

Listening – When It's Not Easy

Recently I had the opportunity to teach a workshop for human resource professionals called "Conflict in the Classroom" on how to manage and appreciate "problem" students and situations. One potential problem came up for me in the first fifteen minutes of the class. A participant asked why it was that I could use aikido, a Japanese martial art with a philosophical foundation as a metaphor in teaching about conflict and communication. He said that if he, as a practicing Christian, got up to speak about Christian values as a basis for behavior he would probably be shouted off the stage. I had to say I didn't know, and I also agreed with him that it didn't seem fair to me either. He said that he had come to class to learn specific strategies to manage conflict and handle difficult students, not to learn about aikido or it's philosophy, and if that was what the class was about he would leave. I appreciated his viewpoint and his openness and assured him that he'd come to the right place. Aikido was a reference point we would use periodically, and at the end of the day he would have the mental and verbal strategies he wanted to manage the difficult people in life, both in and out of the classroom.

Blending and Redirecting

This story is interesting to me for a couple of reasons. The first is my own reaction that morning. I could have easily perceived this man's question as an attack and fought back with lots of reasons why what I was doing was not analogous to his example. I'm sure I could have made some good points, but in the end I'd have lost the participant even if he remained in the class. Instead I instinctively moved to his side and allied myself with his position. From his perspective I was doing something that the culture does not allow him to do, and I could identify with his point of view and the emotion behind it. I would feel the same if I were in his shoes. In that moment I watched myself demonstrate the mental and verbal aspects of aikido by aligning myself with his energy, and I enjoyed the power of seeing a new and different world. As it turned out, this gentleman became an active participant. And I was grateful for the opportunity to practice what I "preach."

Additionally, after the workshop I was moved to think about this man's question: Why can I call upon aikido to teach about conflict management when it's not acceptable for a Christian speaker to use his beliefs to do the same? Is there something about "Eastern" philosophy that is easier to hear, or maybe even in vogue, that makes

it okay? And why do many of us tighten when our fellow worker, friend, or family member speaks to us of God, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, or the benefits of living a life based on their religious principles? Why do we resist the heartfelt beliefs of others when they are different from our own, especially in a world that seems to be searching for principles to live by? What could be lost by listening?

Listening as an Ally

I know there are many reasons why we resist the beliefs of others, especially when they are deeply held. Often the energy is so strong we feel overwhelmed by it. If we don't agree, we feel the need to express our beliefs, also deeply held. We're so sure that the other is wrong that we can barely wait to tell them why. Or maybe we fear that by listening we express tacit agreement.

Yet when we listen to others we give them and ourselves a great gift. We invite them to let their fountain of energy flow freely. We reinforce their sense of self. We help them center and get their bearings. Listening does not mean you have to do what the speaker is telling you to do, accept their beliefs, endorse their reasoning, or agree with their viewpoint. It means you listen without an agenda and without mentally preparing a rebuttal. When I'm able to do this I gain empathy, appreciation, and a wider view of the world. I have found that empathy is a result of good listening, not a pre-requisite. Sometimes I connect with their energy – their outrage, joy, excitement, or intense belief – their humanness. I've been there, maybe not at this moment, but I've had those feelings in my life. I can always find something in common when I center and look.

Another gift I receive from listening is to hear how my actions affect the other person. I may not mean to have had that effect and I'm surprised and occasionally upset to learn it. I want to explain and tell them they're wrong to have reacted this way. But more often now I center and listen. I know I didn't intend harm, but I respect that their feelings are real and are theirs, and I go on. I choose to align myself with them, and the conflict moves toward resolution.

It may not always be easy, but it is simple: we need to start listening more and talking less. The world is growing too complex, too full and too small not to stop, look, and listen. We have a lot to learn from our "opponents," and when we can truly listen to them, we'll discover there are gifts there for us as well.

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt - marvelous error!
that a spring was breaking
out in my heart.
I said: Along which secret aqueduct,
Oh water, are you coming to me,
water of a new life
that I have never drunk?

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt - marvelous error!
that I had a beehive
here inside my heart.
And the golden bees
were making white combs
and sweet honey
from my old failures.

Last night, as I was sleeping,
I dreamt - marvelous error!
that a fiery sun was giving
light inside my heart.
It was fiery because I felt
warmth as from a hearth,
and sun because it gave light
and brought tears to my eyes.

Last night, as I slept,
I dreamt - marvelous error!
that it was God I had
here inside my heart.

Is my soul asleep?
Have those beehives that labor
at night stopped? And the water
wheel of thought,
is it dry, the cups empty,
wheeling, carrying only shadows?

No, my soul is not asleep
It is awake, wide awake.
It neither sleeps nor dreams, but watches
its clear eyes open,
far-off things, and listens
at the shores of the great silence.

— *Times Alone, Selected Poems of Antonio Machado, translated by Robert Bly*





JudyRinger.com

If you enjoy surfing the web, you can now receive **Power & Presence** – and a lot more tips and information – at www.JudyRinger.com. Our new site offers support on conflict skills and communication training, conflict facilitation, private coaching and aikido. You'll also find in-service workshops and upcoming events. Please stop by!

Please tell me!

If you prefer to receive **Power & Presence** electronically, let me know:

- By phone 603-431-8560,
- By email judyringer@rcn.com, or
- Online at JudyRinger.com on the Contact page.



And if you are a listener, it is the secret of having a good time in society (because everybody around you becomes lively and interesting), of comforting people, of doing them good.

-- Brenda Ueland



real life

Remembering to Practice – Let me Count the Ways

From Connie Dove, former Director, Women's Business Center

I felt paralyzed. I heard the word "Audit" and knew I wouldn't be in the driver's seat. The auditors gave every indication that this would be a meeting that would test all of my conflict management skills. But then I thought, "What do each of us want when we walk away from the table?," and I prepared differently. They hadn't anticipated that I would set the stage, laying out my positive hopes at the beginning of the meeting. As I identified their centered intent, I was better able to center myself and our environment.

The outcome? We all walked away smiling, as new partners should.

From Paula Rais, Project Manager

The tricky part is remembering and practicing. I had an opportunity last night at home...and blew it! Oh well. Maybe next time I can get centered first.

From Amy Wallace, Personal and Professional Development Coach

An issue that keeps coming up for me is how I "project" what's going on with me onto other people, only to find out – somewhere down the road – that I'm doing the very same

thing (and realizing how much time and energy I "wasted" doing it that way). Projecting one's energy certainly changes the center of gravity, doesn't it?!

From Joe Werkowski, Environmental Engineer

I had misplaced my copy of *The Magic of Conflict* and had looked everywhere for that book a dozen times. Well today I centered myself and a thought came along telling me to look in my overnight bag – I often bring a book with me when visiting – and there it was, right where I'd left it.

You do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked, it has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

– Franz Kafka

resources

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, and public speaking. To work on specific conflict situations or become more confident speaking in front of people, call Judy at 431-8560 or Email judyringer@rcn.com.

Claim Your Inner Grown-up

Local author and psychotherapist Ashley Davis Prend, A.C.S.W., has written her second book, titled *Claim Your Inner Grown-up: 4 Essential Steps to Authentic Adulthood*. Each chapter offers suggestions and exercises for personal development and insight on how to recognize and claim your inner adult, the person who is wise, loving, mature and responsible. The text, published by Penguin Books, introduces a unique four-step program with practical ideas on developing your power and sense of self.

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 whose name 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 are affiliated with the United States Aikido Federation and whose teachers are recognized 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. Beginners through advanced students are always welcome. 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.

Portsmouth Aikido will offer an **Adult Beginner Class (ages 12 and up)** at the Seacoast Y on Sundays beginning October 14 and running through November 18. The 6-week class will meet from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m., and cost \$50.00. Pre-registration is required. For more information, you may visit www.PortsmouthAikido.com or e-mail 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

(See calendar to the right for dates and times.)

Conflict in the Workplace

This interactive program uses principles and techniques from aikido, the Japanese art of reconciliation, to provide perspective, tools, and training in self-management and conflict resolution in the workplace. You will discover how to use daily challenges to become calm and centered and to see conflict as a way to strengthen workplace relationships. You'll also:

- ✓ Define and understand conflict and your typical reactions to it.
- ✓ Appreciate the value of listening and curiosity in conflict.
- ✓ Learn verbal strategies to communicate more effectively.
- ✓ Appreciate your emotional energy and direct it in positive ways.
- ✓ Perform more effectively at work, in meetings and difficult conversations.

Aikido & Conflict: Getting on the Mat

This program is for kinesthetic learners who like to immerse themselves in the educational experience. We will go to an aikido "dojo" (place of practice), put on gis (practice uniforms) and practice applying physical aikido

principles to everyday conflicts, wherever they occur. You'll learn how to blend with physical attacks and verbal ones. This is an "out-of-the-box" training experience combining aikido, communication and conflict management, in which you'll:

- ✓ See the relationship between how you deal with a physical attack and the way you handle pressure and conflict.
- ✓ Learn to recognize resistance and choose a more conscious response.
- ✓ Increase presence and options under pressure.
- ✓ Apply "on-the-mat" experiences to communication and conflict.

Difficult People – Tormentors or Teachers?

Can you turn even the most challenging co-worker into an ally? The "difficult" people in our lives can be our greatest source of stress or our best teachers. When we meet force with force we escalate the conflict, and if we don't we feel we've lost. Is there something in between? In this program we'll learn the power of changing ourselves instead of trying to change others and begin to transform those interpersonal relationships that give us headaches, both at home and in the workplace.

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

workshop calendar

September 20 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

Tuition: \$135.00 per person

(Lunch and workbook provided)

Portsmouth Location TBD

Call, email, or return Registration Form

October 31 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

AIKIDO AND CONFLICT: GETTING ON THE MAT

Tuition: \$175.00 per person

(Lunch, aikido gi, and workbook provided)

Seacoast Family Y, Portsmouth, NH

Call, email, or return Registration Form

December 6 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

DIFFICULT PEOPLE: TORMENTORS OR TEACHERS

Tuition: \$135.00 per person

(Lunch and workbook provided)

Portsmouth Location TBD

Call, email, 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
 - Assertive Communication
 - Powerful Presentations
- Difficult People: Tormentors or Teachers
 - Principled Negotiation
- Aikido and Conflict: Getting on the Mat

PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS

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



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inside

Listening — When It's Not Easy

Real Life

Aikido For Beginners

Conflict In The Workplace

Difficult People

Getting On The Mat

When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand.
Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life. — Brenda Ueland

quotables

The Magic of Conflict

- *I walked into your home so worried about Wednesday's meeting that I thought I would break into tears, and I walked out in total control. The words, "thank you", are pretty insignificant. But thank you, anyway. I haven't had a good nite's sleep for weeks like I did last night. What happened to my tension? Ah...oh to be centered!*
- *This workshop helped me understand that there are 2 sides to any conflict.*
- *Thank you so much for a useful, practical, and enjoyable training! I learned many new skills and reinforced others. I loved it!*

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.



**Aikido Based
Workshops**
**Conflict Resolution
Training & Facilitation**
Voice Work

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