

Turn Enemies Into Allies

The Art of Peace in the Workplace

Judy Ringer

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“An essential addition to the conflict resolution toolkit.”

—Marshall Goldsmith, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Triggers*

“Ringer’s blend of conflict resolution approaches with aikido practices enriches and deepens our understanding of human interaction.” —Sheila Heen, bestselling coauthor of *Difficult Conversations*

“Clear-cut advice on how to handle workplace conflict from a place of positive energy.”

—Daniel H. Pink, author of *To Sell is Human* and *Drive*

“Judy is a master at helping people to transform conflict into powerful relationships.”

—Thomas Crum, author of *Three Deep Breaths*, *Journey to Center*, and *The Magic of Conflict*

BOOK SYNOPSIS

In today's workplace, where time is a precious commodity, managers, leaders, and HR professionals often believe they don't have the time to help employees navigate conflict. More often than not, however, it takes more time not to address conflict than to constructively intervene.

Turn Enemies Into Allies offers a way of working with clashing employees that is deliberate and systematic—one that draws on the author's expertise in conflict and communication skill building and a decades-long practice in mind-body principles from the martial art aikido.

Following the author's step-by-step guide, you will:

- Acquire the skill and confidence to coach conflicting employees back to a professional, effective working relationship.
- Restore control and peace of mind to the workplace.
- Increase your leadership presence.
- Transform problematic relationships.

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TURN Enemies INTO Allies

THE ART OF PEACE IN THE
WORKPLACE

Conflict Resolution for Leaders, Managers,
and Anyone Stuck in the Middle

JUDY RINGER

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Judy Ringer is the founder of Power & Presence Training and international speaker, coach, and seminar leader, where she brings to life essential conflict skills such as self-management under pressure and appreciation of other viewpoints. Clients include the National Institutes of Health, GE, Sony Corporation, Honda, Frito-Lay, Bose Corporation, TDBanknorth, AthenaHealth, and Wharton Leadership Ventures. Judy lives in Portsmouth, NH where she is also the founder of Portsmouth Aikido.



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A Conversation with Judy Ringer

In the book, you talk about using aikido as a metaphor and teaching tool in your coaching and training. Can you tell us more about aikido and how it can help ordinary people (non-martial artists) deal more effectively with conflict?

The basic premise of aikido is that the attack is a gift of energy. Instead of blocking and punching back, the aikidoist blends with the attack, aligns with it and redirects its power. Resistance is replaced with engagement, with blending. In aikido, we use the attacker's energy without harming him. At the same time, we become aware of the tendency to overreact to opposition, and we learn to remain calm and centered under pressure. These skills, these principles and ways of seeing the world can be used off the mat—in the workplace, and in everyday life.

Can you give us an example of a typical workplace conflict?

Workplace conflict can start anywhere. Conflicts arise from diverse work styles, a misunderstanding of roles, lack of clarity about job descriptions, assuming negative intention—in other words, jumping to conclusions—taking a comment or action too personally. The list is endless.

Most often, though, conflict begins with a communication breakdown. For example, I'm upset with you about something, but instead of speaking with you about my concern, I avoid the conversation or talk to someone else about it—maybe many others about it. Office gossip often starts this way. This kind of "water cooler" discourse is so common that it's taken for granted as a mode of communication. Unfortunately, it rarely addresses the real problem and often makes it worse. If we don't address the issue, it usually escalates until it become even more difficult to address.

How does your new book, *Turn Enemies Into Allies: The Art of Peace in the Workplace*, help the manager deal with these conflicts?

Turn Enemies Into Allies offers a way to work with clashing employees that is deliberate and systematic—one that draws on best practices in conflict and communication skill building and mind-body principles from aikido. I began writing the book after seeing many managers and supervisors struggle as they tried to help two important employees untangle a conflict that may have started months or years before.

Don't these kinds of interventions take time though? Most managers are already time deprived. Doesn't conflict take time to resolve?

You're right—in today's workplace time is a precious commodity, and... in my experience (and probably yours if you think about it),

more often than not it takes more time not to address conflict than to constructively intervene. Managers lose endless time in lost productivity and lackluster teamwork due to unresolved conflict. Not to mention their own sleepless nights and growing resistance to the people involved.

So let's say you're a manager and you have two employees who are not working well together, and it's affecting morale, productivity or efficiency? What is the first step?

The first step is to manage yourself. True power in conflict problem solving begins with you, whether you're in the conflict yourself or helping or coaching others in the process. If you're managing the employees in conflict, you'll only be able to help them if you enter the arena with a calm, centered, positive outlook. In aikido, on the mat, it's easier to see. I position my body in relation to my partner so that it is easy for me to move him. Off the mat, I do the same thing. I center myself and gain control of me so that I can influence the situation toward a useful outcome.

One of the concepts you write extensively about is the practice of centering. What is center? How do you become centered, and can you stay there, can you remain in that state?

When I talk about center, I'm talking about an integrated mind-body state that affects how we interact with our environment. It's a condition of emotional and physical balance, a way of being in the world. Some say it's an attitude toward life. When we're centered, we're aware, calm, and connected to our environment. We're better able to manage our life energy and the energy we receive from others.

How does a person center themselves, especially in a conflict—an environment that is usually anything but calm?

The experience of the centered state is different for each of us. It could be a physical sensation of having both feet planted firmly on the ground; a relaxed, energized posture; perhaps a thought—*I can handle this. Everything will be fine*—comes into your mind; or a picture of a relaxing scene (mountains, beach, forest), or someone you love. There are many paths to center.

If the environment is not calm, it's especially helpful to bring yourself back to the centered state, where you find a quiet stillness at your core. You breathe low into your abdomen, acknowledge the chaos, and focus on your breath or your centering thought. Center allows you to be with the chaos in a calm, easy way. You realize you can't control the outer world. But you can accept that it exists and control how you engage it.



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Talking Points for Judy Ringer, *Turn Enemies Into Allies*

- A template and set of practices for managers to acquire the skill and confidence to coach conflicting employees back to a professional, effective working relationship.
- A “how to” book for managers, leaders, HR professionals, and anyone stuck in the middle of an employee conflict that will foster ability to:
 - Restore control and peace of mind in the workplace.
 - Increase leadership power and presence.
 - Transform problematic relationships.
 - Help key players with a personality conflict find mutual ground.
 - Manage self in order to manage others in conflict.
 - Raise awareness of assumptions and support a positive outcome.
 - Work with and overcome a fear of conflict.
- A four-phase model and six key skills to manage coworker conflict that’s interfering with productivity.
- Aikido as metaphor and method for calming coworker conflict.
- Case studies and stories on successful conflict resolution in the workplace.
- A martial artist’s view on how to transform problematic relationships one step at a time.
- Mental, physical and verbal practices to use before, during and after the intervention.

