

# Power & Presence

Spring 2005

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

## How Are You Inventing Your Life Today? *By Judy Ringer*

**W**alking down Lincoln Avenue in Portsmouth, I am struck by the beauty of the day – forsythia, tulips and daffodils, bright sun, warm breeze – and the freedom and privilege I have to walk in a healthy body, through a friendly neighborhood, of my own volition. I think about how much I take for granted, and how easy it is to feel centered and content when life is easy, flowing, and conflict free.

The day before was not so. It was rainy, windy, and cold. I hadn't slept and woke up short-tempered and irritable. (*Will winter never end?!*) A project I'd been putting off could not be postponed any longer, and I knew I had to finish it even though I had no inspiration for it. My body ached from hard aikido practice the night before, and I felt tired and lacked energy. I opened a window and spilled a potted plant all over my office floor. And the last piece of my favorite toasting bread had mysteriously disappeared from its storage place. Tomorrow – who knows? As my friend Carol says, life can fall on your head at any moment.

***"Organisms do not experience environments, they create them."***

– From *A Simpler Way*, by Margaret Wheatley

So how do I walk my talk, change my attitude, adjust my goals, and reinvent my life even when I don't feel like it. I kept thinking: *You can do this, this is great, exactly what you look for – ideal opportunities to practice . . . center, breathe, laugh. Sure, it's easy to be centered when things are going your way. This is the perfect day to practice – when they aren't.*

I'm embarrassed to say that it was still hard. The only good news that I was able to give myself was that I *noticed*. I could see I was having a "pity party," which was a step in the right direction. Friend and colleague, Joy Jacobs, calls this ability to step outside our selves and acknowledge our reactions meta-communication. My meta-communicator is the role that says, *Hey, Judy, you're really having a strong reaction to that plant falling over. Whoah! Are you sure you want to throw it through the window? Right, probably not.*

The meta-communicator is the insulation between my reaction and my response. It keeps me from getting dragged down an emotionally reactive path that I will probably regret. The ability to meta-communicate is a sign of emotional intelligence, analogous to self-awareness, and essential to self-control. Without the ability to meta-

communicate, I get lost in the emotion and identify with it. There is no distance, no separation between me and my mental state; the attitude, emotion, or mood overrides conscious thought and takes me wherever it wants. I can only talk about the emotion (like this) when it's played itself out and I regain the ability to see it.

Centering awakens the meta-communicator. Taking a moment of literal and figurative inspiration – breathing and connecting to my power source – gives me the time and the space to decide if I want to get dragged off or not.

Pity parties are fun sometimes. I can enjoy getting together telephonically or in person with special friends. We dress up in our best long-suffering attitudes and moan about this event or that person, how much work there is to do and how little time. We bring our meta-communicators along, and we laugh at ourselves in the midst of our complaining. It's a lot more fun to whine with awareness.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said, "If you don't like what's happening in your life, change your mind." How do you like what's happening in your life at the moment? I realize it may be a lot more challenging than winter weather in April. Still, gently experiment with changing your relationship to life events, and see what happens.

When I am willing and able to do this, *to change my mind*, everything changes. It begins by noticing my reactive state.

*I'm upset.*

*Okay – Upset Energy. How can I be intentional about this energy? How can I use it in a way that's congruent with my values and vision?*

I take charge of it, before it takes charge of me.

I begin to travel a path of power and presence, instead of a path of reactivity and regret.

As I place that bit of padding between my reaction and my response, I reclaim my power. I reconnect with what is really important. Why am I here? What do I want to contribute to this workplace, this family unit, this relationship? What are my hopes for this conversation? How will I impact this meeting?

More sunny days and uplifting moments are on the horizon. But whatever the external or internal weather conditions, I am protected by an inner spring of insight that is always awake, aware, and available to be tapped at any moment. And I remember all that I have to be grateful for, including the privilege of having unsettling emotions.

How are you inventing your life today, this moment? Is life a struggle, or does it flow? It's possible that the answers are really up to you.

inspiration



## Why I Wake Early

*By Mary Oliver*

Hello, sun in my face.  
Hello, you who make the morning  
and spread it over the fields  
and into the faces of the tulips  
and the nodding morning glories,  
and into the windows of, even, the  
miserable and the crotchety -

best preacher that ever was,  
dear star, that just happens  
to be where you are in the universe  
to keep us from ever-darkness,  
to ease us with warm touching,  
to hold us in the great hands of light -  
good morning, good morning,  
good morning.

Watch, now, how I start the day  
in happiness, in kindness.

**Conflict Management  
Communication Skills  
Training & Facilitation**



Judy Ringer





We are  
what we do  
repeatedly.  
Excellence,  
therefore,  
is not an act,  
It is a habit.

Aristotle

## real life

### **From a New Hampshire Business Owner**

We have a new, very bright employee, and we've been trying to gradually bring her up to speed with business practices, so as not to overwhelm her. She came up with her own business plan, which took us completely by surprise. In fact, when my partner and I opened the email with her suggestions, we both felt as if we had been kicked in the stomach. We read her note as an indictment of our business style and felt pretty horribly about it. Our first response was to sit down and talk to her about what we perceived as the inappropriateness of her actions.

On the hour-long drive to meet with her, we had time to talk and vent, and before long the aikido approach to conflict came into the conversation. Sure enough, we understood that this woman was trying to help and better the situation for the company. (We still didn't like her telling us what to do!) We appreciated where her efforts came from, even if it still sounded like criticism. Ultimately, we stepped back from our first response to confront her (and tell her to back off) and decided to back off ourselves. We took the rest of the day off and just took a break from the whole issue.

I had another aikido moment recently at a meeting in

Concord that began with tension about what appeared to be conflicting needs between our company and the project managers, contractors, and construction people. We met for an hour and by the end, I think we all better understood some of the concerns that were weighing on other people. I came away with a new appreciation for the stresses that were driving decisions.

You and your lessons about how to approach conflict have been part of our life often in these last months, and I wanted to let you know that.

### **From Joe Ruzzo, State of Vermont Department of Transportation**

Thanks for the workshop on conflict last week. I have been thinking about it and measuring where I am at different times. I did have one little funny insight I wanted to share with you about opportunity during conflict. In the past when I would lose a tool or not be able to find something I would become very stressed out, but for the past few months whenever I start to search for the misplaced item I am always thinking to myself, "what am I going to find today that I am not even looking for?" Sooner or later I find most everything I lose but the sense of discovery is pretty cool.

## resources

### **Power & Presence Training Associates**

Power & Presence Training is a company that provides unique training for specific needs. Any of the workshops in this newsletter can be tailored to your goals, and you will find additional programs at [www.JudyRinger.com](http://www.JudyRinger.com).

At Power & Presence Training, we have associates with expertise in conflict and stress management, leadership development, strategic planning, customer service, and powerful presentations. Please contact us to discuss your training needs.

### **What's new at JudyRinger.com?**

I am reinventing myself electronically. I've been having fun this spring adding new user-friendly improvements to my website. Check out the **Audio Welcome Message** on my Homepage. Download articles on conflict, difficult conversations, and three questions that will help you turn your "tormentors" into teachers – all on the **Free Articles** page. There is also a new **Corporate Workshops** page, and access to past issues of *Power & Presence*.

Please stop by and let me know what you think.

### **Ki Moments**

How are you handling the Ki Moments in your life? In addition to *Power & Presence*, we publish monthly tips on conflict and communication through our new email magazine (aka "e-zine") – "**Ki Moments**." Ki (from Ai-Ki-do) is the Japanese for life energy. A Ki Moment is any moment that requires your full attention, your power, and your presence. Quality of life is contingent upon the choices you make in these moments. Sign up for these free monthly reminders at: [www.judyringer.com](http://www.judyringer.com)

### **Infinite Strategies**

If you're interested in seeing life's challenges as growth opportunities, another excellent resource is my friend Joy Jacobs and her company, **Infinite Strategies**, in Peterborough, NH. Call her at 603-924-7008 for more information on her AUM Approach – Attend, Unfold, Move On – and how she uses it to support individuals, relationships, and group process.

### **The Recipe for Resilience**

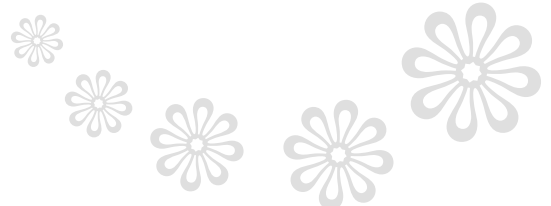
"Resilience is a state of being that allows you to recover quickly and reliably when you are stressed or thrown off-balance by adversity or change." So says Sandy Davis in his new training manual: *The Recipe for Resilience: Three Simple Practices for Staying Unfrazzled*. I highly recommend it and its companion workbook to anyone who wants to learn about resilience and develop simple, effective, daily practices to increase and maintain it. Learn more about Sandy and his work at [www.changewise.biz](http://www.changewise.biz)

### **Portsmouth Aikido**

Portsmouth Aikido is an ongoing martial arts school located at the Seacoast Family Y in Portsmouth. Many of the principles reflected in *Power & Presence* come from aikido, the Japanese martial art that teaches self-defense through redirection of energy. Classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:45 p.m. and Sundays at 1:00 and 2:15 p.m. Beginners through advanced are always welcome. You may stop by anytime and watch a class, or visit our web site for more information – [www.portsmouthaikido.com](http://www.portsmouthaikido.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

### Women's Power, Women's Voices

Our voices are intimately linked to our power. What keeps you from using yours? Learning to use your voice can help you be more effective, articulate, and influential in the world. Engaging your inner voice can help you stay healthy in the midst of confusion, stress and emotional chaos. If you'd like to be able to express yourself more freely, join me in June for this interactive and experiential program on discovering the power of your voice.

Activities include:

- Aikido kinesthetic and movement exercises
- Verbal and non-verbal ways to express yourself
- Speaking from center
- Group discussion
- Singing

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

### Conflict in the Workplace

Experience a unique approach that goes beyond the intellectual analysis of what to do when conflict and change occur. Root causes and old habits are addressed by looking at the mental, emotional and physical aspects of useful communication. Current western methods are blended with Aikido, the Japanese art of reconciliation, for a profound learning experience. Participants will learn to:

- Embrace conflict and change as opportunities
- Get off issues and on to vision
- Increase focus, clarity and balance
- Effectively communicate differences
- Stay calm and maintain perspective under pressure
- Prevent petty conflicts from becoming major crises

## OFFERING e news!

In addition to receiving *Power & Presence* three times a year, would you like to **receive regular monthly tips and advice on centering, conflict and communication?** I have a new "e-zine" — like a magazine but sent by e-mail. It is free, fun, and full of how-to articles and inspiration. My subscribers tell me it arrives "at just the right time" each month.

It's called **Ki Moments**, and you can subscribe on my website: [www.judyringer.com](http://www.judyringer.com) (We never share subscriber information.)

When all is said and done,  
conflict often comes down  
to one question:  
Am I willing to change?  
And if not, why not?

— Judy Ringer

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Full deposit refundable one week prior to workshop date.

### Are you interested in a program for your organization or work group?

Put *Power & Presence* to work for you:

- By phone 603-431-8560 • By email [Judy@JudyRinger.com](mailto:Judy@JudyRinger.com)
- Online at [JudyRinger.com](http://JudyRinger.com) on the Contact page.

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

## workshop calendar

June 11 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### WOMEN'S POWER, WOMEN'S VOICES

Tuition: \$135.00 per person

(Lunch included)

Location: To be determined

To register: Return form below, call, email

or register online at

<http://www.JudyRinger.com>

July 27 • 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE

Tuition: \$135.00 per person

(Lunch and *The Magic of Conflict* text included)

New Hampshire Community Technical College

Pease Tradeport, Portsmouth, NH

To register: Return form below, call, email

or register online at

<http://www.JudyRinger.com>

**Please register early.**

**All workshops have minimum and maximum participant requirements.**

### CUSTOMIZED PROGRAMS

The following are examples of programs designed for organizations. Additional workshop descriptions can be found at [www.JudyRinger.com](http://www.JudyRinger.com). All trainings are tailored to meet specific goals and objectives. Please call 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
- Violence: Dealing with Anger (for students)
- Helping Students Deal with Anger and Conflict (for teachers)
- Team Building: Working Together Effectively



# Judy Ringer

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To pay attention,  
 this is our endless and proper work.

— Mary Oliver, *Yes! No*

## quotables

- “
- *I just wanted to thank you again in the name of the entire staff. You did a wonderful job. Now we need to keep practicing. I see your teaching has already made a difference in the atmosphere here at our medical practice.*
  - *Thank you so much! I came home a calm and curious person. I got along great with the kids and handled situations that arose with control, comfort and understanding.*
  - *My staff really enjoyed you and what you had to say. It brought us back together as a team. It was very special.*

## solutions

### question

***How do you control emotions in the middle of a conflict?***

### answer

Emotions are what make conflict challenging. There is no quick fix, but with awareness and practice you can begin to retrain your reactive state to be more responsive.

When your emotions become engaged, breathe, center yourself, and awaken your meta-communicator. While you may not choose the emotion, you can choose how you express it.

- Listen before you speak. Become curious about the situation and the people. Listening buys you time to center and engage your awareness.
- State your thoughts, hopes and feelings in a way that reduces defensiveness. Address the differences between your expectations and what actually occurred.
- Search for common ground as you seek to build sustainable solutions. Be hard on the problem while being soft on the people.
- Get additional practice in centering and communication skills. Eventually you will gain the patience to honor your emotions and the verbal skills to express yourself in difficult situations.



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 Communication Skills  
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