

## The Power of Practice Under Pressure

By Jill Robinson, ITP Mastery teacher

Again and again in our ITP practice we are reminded, “our body is a teacher.” It is what makes the integral and transformative components of the practice truly life changing. By understanding the connection to our body, mind, heart and soul, we are able to tune in to our experience during moments of balance, as well as moments when we are consciously or unconsciously experiencing times of stress and extreme pressure. Having this awareness allows us to make course corrections along the way, and ultimately, to stay on the path to realizing our full potential.

This isn't an easy journey. In a time when it can seem we are living in a pressure cooker of global conflict and extreme standards of personal perfection, being able to balance and center and call on a community of supportive ITP practitioners is vital. By engaging with this practice we are building our “tool box” for life's adventure, and for me, there is one exercise in particular that was that sort of “aha” moment that demonstrated the profound effect ITP would have on my daily life.



I was visiting for one of my first Mastery weekend experiences in California, and our group was partnering up for a Leonard Energy Training exercise called the “Power of Relaxation: A Change of Context.” Inspired by the teachings of Aikido, this exercise focuses on the powerful transformation that can occur when we change our context within a stressful or high-pressure situation to be one of relaxed power rather than rigidity and resistance.

The exercise demonstrates this concept by having partner A apply gentle force to partner B's arm, gradually increasing the pressure in an attempt to bend their arm at the elbow. During this exercise, partner B is to first resist the pressure by being rigid. The second run-through has partner B ground and center, and with a change in context, relax into a sense of power.

The first few times I experienced this exercise, I will admit I had a hard time grasping the idea of finding strength in what seemed to be a contradictory reaction. I held on to my old tendencies when struggling with pressure. I set my jaw, tensed all my muscles and relied on my strength of will and stubbornness to hold steady. While outwardly this seemed to be effective in keeping my arm from dropping from the pressure of my partner's force, in the end it left me tired, tense and disconnected.

Then on the final try, it all clicked. That great teacher, our own body, gave me a glimpse of how it feels to ground deep into the earth energetically and feel a warmth of strength and gentle power rise up through my legs, center and through my arm. I actually enjoyed this experience! This change of context not only felt energizing, I felt connected to the same partner that was “pressuring” me. My mind raced in excitement. What if I applied this idea to my daily life at work



and in relationships? What started as a simple exercise has been a transformative guidepost in my daily interactions ever since.

This is the power of practice, the importance of practicing. ITP reminds us of the critical importance of ongoing awareness of our own breath, finding our center and the empowering choice to expand our attention and perspective in moments of stress. In a time of reactionary commentary, violent eruptions of emotion and daily newsfeeds reminding us of extreme pressures we all face financially, politically, personally and within a career, taking a moment to relax into our power and change our perspective for a moment could be the most revolutionary act we could employ.

In whatever way we define “extreme pressure,” our ongoing practice is an ever-present tool-kit for these moments. What I have come to realize, is that this practice is transformative because we do it for the sake of doing it, not for a quick fix solution in times of crisis. (Although, when life leaves me flailing out of balance, it is ITP that helps me find my center again and again.)

Despite extremely challenging times, one of the most powerful components of this practice is remembering to honor the “peace and joy of existence itself, the invisible connections that join us with all beings, with all the universe, with the miracle of the life we are given.” ITP is not a practice in avoiding life’s uncomfortable moments and pressure situations; it is an ongoing effort to be able to gracefully “take the hit as a gift.”