



**The 18th Biennial International Conference
Strength through Diversity:
Creating One Breastfeeding World
Hilton San Francisco & Towers
San Francisco, California USA
July 3 - 6, 2003**

**Bring Out the Best in Your Child and Yourself –
Practical Suggestions for Remaining Calm and
Centered While Dealing with Our Children**

Ilene Val-Essen, PhD

Step Two:

Cross the Bridge to the Centered Self

Step two provides the magical key for successful parenting. In fact, *if you were to learn only one thing from this course, Step Two would be the most valuable.* Why? Because it will help you to become free of the destructive behavior of the subpersonality — the real troublemaker in the parent-child relationship. And it will give you greater access to a far more effective part of yourself: your *centered self*. Each time you move across that bridge, you strengthen your ability to cross it again — to leave the subpersonality behind and act from center. A world of possibilities is then open to you: the ability to remain calm and think clearly, to access assertive and communication skills and much more. Step Two opens the way for you to grow beyond the lower self and become the parent you want to be.

Step two consists of two exercises: the Relaxation Exercise and the Bridge Exercise. The Relaxation Exercise helps you relax and prepares you for the Bridge Exercise. Practiced daily, it helps you reduce tension and *stay* more relaxed and calm so that, over time, you are less and less likely to “boil over.” The Bridge Exercise, also practiced daily, helps you remember you have choice. When you recognize the subpersonality is on stage, you don’t have to let it continue. You’re much more than your lower self. You can *choose* how you act, feel and think.

When And Where To Do The Exercises

It’s most important to do the exercises daily. Here’s the ideal:

- The earlier in the day, the better.
- At the same time each day.
- In a comfortable and quiet place.

The Relaxation Exercise

The benefits:

- Relaxes your body and mind; helps you to remain calm.
- Helps you transform a negative frame of mind into a positive one; reminds you that you can alter your moods.
- Prepares you for the Bridge Exercise.

Like daily physical training, this exercise builds strength; in this case it is a form of psychological strength. The more you practice, the more you strengthen your ability to handle stress. Daily practice helps you deepen your sense of inner peace and harmony. Then, when confronted with stress, you're more able to stay relaxed and centered.

About The Relaxation Exercise

This exercise combines two well-proven relaxation techniques, used successfully by athletes, people in stress-reduction programs and pain management clinics. Both techniques — focusing on your breath and visualization — create measurable changes in the human body.

Here's how the exercise works: many of us experience tension in the gut or "solar plexus" area. We use expressions like "My stomach is in knots" or "Butterflies in my stomach." This exercise uses relaxation and the power of imagination to transform that energy. Breathing deeply, we visualize moving the energy up an imaginary elevator, and transforming its quality.

Our minds are extremely sensitive to suggestion, especially in visual form. That attribute can help us create practical and useful results. Remember that it's not necessary to *believe* anything. All you need to do, for the time of the exercise, is to act *as if* the image is real.

Directions for the *Relaxation Exercise* are on page 48.

The Bridge Exercise

The Relaxation Exercise helps you to become calm and adopt a positive frame of mind. That prepares you for the next step: to gain perspective — to see your options more clearly.

The Bridge Exercise helps you see that you have a choice; you can choose to be centered. It allows you to “get outside yourself” — to switch to the director’s point of view. From that perspective you can see if the subpersonality is on stage (or in the wings). Then you *have a choice*: you can invite a different part of yourself on stage — the centered self. As you know, that’s the part of you that is competent and skilled.

The exercise is called the Bridge because it provides a mental “bridge” which helps you to move from the lower self to the centered self. Once again, this exercise makes use of the powers of imagination and visualization, which have potent and measurable effects on the human mind.

How It Works — The Benefits

We’ve all had the experience of being out of control and not realizing it at the time. Then, at some point, we recognize what’s happening and say to ourselves, “Uh, oh; I’m over the edge.” It’s as if *one* part of us is acting out while *another* part is able to watch it happen. The Bridge Exercise helps us gain this all-important “dual awareness.” *Without awareness change is not possible.*

Directions for the *Bridge Exercise* follow the *Relaxation Exercise*.

The Relaxation Exercise

Preparation:

Find a comfortable sitting position: legs crossed or placed evenly on the floor. Spine erect, eyes closed.

Step 1: *Inhale slowly for 6 counts.* As you breathe in, visualize lifting tension from your solar plexus in an imaginary elevator, located just behind your body, parallel with your spinal cord. Raise this energy up to the area of the loving heart — and then into the wise head.

Step 2: *Hold your breath for 8 counts.* Imagine the energies from the heart and head fusing, filling the head with the energy of love and wisdom.

Step 3: *Exhale for 6 counts.* Allow the energy of loving wisdom to radiate out through the space between the eyebrows, filling the room with calm and tranquility.

Step 4: *Pause for 8 counts.* Affirm what you did: you raised tension-filled energy from the solar plexus, lifting it in the imaginary elevator — past the loving heart and into the wise head. Through this action you created the relaxed energy of loving wisdom. You then radiated that energy from the area between the eyebrows, filling the room with calm and tranquility.

The exercise is complete when it is repeated three times.

Time Required:

28 seconds per cycle

X 3 cycles

84 SECONDS TOTAL (about 1.5 minutes)

The Bridge Exercise

Purpose: To recognize that you are more than the lower self — and that you have the choice to identify with the centered self.

Preparation: The Relaxation Exercise.

Directions: Recall the description of the lower self.
Use that information to practice this exercise silently.

Step 1: Describe the *physical appearance* and *actions* of the lower self.

Affirm to yourself,

*I am more than the appearance and actions
of the lower self.
I am the centered self.
I choose how I act.*

Step 2: Describe the *feelings* of the lower self.

Affirm to yourself,

*I am more than the feelings of the lower self.
I am the centered self.
I choose how I feel.*

Step 3: Describe the *thoughts* of the lower self.

Affirm to yourself,

*I am more than the thoughts of the lower self.
I am the centered self.
I choose how I think.*

Final Step: Affirm who you are and the choices you have.

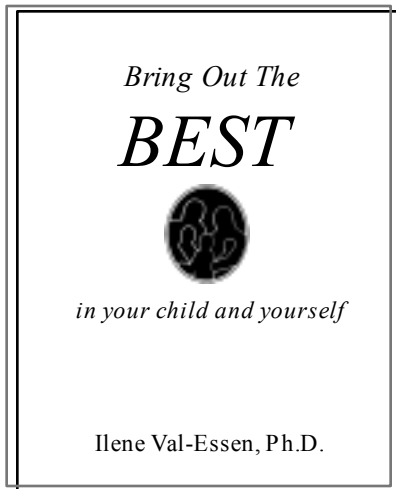
*I am the centered self.
I choose how I act, feel and think.*

© 1996 by Ilene Val-Essen, Ph.D. All rights reserved.

Quality Parenting™, 4909 St. Louis Court, Culver City, CA 90230-4317

E-mail: ivalessen@aol.com, Telephone: (866) LUV KIDS (866) 588-5437, FAX: (310) 839-1614

A new kind of book for parents...



How to

*create an environment
that brings out the best*

What's UNIQUE about this book?

The first book to...

- Help parents view children's negative behavior as a cry for help — “Help me learn a better way to meet my needs.”
- Give parents a *new way of seeing* their relationship: Children want to develop their highest potentials — and they depend on us to help them.
- Help parents discover why they sometimes “lose it” and provide a powerful Three-Step Process to help them become calm and remain centered more often.
- Show parents, through a systematic approach, how to recognize and bring out the best in their children and teens — discover the best within themselves.

Dr. Val-Essen has worked with families and children as a psychotherapist and parent educator during the past twenty years. Her *Quality ParentingSM* program is taught in the US and Europe. This book is based on that unique approach.

Book can be ordered through the LLLI catalogue. Website: www.lalecheleague.org or by email: LLLI@lli.org or orderdepartment@lli.org, #903-7, \$20.00

If you have any questions, feel free to call Ilene Val-Essen, toll free at
(866) LUV KIDS, (866) 588-5437