



## Women and Power

### Questions for reflection:

1. What, if anything, distinguishes women's leadership?
2. What three women inspire you with their leadership? What qualities do they demonstrate?
3. What is "domination"? What is "dominion"?
4. If you were the most powerful woman in your company or community or nation, what would you do?

### Your presence as a leader:

Remember a time when you've shown yourself and the world just how gutsy you can be. A time when you displayed courage, self-assurance, and a can-do attitude. A time when you demonstrated leadership.

Whatever the situation, chances are you were standing proudly, walking with dignity, speaking with clarity and authority, looking people right in the eye.

Step right into that experience—see what you're seeing then, hear what you're hearing then. What are you saying to yourself? How are you speaking to others?

Feel how your body is feeling. How are you carrying yourself? What's the position of your head? Shoulders? Hips? Knees? Feet? How are you breathing?

This is you, a gutsy woman, a leader. This is how you personally embody the attributes of leadership.

Now imagine yourself in a situation that calls for your leadership. See what you see as you survey the scene. Feel what you feel as you embody the attributes leadership in your own unique way.

Where are you directing your gaze? What are you saying to yourself? How are you speaking to others? How are you carrying yourself? Notice how you're holding your head and shoulders. How are you positioning your hips and your feet? How are you breathing?

As you embody the attributes of leadership, see and hear the impact that your presence makes on the people and things around you.

## **As you live and breathe:**

The Centering Breath is a pattern of breathing fully and deeply from your body's center, your belly. (If you have a serious medical condition, consult with your physician to ensure the suitability of even this gentle breathing pattern for you. Abdominal breathing may not be appropriate, for example, if you have hypoglycemia, diabetes, or kidney disease.)

### Centering Breath

- a. Give yourself room to breathe. Adjust your clothes and your posture to allow your belly to move out and in easily with your breath. Unhitch your waistband, loosen your belt, unzip your zipper. Place your palms on your lower abdomen.
- b. Notice what's happening underneath your hands. You might already sense a wavelike motion, your belly expanding away from your spine as you inhale and then sinking back toward your spine as you exhale.
- c. If you don't see or sense any movement, that's okay. You can jump-start the process by actively pulling your belly in toward your spine as you exhale. Then release the contraction and allow your belly to relax. As it expands naturally — you don't need to push it outward — your belly draws the breath in, beginning the inhalation.
- d. Continue, keeping your mouth closed, allowing the breath to move evenly through your nose.
- e. Feel the gentle rhythm, allowing your belly to expand and draw the breath in, and then sink back toward your spine and send the breath out. You might imagine that your belly contains a beautiful balloon. With each inhalation, the balloon fills with breath and your hands ride with your belly away from your spine. With each exhalation, the balloon empties; your hands ride with your belly back in toward your spine.
- f. Continue observing your belly and your breathing for ten or more cycles of breath.
- g. Gradually return your attention to your whole body and to the present moment. What do you notice and feel? What images and sensations have entered your awareness?

### Activate Your Self-Assurance

- a. Rest your palms lightly on your lower abdomen. Allow your breath to deepen into your belly and enter into the Centering Breath.
- b. As you inhale, imagine drawing the breath in through the crown of your head as a lovely golden glow, letting the breath stream down and fill your belly with warmth and light.
- c. As you begin to exhale, feel and see the breath rising from your body's center up along the midline of your body. See and feel the breath rising up from your body's center to the area of your solar plexus, a few inches below the base of your ribs. Exhale the breath through the front and back of your body at this place as a bright yellow light.
- d. Continue this breathing pattern for ten to twenty cycles of the breath.
5. Gradually return your attention to your whole body and to the present moment. What do you notice and feel? What images and sensations have entered your awareness?

## Women's economic muscle:

1. Women make more than 85% of consumer purchases. Women make 50% or more of purchases in categories such as cars, electronics, computers, and health care.

Women's annual consumer spending is \$3.7 trillion. Women's annual business spending is \$1.5 trillion. Women influence the purchase of more than 95% of total goods and services. Women's choices determine two-thirds of the \$3 trillion spent in the United States each year.

source: Andrea Learned, "The Six Costliest Mistakes You Can Make in Marketing to Women," inc.com, Jan 2003; Jill Fallon, "Why Women of a Certain Age are the #1 Marketing Opportunity for Financial Advisors," Estate Legacy Vaults, 2004; Bernice Kanner, *Pocketbook Power*, McGraw-Hill, 2004

2. Nearly 40% of women have household annual incomes ranging between \$50,000 and \$100,000. More than 10% of women have household annual incomes exceeding \$100,000.  
source: Joanne Cleaver, "What women want," *Entrepreneur*, Feb 2004
3. Women own more than 40% of the nation's small businesses. Women employ 35% more people in the United States alone than the Fortune 500 companies do worldwide.  
source: Jill Fallon, Estate Legacy Vaults, 2004
4. Women control or influence 67% of household investments. Women control more than 50% of the private wealth in the United States. Women's wealth will increase as they outlive their husbands by an average of 15 years and inherit their assets.  
source: Jill Fallon, Estate Legacy Vaults, 2004

## Resources:

### books:

Baldwin, Christina. *Calling the Circle: The First and Future Culture*, Bantam, 1998.

Enslar, Eve. *The Good Body*, Villard, 2005.

Gregerman, Alan. *Surrounded By Geniuses*, Sourcebooks, 2007.

Hill, Julia Butterfly. *The Legacy of Luna: The Story of a Tree, a Woman and the Struggle to Save the Redwoods*, HarperOne, 2001.

Noble, Vicki. *Shakti Woman: Feeling Our Fire, Healing Our World*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

Parks, Rosa and Jim Haskins. *Rosa Parks: My Story*, Puffin, 1999.

Sarasohn, Lisa. *The Woman's Belly Book: Finding Your True Center for More Energy, Confidence, and Pleasure*, New World Library, 2006.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*, Vintage, 2007.

### DVD:

Sarasohn, Lisa. *Honoring Your Belly: Dynamic Yoga Moves Activating Your Core Energy*, Self-Health Education, 2000.

websites:

Practical, pleasurable ways to reclaim the wisdom and power concentrated in your body's center

[loveyourbelly.com](http://loveyourbelly.com)

Appreciative Inquiry, a positive approach to organizational change by focusing on the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them

[appreciativeinquiry.case.edu](http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu)

V-Day, a global movement to stop violence against women and girls

[vday.org](http://vday.org)

Woodhull Institute, leadership training and professional development for women

[woodhull.org](http://woodhull.org)

conferences:

Southeastern Women's Conference

Time for Our Power: Women Bringing Change to the World

June 20-22, 2008

Asheville, NC

[timeforourpower.com](http://timeforourpower.com)

Women and Power

annual fall conference

Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, NY

[omega.org](http://omega.org)