

### PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS

- Violence: Dealing with Anger (for students)
  - Helping Students Deal with Anger and Conflict (for teachers)
- Team Building: Working Together Effectively
  - Parent's & Teens:  
From Conflict to Connection



# Judy Ringer

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## inside

- Letting Go of Perfection**
- Real Life**
- Conflict Cookbook**
- Private Coaching**
- Powerful Presentations**
- The Magic of Conflict**
- Conflict in the Workplace**

*We can change our circumstances by a mere change of our attitude. — William James*

## quotables

### **The Magic of Conflict**

- *I just wanted to share personally that I got more information out of yesterday's session with you than I have in years from any other program.*
- *I think I've learned tools for effective communication and also how to center and express myself better.*
- *I will center before opening my mouth and remember to consider the other person's perspective.*

### **The Powerful Voice**

- *The breathing and projection exercises will be helpful when speaking and making presentations.*
- *This workshop will help me in leading our Board Orientation Program next month.*

### **The Magic of Conflict**

The Magic of Conflict involves both body and mind in a journey of change, using simple and powerful kinesthetic exercises from the gentle martial art of Aikido ("The Way of Harmony"). Based on the book by Thomas Crum, The Magic of Conflict is a course in conflict, personal growth, and better relationships. We examine beliefs about conflict that hold us back, practice skills such as centering, listening, and managing emotions, and strengthen our commitment to make new choices. This workshop is about changing ourselves at a deep level and discovering how to live the life we want.

### **The Powerful Voice**

Do you wish you had a more powerful speaking voice? Do you have skilled, capable employees whose confidence is hampered by a soft-spoken, harsh or shaky voice? How we use our voice is closely connected with who we are. The Powerful Voice workshops teach how to develop a stronger, more effortless voice, how to give clear, effective, and compelling presentations, and how to be more confident in front of an audience of one or one hundred.



# Judy Ringer

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 Workshops**

**Conflict Resolution  
 Training & Facilitation**

**Voice Work**

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