



## Taking Myself Too Seriously: Suggestions for Reclaiming Perspective

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

–William James  
19th Century American psychologist and philosopher

I've noticed I often take my work, my life, and myself way too seriously. I blow events out of proportion, demand perfection, and generally behave as if my needs are at the center of everything.

I agonize over small decisions, worry about personal interactions, wrestle with each word of a simple e-mail, and wake up at night with my heart pounding in anticipation of tomorrow's presentation or with angst about what happened today. Was that good enough? What if the technical equipment breaks down? Why did I say THAT?! The minutest detail is not too small to escape scrutiny when I'm in this frame of mind - when life becomes very, very serious.

When this happens I lose my self, my center, and my perspective. I step out of the precious present moment and into anxiety about the future or the past. I forget that there's nothing I can control except right now, right here, this moment and my availability to it.

Happily, remembering this personal truth is what shifts me back into the present. I begin to breathe again and slip seamlessly into the realization that right now, at this moment, I am okay. Sanity returns as I focus on what is at hand.

## Vibrant and Joyful

I practice a martial art called aikido, whose flowing and graceful movements belie the power behind them. Aikido is based on principles such as centered response and utilization of energy, and it has practical applications in the world of conflict resolution and self-management. Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido, called it the Art of Peace, and said that we must "always practice the Art of Peace in a vibrant and joyful manner." Aikidoists try to remember this as we throw each other around the mat, smiling and having fun while we work to perfect our technique.

As we push on into the first decade of this new century, it is likely that life will become even more complex than it already is.

Here are some suggestions that might help when you become separated from your perspective:

- Acknowledge - Often all it takes to change your current stressed out state is to notice it. As you bring your awareness back to the present moment, you regain a sense of perspective and possibility.
- Center - Breathe. Smile. Be.
- Call someone and talk about it, better yet laugh about it.
- Read a poem.
- Listen to music.
- Take a walk or go for a run.
- Dream up some practices of your own

Use your growing awareness to lighten up, smile, live and love in a vibrant and joyful manner. And stop taking yourself so seriously!

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**About the Author:** Judy Ringer is the author of *Turn Enemies Into Allies: The Art of Peace in the Workplace*. She provides conflict and communication skills training based on mind/body principles from the martial art aikido, in which she holds a third-degree black belt. Employing best practice communication models, Judy brings to life key concepts such as self-management under pressure and appreciation of other viewpoints.

Judy is also the author of *Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict*, and three CDs: *Managing Conflict in the Workplace*, *Simple Gifts: Making the Most of Life's Ki Moments*, and *This Little Light: The Gift of Christmas*, all of which can be found on her website [www. JudyRinger.com](http://www.JudyRinger.com), or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

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