

**M A S T E R I N G**  
**RESPECTFUL**  
**CONFRONTATION**

**BY Joe WESTON**

**A Guide to Personal Freedom and  
Empowered, Collaborative Engagement**

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*“For so long, I saw myself as the victim. I wasn’t living my life. Life was living me. Through Respectful Confrontation, I now see how I contribute to my own unhappiness. I am looking at aspects of myself I have avoided. I actually feel happy. Who would have thought that the one person I needed to confront the most was me!”*



# COURAGEOUS SELF-REFLECTION

The first part of the practice focuses on the development of the respectful, responsible, and powerful self.

Throughout history, most martial arts were practiced as a way to alleviate violence, as well as being a spiritual practice, and a path to self-realization. Morihei Ueshiba, founder of the martial art Aikido, said, "The purpose of training is to tighten up the slack, toughen the body, and polish the spirit." This challenging path is an inward journey and one of deep contemplation, skill, endurance, and courage.

Ueshiba goes on to say, "There are no contests in the Art of Peace. Defeat means to defeat the mind of contention that we harbor within." There are many accounts of great teachers encouraging their students to embark on the path within. According to Buddhism and other Eastern philoso-

phies, the state of enlightenment, or liberation, is already a part of your consciousness. It is up to you to find it within the depths of your mind. Buddha said, "Look within. Be still. Free from fear and attachment. Know the sweet joy of living in the way." Similarly, Jesus said: "Neither shall they say, lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you."

To overcome your own internal enemies, like fear, hate, anger, grief, jealousy, violence, prejudice, and confusion, is viewed by many to be the true noble fight. Not everyone is ready for this path within. Most of us give up, get frightened or get bored to name a few possibilities. This is further reiterated by Angel Kyodo Williams, a contemporary, innovative, spiritual activist and author of books like "Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace," who says, "The most frightening thing people can do is to take an honest look at themselves and see themselves in a truthful way."

On this sacred journey, you come across parts of yourself that you'd rather not see and feel or parts that have been conveniently buried or suppressed. It is a painful process to see all of you—the pleasant parts and the less pleasant parts. Courageous Self-Reflection brings these parts out into the light. When you see these hidden parts, you actually see that some of them are not so bad or scary. They are actually very interesting!

Think about it. If you only present the "nice" parts of you, you become very shallow, flat, and boring. Think of a painter and her palette of colors. If she only uses colors like pink, light yellow, and light blue, then she is limited to creating nice and simple art. Imagine a palette that also includes deep red, black, purple, and dark green. Suddenly, the possibilities are endless for creating very rich and deep paintings. Your life is the same. The only way to live a full, rich, and fulfilled life is to use all of who you are, the lighter parts and the darker parts, *in a balanced and controlled way*.

When you find this balance, free of denial and reactive behavior, you

tap into your true power. In order to get to this point, you have to tread through your fear, anger, sorrow, desire, insecurities, and viewpoints.

The Practice of Developing the Respectful Self offers ways for you to start waking up again and to come out of numbness and remember what it feels like to be alive, content, energized, and empowered. You will experience yourself in a new way. This can be uncomfortable, maybe even frightening.

With Courageous Self-Reflection, you have the opportunity to reframe many viewpoints and unexamined assumptions that keep you from living the life you want to live. You also get the chance to take a journey of self-discovery to feel, in a real way, who you are in your true power. Then you can walk through the world as a peaceful member of society using your skills and wisdom to foster peace, respect, and cooperation.

## THE POWER OF MOTIVATION AND TAKING AN OATH

Since the process of learning a new discipline is arduous— filled with many challenges and distractions— setting a clear goal, knowing your motivation, and actually making an oath to follow through is essential.



- *Why are you reading this book?*
- *What interests you about Respectful Confrontation?*
- *Is it for your personal fulfillment?*
- *Do you desire to have more of an impact in the world and success in what you do?*
- *Are you interested in improving your personal relationships?*
- *Are you ready to commit to influencing society on a larger scale?*



Lasting change can happen if each individual commits to being mindful of their own actions and finding ways to be a positive influence on others. When you choose to overcome your own reactive behavior and find creative ways to empower others, you will contribute to positive change in your relationships with your family, with your friends, at work, in your neighborhood, and in the larger community. Not only will you have a large impact on your surroundings, but you will also find inner peace, personal fulfillment, and a sense that your life has purpose and meaning.

This process starts with finding the proper motivation and committing to a goal. You tap into an enormous power when you take an oath and commit to a daily practice. It provides focus, direction, confidence, and conviction, and keeps you on track through tough and challenging times.

Many of us struggle to find ways to feel satisfaction and purpose. We flit from one teaching to another, searching for the one thing that will offer us inner peace and happiness. We allow our personal beliefs to be swayed by those with the loudest voices, without taking the time to see what we truly value. You get a glimpse into your deepest and highest self when you clarify for yourself what you hold dear and what is important to you.



- *What are you willing to stand up for?*
- *What is most precious to you?*
- *What values resonate with you?*
- *What are you prepared to do to create more peace in your life and live with purpose, satisfaction, and confidence?*

Each one of us will respond differently to these questions. That is

what makes us unique and ultimately holds the clues to what will bring us our deepest satisfaction.

Clarifying your values is an essential step in making life choices and tapping into your own innate wisdom and energy. When you make choices based on your personal values, you radiate confidence and peace and inspire others. Doubt, insecurity, and fear fall away and you attract success, achievement, and well-being.

The following exercise will help you establish what your true values are as well as clarify your own personal motivation for generating more peace, personal fulfillment, and cooperation in your life. It will also help you shed light on your motivation for reading this book, making the experience more substantial and beneficial.



- *Are you interested in Respectful Confrontation to improve yourself or your relationships with your friends, family, and community?*
- *Would you like to commit to the oath of the Respectful Confronter?*
- *Are you ready to engage with everyone you encounter in an open-hearted way?*

It is important to be honest with yourself and base your decision on what you feel motivated to do in your heart as well as look at what you are capable of at this moment. Your oath can change after a time as you feel more confident to take on more responsibility. St. Francis of Assisi, thirteenth century Catholic friar and founder of the Franciscan Order said, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." The choice to work on yourself and to take personal responsibility for your own behavior and actions makes an enormous contribution to shifting our society in a positive way.



EXERCISE

## CLARIFYING VALUES AND TAKING A PERSONAL OATH

BEFORE YOU START THIS EXERCISE, REVIEW  
"HOW TO USE THIS BOOK" ON PAGE 23

### PRELIMINARY STEPS

(see APPENDIX ONE on page 281 for details)

- ▷ **Choose a good time and location**
- ▷ **Start with the basic sitting pose**
- ▷ **Bring your attention to your center**
- ▷ **Place all of your attention on your breath**

### MAIN STEPS

- ▶ **Get some paper or a journal and a pen**

If you enjoy drawing, you may want to get pens of different colors.

- ▶ **Take a look at the following list and read through each item**

Notice how each value makes you feel. Do you have any connection with the value? Did you feel some charge when you read it? Do you find that value important to you? Make notes.

## VALUES

---

ACCOMPLISHMENT/SUCCESS	EQUALITY	LOYALTY
ACCOUNTABILITY	FAITH	MONEY
ACCURACY	FAMILY	PEACE/NON-VIOLENCE
BEAUTY	FREEDOM	PLEASURE
CALM	FRIENDSHIP	POWER
CHALLENGE	FUN	PROSPERITY/WEALTH
COLLABORATION	HARD WORK	SERVICE
COMMUNITY	INDEPENDENCE	SIMPLICITY
COMPETITION	INNOVATION	SKILL
CREATIVITY	JUSTICE	STATUS
DELIGHT IN BEING/JOY	KNOWLEDGE	TRADITION
DISCIPLINE	LEADERSHIP	TRUTH
EFFICIENCY	LOVE/ROMANCE	WISDOM

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► **Choose ten values from the list**

After reading through this list, decide which of these values resonate with you the most. Which ones get you excited and energized?

Which ones are you willing to stand up for if you feel they are being threatened or violated? Which ones inspire your creativity? Write these ten values in your journal. Take your time before you decide.

► **Choose five values from your list of ten**

Now we are getting deeper into the core of who you are. Of these ten values, which would you say are your top five? Write these five values in your journal. Take your time before you decide.

► **Choose three values from your list of five**

Of these five, which would you say are your three highest values? Write these three values in your journal. Once again, take your time before you decide.

Once you have your three top values, add them to the empty spaces in the statement below. Now read the statement to yourself a few times, either silently or out loud. Notice what you are feeling when you read it. Write your own statement if the wording I offer doesn't work for you.

.....  
*"I realize that I have the fortunate circumstances in my life to ensure that I can bring purpose and meaning to my time here on this planet. I will find creative ways to bring about more personal fulfillment and harmony within myself, and empowerment to others, by tapping into my unique abilities and stemming from my core values of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."*

*I commit to living in a way that will create the most positive influence on myself and others, fostering peace, education, generosity, human rights, respect, a healthy environment, and equality for all citizens. I commit to practicing Respectful Confrontation in a skillful and creative way."*  
.....

► **Write this statement in your journal or on a piece of paper**

Write it a number of times as a way to get familiar with it. Write it on a large piece of paper and hang it up where you can see it. You may want to memorize it.

► **Be silent, breathe, and focus on this oath**

Notice what happens when you contemplate your highest values — the core of who you are—and this personal oath. Notice the feelings that arise. Notice the energy that flows. Allow yourself to feel the power when you connect with your highest values, clear intention, and purpose.

**CLOSING STEPS**

(see APPENDIX ONE on page 283 for details)

- ▷ **Shake out and stretch your legs**
- ▷ **Make notes on what you have discovered**



**TIPS**

There is no right or wrong way to do this exercise. Listen to your heart and aspects of yourself will be revealed. Making decisions in your life should be easy once you are clear about what you value most. All you need to do is ask if the choices you make align with your chosen values. What are you doing with your time, habits, career choices, and other aspects of your life? Look at the people you hang out with. Choosing to do things and be with people who align with your values will energize you and lead you to fulfillment and satisfaction.

This is your personal declaration and oath. When you find yourself getting distracted, doubting your own abilities or losing interest in this process and these practices, go back to your declaration and allow it to energize and inspire you to get back on track.



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*"I have always had great ideas and started new projects. But none of them ever went anywhere. I would try to connect with people, without success. Then I got centered and made it a point to stay present. I am now following through. And the funny thing is that people are noticing me more without me having to try!"*



# THE POWER OF PRESENCE AND CENTEREDNESS

Now that you have established a clear motivation, it's time to start doing some work on yourself. This starts with centering yourself and becoming present. When you choose to navigate the bumpy, inward path, as well as engage with others in an openhearted way, it is important to stay connected to yourself, to stay open to what is happening at that moment, and also find your way back to your core when you get distracted or thrown off.

Having your body in a particular place is one level of presence. For example, that's what I said in school when the teacher called my name:

*"Joe?"*

*"Present."*

But was I really present? My body may have been there. But where



were my thoughts? Was I aware of the fly on the wall? Did I notice that I was hungry? That Sandra was trying to pass me a note? Or that I was happy or sad?

Being fully present and centered connects you to all of yourself—your physical body, emotions, sensations, and thoughts—and opens you to a strong awareness of where you are and what is happening around you.

When centered, you walk through life in a conscious way ready to take advantage of opportunities and mindfully avoid those things that are harmful or distracting. You easily assert yourself and also react quickly to any and all input that comes your way. All of your actions come from your core—leading to balance, flow, and integration. You are both strong and graceful.

You can see how this presence and centeredness is essential for succeeding in different areas of your life: in work, relationships, personal growth, and maintaining your health. People in high-stress jobs, like teachers and nurses, will have more ease and longevity in their career if they maintain a level of centeredness. This also applies to parents and students.

You see this in athletes, politicians, and prominent leaders from history, like the Dalai Lama and Martin Luther King, Jr. By remaining centered and fully present in all situations, they were able to overcome distractions and obstacles to achieving their goals.

## **THE CENTER, AWARENESS, AND DEEPER LISTENING**

The center referred to in the Chinese disciplines as the “tan tien” and in the Japanese practices as the “hara”, is located in the core of your body: about three finger-widths below the navel and about one-third of the way into the body from the front.

Even though your center is not a real organ in your body, it definitely has a presence. With many nerves that flow through this area and close to many of your vital organs, it a highly sensitive and active part of you.

This is your place of personal power, personal identity, awareness, creativity, and desire to connect, and where the impulse to take action originates. According to Taoist principles, your center is where you open to awareness and where you perceive things. The cultivation of “coming from your center” in all that you do is the foundation for success in many skills, like sports and dance, and is considered an important part of most martial arts and meditation practices.

When you have developed a strong connection to your center, you tap into your own personal power and creativity, following appropriate impulses with confidence and ease. By placing your attention in your center, you open to deeper levels of noticing and listening.

*Noticing is one of the most valuable tools in self-development, healing, and how you relate to the world.* When you are present and centered, you use a more sophisticated way of listening that includes your ears, your eyes, your whole body, your feelings, and your full experience. Your whole being comes alive. There is a much richer and more detailed world around you and you are a much more intricate being than you may think. All you need to do is take the time to notice. Noticing is also an important element in maintaining peaceful interaction with others. You can't resolve a problem or change a bad habit if you aren't first aware that it is there.

Deeper listening is an essential part of the practice of Respectful Confrontation. By listening in this way, you learn to pick up on subtle signals that go beyond what is heard or spoken. You have the ability to “hear with your heart” and navigate feelings, belief systems, anxiety, and fear. This allows you to make informed decisions that are supported by infor-

mation that goes far beyond the spoken word or what is seen on the surface. This helps you to open to your innate wisdom and also gives you the confidence to take action from a place of conviction.

Have you ever made decisions that were based on a deeper knowing? Have you ever done something that others thought was odd but you knew that it was the right thing to do? Can you hear beyond what someone says and connect with something that is unspoken? This is the result of deeper listening.

What follows are two exercises that familiarize you with your center and help you develop more presence. The more you do these exercises, the quicker they will become healthy, empowering habits.



## EXERCISE GET CENTERED

BEFORE YOU START THIS EXERCISE, REVIEW  
"HOW TO USE THIS BOOK" ON PAGE 23

### PRELIMINARY STEPS

(see APPENDIX ONE on page 281 for details)

- ▷ Choose a good time and location
- ▷ Start with the basic sitting pose or the basic standing pose

### MAIN STEPS

- ▶ Focus on your center

Focus on a spot three finger-widths below your navel, somewhere in the center of your lower belly. Try to see this point with your mind's eye. Notice any sensations and feelings while focusing on your center.

- ▶ Make this point as tangible as possible

Place your index finger in front of your navel. Place all four of your fingers next to each other, resting on your lower belly. Notice where your pinky finger rests and feel that point. From that point, bring your awareness inside your body about one-



third of the way from the front of your abdomen to the back. Keep your focus on this point.

If you are the type of person who works well with images, you may want to visualize an image at this point, like a flower, a ball or anything that will help you to keep connected to this point.

► **Breathe naturally from your center**

Listen to your natural breath and let your belly relax with each breath. Breathe out through your mouth. Notice your belly moving inward towards your spine. Breathe in slowly through your nose without creating any tension. Notice your belly expanding. Hold the breath for a moment and then simply release the breath. There is no need to push out the breath. Just let it pour out of your body. Breathe in fully and breathe out fully. Exert yourself on the inhalation, and practice fully letting go on the exhalation.

Continue to breathe into this area and notice if you feel any sensation. *Don't do anything with what you notice; just take note of how it feels. Let it flow.*

► **Notice when you stop focusing on your center**

Notice as quickly as possible when you get distracted—the quicker, the better. When you realize you are distracted, think of your center, and bring your attention back to it. Keep repeating this process until you come to the end of the exercise.

## **CLOSING STEPS**

(see APPENDIX ONE on page 283 for details)

- ▷ **Shake out and stretch your legs.**
- ▷ **Make notes on what you have discovered.**

## RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE

Start with ten to fifteen minutes. I recommend you do this exercise every day in the beginning. This exercise is the basis for all of the other exercises in this book. Mastering this will make it easier to practice the other exercises. In fact, it is a longer version of the Preliminary Steps for each exercise.



### TIPS

You can do this exercise either standing or sitting. I find it most effective to stand, but if it is difficult for you to stand for a long period of time, do it in a seated position. Or try switching off from one day to the next, standing and sitting, so you get a sense of the subtle differences and keep the exercise from getting tedious. Try doing this exercise while you are at work or with friends. Try staying engaged with others and still focus on your center.

*There is no right way or wrong way to do this.* Be aware of how you experience this exercise. The goal is to increase the amount of time you stay focused on your center and, more importantly, to shorten the amount of time you are distracted. Many of us can go hours before we realize we are not centered and present.

**REMEMBER:** *you are expected to get distracted; the success lies in how quickly you notice it!*



## EXERCISE

# PRESENCE AND DEEPER LISTENING

BEFORE YOU START THIS EXERCISE, REVIEW  
"HOW TO USE THIS BOOK" ON PAGE 23

### PRELIMINARY STEPS

(see APPENDIX ONE on page 281 for details)

- ▷ **Choose a good time and location**
- ▷ **Start with the basic sitting pose**
- ▷ **Bring your attention to your center**
- ▷ **Place all of your attention on your breath**

### MAIN STEPS

#### ▶ **Become aware of yourself**

Start with your body. What kind of sensations do you feel? Then notice your emotions and then your thoughts. There's no need to do anything with this information. All you need to do is *notice*.

#### ▶ **Become aware of your surroundings**

Start with your eyes closed. What do you hear? What do you feel? What do you sense? How do these things influence you? Now open your eyes. What do you see? Be as detailed as possible.

► **Name the things you notice**

Without judging, simply whisper or think the things that come into your awareness, both internally and externally. For instance: *There is tension in my leg. The wind is blowing the curtain. I can smell food cooking. I'm feeling a bit tired.* Do this until you come to the end of the exercise. Don't stop naming things; stay focused on what you notice.

**CLOSING STEPS**

(see APPENDIX ONE on page 283 for details)

- ▷ **Shake out and stretch your legs**
- ▷ **Make notes on what you have discovered**

**RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE**

Start with five minutes, at least three times a week. Add more time as you get more familiar with the process. When you begin to master this exercise, you will become more grounded and aware of what is going on around you.



**TIPS**

One thing that gets in the way of opening to deeper levels of listening is judging the things you see, hear or feel. Judging is different from noticing. When you are listening in the proper way, your thoughts may be something like: *I hear a bird. I feel a breeze. I see a spot on the wall.* Keep those thoughts coming. Don't stop.

If your thoughts sound like this, then you are no longer in the present and noticing what is happening now: *That damn bird is making so much noise. I'm cold, why didn't I turn on the heat?*



*Stupid me. Look at that spot on the wall. The people who live here are slob.* You are judging and throwing yourself into the past and future, and avoiding the present. This is what happens when you drop out of present awareness and into your scattered mind.

When your mind wanders, get back to listening to what is around you or within you. If you start to get discouraged, bored or distracted, don't judge yourself. Acknowledge that those things are part of the present moment and worth noticing.

This exercise helps you to stay engaged with the present moment and develop sensitivity to what is unfolding around you so you can quickly and wisely take action.

Although they may seem simple, these exercises have enormous power. If you can find five to ten minutes a day to do them, you will notice that your life will change. You will feel safer and more at home in the world, and you will feel less distracted and find that you can get things done in a quicker, more efficient way. You will have less tension, aches, and pains, and feel generally happier and lighter. You will learn to trust your intuition more and connect with others more easily.

## PRELIMINARY STEPS

► **Choose a good time and location**

Do this exercise when you are alone, or around people who can respect your need for focus and silence. Find a place to do this where there is enough space around you.

► **If you choose to start with the basic sitting pose**

Sit in a comfortable way. Your spine is vertical and relaxed (either sitting on a pillow on the floor with legs crossed, or sitting at the edge of a chair, feet flat on the floor); your breath is relaxed, steady and deep; your eyes are closed or partially closed looking down towards the ground; your shoulders and jaw are relaxed; your hands are resting on your knees or in your lap. This basic way of sitting allows energy to flow freely and in the long run can promote good health, looser joints, and more vitality. Hold this pose for a few minutes.





► **If you choose to start with the basic standing pose**

Stand with your feet apart, about the width of your hips. Keep your whole body relaxed and flexible. Bend your knees slightly. Tilt your tailbone slightly towards the front of your body. Lengthen your spine in a soft way. Lift your head lightly, and tuck your chin towards your chest. Your mouth and eyes are slightly open. This basic way of standing allows energy to flow freely and in the long run can promote good health, looser joints, and more vitality. Hold this pose for a few minutes.



► **Bring your attention to your center**

Focus on a spot three finger-widths below your navel, somewhere in the center of your lower belly. Try to see this point with your mind's eye and

focus on it for a period of time. If you get distracted during the exercise, bring your attention back to your center to get focused.

▶ **Place all of your attention on your breath**

From your center, become aware of your breath. Breathe into your center and belly. This simple task helps you to come more into alignment with yourself and come more into the present. Breathe naturally with as little effort as possible. There is no need to change your breath. Simply notice.

## **CLOSING STEPS**

▶ **Shake out and stretch your legs**

Stretch and shake out any tension you have acquired. You may not be doing a lot of movement, but the exercise requires a lot of exertion and energy.

▶ **Makes notes**

In order to see your progress and learn from this practice, make some notes. Don't judge yourself, only evaluate. Write down how it went and what happened. Did you learn anything new? Did you come across a new challenge? Are you seeing yourself in a new way? Make a note about how you will approach the exercise next time around.

## ABOUT JOE WESTON

Joe Weston is renowned in the United States and Europe as a workshop facilitator, a consultant, writer, life coach, creative social activist, and as an advocate for peace. He is the founder and presenter of Respectful Confrontation workshops and lectures.

Weston is a frequent volunteer for the Liberation Prison Project, where he teaches Buddhism to prison inmates. He is also the founder of Heartwalker Studio and the Heartwalker Peace Project, initiating Heartwalks (peace rallies in various cities with routes in the shape of a heart) and peace vigils, thereby creating opportunities for connection, discussion, and creative collaboration.

Born and educated in New York, Weston lived in Amsterdam for seventeen years and now lives in the U.S. He graduated from Hofstra University with an honors degree in Drama and Literature. Weston brings a

wealth of insight to his work based on many teachings, including Tai Chi Chuan and a variety of spiritual traditions—plus his extensive experience in theater and organizational trainings. [www.joeweston.com](http://www.joeweston.com)

## **RESPECTFUL CONFRONTATION® WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES**

Respectful Confrontation trainings are designed for corporations, organizations, government bodies and for individuals who seek lasting change in the areas of communication, productivity, time and stress management, impactful leadership, empowerment, personal freedom, and fulfillment.

Presented to a clientele around the world, these personal, intensive trainings and private consultations are engines of transformation, resulting in the attainment of true power that leads to self-confidence and peaceful interactions with others.

The Respectful Confrontation experience is unique because it goes beyond theories, incorporating interactive, dynamic exercises and easy-to-apply tools. Participants gain deep insight into themselves and greatly enhanced relationships with others, along with greater ease in tackling challenging situations with integrity and understanding.

### **Benefits for your company:**

- *Enhanced communication skills, increased productivity, and efficiency*
- *Leadership improvement as related to conflict resolution, problem-solving, and relationships with employees*
- *Understanding and implementation of a creative, productive work culture*
- *Team-building and collaboration*
- *Better time and stress management, mediation, and negotiation*