

# Power & Presence

Spring 2002

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

## Choosing My Self

I have two little pieces of paper taped to the telephone in my office. One says "Center," the other "Breathe." With these two reminders facing me, I picked up the handset to call the customer service department of a nationally recognized banking institution. My mother has a loan with the bank and is trying to get them to send me duplicate statements every month. For many reasons she likes me to know what's going on in her financial life, and I receive statements from a variety of companies on her behalf. Mom told me she had called the bank twice with no success. I decided to take matters into my own hands.

After some time and confusion over my request, Eva, the customer service rep, said that I would need to send them a power of attorney for my mother along with a written request. Then they would send me the monthly statement instead of my mother. I said, no, I wanted a duplicate. I wanted us both to get a statement. She said that was impossible.

### Pushing Buttons

You should probably know that customer service is one of those areas that can trigger uncentered behavior in me. If I judge that I'm being treated poorly or that the company should be able to accommodate me and won't, I can lose it very quickly. This was one of those times. I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe that an institution of this quality and size would or could not do this simple thing.

I told Eva how amazed I was since, in my view, I was asking for such a small service. It was ridiculous that they could not manage what others handle easily enough. I could tell I was getting nowhere, except increasingly frustrated. I also sensed that Eva was becoming very resistant on the other end of the phone. If I kept pushing one of us would eventually hang up and both of us would stew in our own juices — who knows how long.

### Curiosity vs. Judgment

I may have caught sight of my telephone reminders, or maybe I remembered the part in *The Magic of Conflict* that speaks to the power of discovery and the opportunities that arise when we move off our position and decide to be curious instead of right. Or maybe I just came to my senses — literally. I didn't like the way I felt — body, mind or spirit. So I took a deep breath, I centered, and I said: "So what can we do?" And I was quiet. Eva said, "Well, I don't know because data management says they can't send more than one statement a month. It's all on computer. I wish I could."

Whew — what a feeling. My whole body relaxed. I was now talking to a person. I also felt Eva relax and I knew whatever happened next was going to be okay. I said: "You sound frustrated. I'm probably not the only person who's called with this kind of request." And, of course, I wasn't. As it turns out, she gets these calls daily and doesn't like being blamed for something she can't control. She'd love to say yes. But her pleas for help to data management seem to fall on deaf ears. I asked if

there was anything I could do. She said writing a letter to the director of servicing might help, and I said I would. In the meantime, I asked if she could send a copy of this month's statement. "Of course, I'd be happy to," she said. We were friends now, helping each other out.

So I wrote the letter and copied Eva. I still haven't heard back, but it's okay. My challenge was not what I thought it was that day. Eventually the bank may straighten out their software problems, and in the meantime I know when I need a statement I can call Eva. We have a connection.

### Listen and Learn

Resistance is not a solitary event. It doesn't cause itself to happen. It needs something to push against. The more you push, the more they push back. To reduce the tension, let go of the need to get your point across. See what's going on for the other person. Say something like: "What can we do here?" or "Tell me how you see it." If you are sincerely interested, you'll learn a lot. Truly listening means to drop your agenda momentarily. I know it's not easy — but that's the key. When you're really interested in understanding you stop pushing, and they will stop, too.

In *The Dance of Connection*, author Harriet Lerner writes that in difficult conversations the task is not to "be yourself" but to "choose your self." There are many selves inside each of us. We want to take action from the self that speaks for the values we hold, the virtues we subscribe to, not the self who is reactively aggressive or acquiescent. Finding that self takes practice and intention. Difficult situations and individuals become opportunities for choosing the self that expresses who we really are.

People ask me all the time what is needed in order to resolve the difficult issues facing this country, this planet. I think we need to resolve our own conflicts first, with loved ones, co-workers, fleeting acquaintances, and with our selves. The problems are not out there, nor is the power. It resides in each and every one of us.

The task is not to  
"be yourself"  
but to  
"choose your self."

## poem

### On a Tree Fallen Across the Road

The tree the tempest with a crash of wood  
Throws down in front of us is not to bar  
Our passage to our journey's end for good,  
But just to ask us who we think we are

Insisting always on our own way so.  
She likes to halt us in our runner tracks,  
And make us get down in a foot of snow  
Debating what to do without an ax.

And yet she knows obstruction is in vain:  
We will not be put off the final goal  
We have it hidden in us to attain,  
Not though we have to seize earth by the pole

And, tired of aimless circling in one place,  
Steer straight off after something into space.

— Robert Frost

Conflict Management  
Communication Skills  
Training & Facilitation





## Journey to Center in October

Each October I return to Peaceful Valley, Colorado to attend and



assist with Tom Crum's Journey to Center program. On a beautiful mountaintop in the Colorado Rockies, I reconnect and reenergize, review and relearn skills in optimal relationships and successful conflict management and communication skills. Morning sessions concentrate on mind-body training in calmness, awareness and focus. Afternoons apply these principles to relationships at work and in life through peak performance models, problem solving strategies and vision building. This year the program runs from Sept. 30 to October 4. For more information, email [judyringer@rcn.com](mailto:judyringer@rcn.com) or visit [www.AikiWorks.com](http://www.AikiWorks.com). It's a wonderful way to spend a week.

## real life

**Why is it that center so often eludes us? In lives filled with deadlines, meeting planners and e-mail messages, the simplicity of center may be its most elusive quality, and the most useful.**

### **From Tracy Pelletier, Business Manager, Local Mental Health Facility**

I truly appreciate the idea that all in life is great; embrace it; flow with it! What a wonderful way to keep perspective. I found myself centering in a meeting the other day at work! I laughed to myself, because no one else in the group ever knew what was going on! It is so much nicer to get through the day this way rather than attracting the negative toward myself.

### **From Kathleen Labb, Director of Pastoral Care, Exeter Health Resources**

I must tell you of one of the gifts I received during a recent weekend meditation retreat. I was kneeling on a meditation bench in front of the altar "trying" to meditate. My eyes were closed and my mind was going a mile a minute, jumping from one thought to

another. I was getting exasperated with myself and finally opened my eyes. Before me the dancing flame on the altar was casting a jerky, frenetic, almost comical shadow of the serene alabaster Buddha that adorned the altar. The shadow was disquieting until I realized that at its center rested the peaceful countenance of the Buddha-Self. It helped me remember that all outer experience is but an illusion, and within all of us the truth of our Buddha-Selves or Christ Consciousness or whatever is most holy lies. I hope I can remember!!

### **From Bob Durney, Global Logistics Manager, Converge**

I think I have learned a very important lesson – that I need to breath. This is so easy why don't we think of it? When I exhale and remember to breath it does seem to help me relax and center. Simple things do help.

## resources

### **Music In Market Square**

Music is a great resource for inner and outer harmony. This summer North Church in downtown Portsmouth will again offer its free concert series – "Music in Market Square" – on Fridays from Noon to 1 p.m., beginning July 19. I'm personally excited to be part of this year's program. On August 16, I'll be performing Bach duets for solo soprano and violin with my violinist sister, Deborah Rodin, who is traveling from far away Indianapolis for the occasion. I hope you'll come and listen!

#### **CONCERT SCHEDULE:**

##### **July 19**

Darby Tench: An Afternoon at the Opera

##### **July 26**

Artful Noise: String Quartet

##### **August 2**

Gary MacDonald: Organ

##### **August 9**

Yagottawanna (women's a capella group)

##### **August 16**

Mostly Baroque: Bach arias for soprano and violin

##### **August 23**

Air Force Brass Quintet

### **[www.JudyRinger.com](http://www.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](http://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!

### **[www.PortsmouthAikido.com](http://www.PortsmouthAikido.com)**

Portsmouth Aikido is an ongoing martial arts school located at the Seacoast Family Y in Portsmouth. Many of the principles that are reflected in our workshops and in *Power & Presence* come from Aikido, the Japanese martial art devoted to turning resistance into energy. Regular mixed level classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:45 to 9:00 p.m. and on Sundays from 2:15 to 3:30 p.m. Monthly dues are \$40.00 per person and there are discounts for family memberships. Beginners (aged 12 and up) through advanced are welcome. You may stop by anytime and watch a class, or jump in and practice once at no charge. Visit our new web site for more information.

**"Opponents confront us continually, but actually there is no opponent there."**

—Morihei Ueshiba O'Sensei, Founder of Aikido

### **The Randori Principles: The Path of Effortless Leadership**

This newly published book by David Baum, Ph.D., and Jim Hassinger (of Peterborough, NH) is a well-written development of aikido principles applied to leadership in organizations. Their definition of randori – "to be in the right place, with the right technique, at the right time, with the right level of power" – is demonstrated through descriptions of aikido techniques and their corollaries in the business environment. It's replete with interesting metaphors, lessons, and stories.

### **Develop Your Own Workshop**

After a recent workshop at City Year, I received this e-mail from Amanda Martin, Development director:

"I plan to use your ideas and tie some exercises into each of our weekly meetings to further our conflict resolution skills. Yesterday I made up an exercise that explores body language. We listed some habits people have when engaged in conversation that may cause conflict or discomfort – playing with items, looking away, crossing arms, writing things down, etc. I think the team enjoyed it as they explored their own habits a bit more deeply. We tried to be aware of what it means to be present during a conversation, to help the other person feel they are being listened to and appreciated. I will let you know how these exercises go. Thank you!"

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.)

### Powerful Presentations

This empowering workshop combines training in good vocal technique with practice in giving clear, effective, and compelling presentations. Judy Ringer and Susan Losapio team up to help participants develop a more powerful voice, enhance confidence and presence, and connect with an audience. You'll learn simple kinesthetic exercises you can practice daily and use before, during, and after presentations. You will also be guided in the "four defining characteristics" of a powerful presentation and have the opportunity to deliver several one minute presentations on tape. You'll receive individual coaching to help fine tune your skills and have the video to review at home. See Calendar for date and time.

### The Magic of Conflict

"Conflict isn't good or bad. It's what we do with it that makes the difference." —Tom Crum

Each time conflict shows up, we have the opportunity to respond with awareness and composure. Yet so often we fight or flee. We know what we want to do, but our bodies react before we can stop and think. *The Magic of Conflict*, using principles from the gentle martial art of

Aikido, teaches how to avoid reaction, stay calm and focused, and utilize the energy in conflict. This workshop will explore new ways to transform difficult situations into opportunities for growth and change. Participants will:

- ✓ Build skills in conflict management
- ✓ Strengthen the ability to communicate with power
- ✓ Increase connection and improve relationships

### Assertive Communication and Conflict Resolution

Do you find it difficult to ask for what you want, say no, or express a difference of opinion? Since most of us have been conditioned to view conflict as negative, it is often difficult to assert our position. Assertive (versus aggressive or passive) communication can help create a sense of self and foster an environment which is meaningful and fulfilling. This workshop will help you express yourself with equanimity and clarity while honoring other perspectives. Co-facilitators are Judy Ringer and Tom Dubois. Enrollment limited to ten participants. See Calendar for date and time.

## workshop calendar

June 11 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### POWERFUL PRESENTATIONS

Tuition: \$135.00 per person  
(Lunch, videotape and handout materials included)

Maximum 12 participants  
Portsmouth Location TBD  
Call, email, or return Registration Form

July 16 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### THE MAGIC OF CONFLICT

Tuition: \$135.00 per person  
(Lunch and Magic of Conflict text included)

Portsmouth Location TBD  
Call, email, or return Registration Form

August 24 • 10 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

### ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Tuition: \$95.00 per person  
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
- Creating a Positive Work Environment
- 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

"Take a deep breath ... you can't live without it ... it is one thing that you and you alone can control ... Taking one deep breath can make a huge difference in what you choose to do in the next second ..."

— Maureen Ross, DogTalk.com

## registration

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Please add me/my colleague to your mailing list:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please call to discuss creating a program for my organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 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.

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



# Judy Ringer

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*The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands,  
 and then work outward from there. – Robert M. Pirsig*

## quotables

- *Your last bit of work with us was sublime, perfectly on the mark. Thank you very much for your knowledge, professionalism and warmth. It sets a nice tone for the "business" portion of our meetings. More importantly it reinforces what we say is critical to our culture and values here.*
- *Thank you so much for your priceless workshop. It was the best workshop we as a staff team ever had together. You made a big difference for all of us.*
- *Your program showed me how to look at anger and frustration in a new way and what to do about it. Very practical for the classroom.*

## solutions

### question

***What do you do with emotions in the middle of a conflict? Sometimes I feel so full of rage I can't talk.***

### answer

Emotions are what make conflict challenging. And there is no quick fix answer to your question. In Tom Crum's *Conflict Cookbook*, designed for teachers of adolescents, there is an approach I often quote: **BLT – Breathe, Learn, Talk**. Take several deep breaths and exhale fully. In other words, center. Listen to understand and learn where your conflict partner is coming from. Then state your thoughts, hopes, and feelings. As you address the differences between your needs, re-center periodically and search for common ground. Whatever the emotions, it's a good idea to acknowledge and appreciate them – yours and theirs. Don't suppress them but don't act them out either. Use the energy in a conscious, volitional way. Get additional practice in centering and communication skills through training or private coaching or counseling. Eventually you will gain the patience to honor your emotions and express them in good listening and talking behavior.



Conflict Management  
 Communication Skills  
 Training & Facilitation

# Judy Ringer

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