

## **FRUITING BODIES IN THE WORLD: INTENDING, RESULTS, AND EVERYONE WE KNOW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Whenever we look for progress in our promises, we look first at our intentions, then at results we recognize as coming directly from those intentions, then at results that have surprised us completely. Tracking these results inspires us to keep using a small set of tried and true practices.*

### **HONORING AND INTENDING**

In February 2002, four of us – Judith, Deb, Chris, and Ruth – with four different promises for the world came together and formulated a model of honoring as expressed in Judith’s impossible promise (“by 2012, all people honoring themselves, each other, the planet and the mystery of the universe”)(Aftergut, et al. 2002). We wrote up our model and developed a workbook and two-part workshop through which these practices could be learned quickly and immediately by people of all ages (Shields, et al. 2002).

In September 2003, Sharon joined our group, and together we began exploring non-linear ways of spreading these practices. We wrote and published a paper on the “Fungus Model” for fulfilling impossible promises, illustrating how conversations, tools, and practices of honoring might be spreading seemingly independently of action or planning on our part (Aftergut, et al. 2004). Again we presented a conference workshop – this time designed to give participants the experience of the Fungus Model at work in their own lives right then and there at the conference (see “All of Us” section, below).

We continue to work together while our promises take us alternately in similar directions, off on separate tangents, and back together again through our weekly conference calls. Others have started referring to us as “the honoring people” or “the people working with Judith,” and some of us refer to ourselves as “the honoring group.”

- By 2012, all people honoring themselves, each other, the planet, and the mystery of the universe (Judith)
- By 2020, every person honored and present to life’s miracles (Chris)
- By 2020, a world where death is celebrated, life honored, and communities inspired by the lives that pass through (Sharon)
- By 2020, all of us are participating fully in all of life, for all our lives (Ruth)
- By 2022, all people consciously choosing their lives, all people being honored (Deb)

While our Fungus Model appears to leave everything to chance, we have done anything but that. Instead, throughout 2004, we were very much in action building on our earlier work together and with others. We rapidly expanded our skills and abilities in areas such as personal finance, e-marketing, small business planning, non-profit incorporation, honoring in relation to specific situations or groups of people, and community leadership and service at local, regional, national, and international levels. We honed our skills in writing and editing, in one-on-one and small group

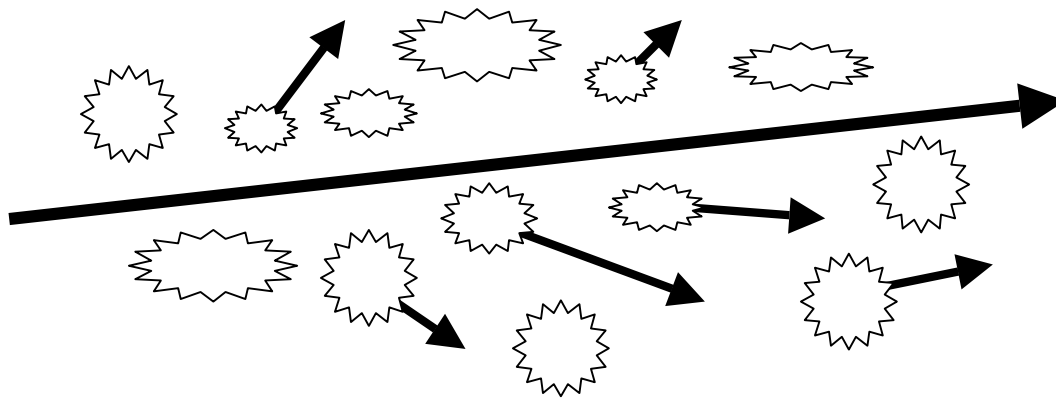
coaching and consulting, and in using the Internet effectively for research and for connecting and reconnecting with people important in our lives.

Pursuing our interests and the acquisition of new skills -- as individuals, in pairs and trios, as well as all together -- has opened up new opportunities for each of us to contribute as our work on honoring becomes financially supportable and rewarding, widely adopted and adaptable, and capable of making a lasting, positive difference not just for a handful of people, but for every single person on the planet.

## INTENDING AND RESULTS

This paper is about the results of three years of working together and how and where to look for them. We started from an intention that continues to give rise to new opportunities (the star shapes in Figure 1, below), some of which we choose to pick up and hold as new or additional intentions (the lines). (The arrows represent the direction of time.) As we continue along the path of our original intention, we not only hold more and more intentions, but we start seeing results of our intentions, both the original one, and subsequent ones, that we had not expected, nor could have predicted. Some of these results are so small that we might fail to notice them if we were not actually looking for them. Others are so startling that we would have to work hard to avoid knowing they had happened.

FIGURE 1. Intentions Spawn Results Spawn Intentions



Our experience has shown that we cannot predict the particular results of particular intentions. We can, however, develop our capacity to predict by when an intention will be fulfilled, allowing us to give our word with integrity. In fact, one of us – Judith – successfully uses the applied kinesiology method of muscle testing to determine first whether she should be holding a particular intention for a particular result to occur and then by when she can promise that it will be fulfilled. In other words, she checks whether or not to make a promise in the first place, and only then what kind of promise to make if her system says go. This past year, Judith began experimenting with applying this method to holding intentions for our group as a whole. Whether or not the rest of us learn to use Judith’s method, we all have been expanding our ability to do what we say we will do – making and keeping promises – a necessary condition for keeping a promise as big as a promise for the world.

In any case, we have a regular practice of declaring goals to be reached or intentions to be fulfilled by the time of the next year’s Conference for Global Transformation (CGT), and our track record so far has been pretty good. Table 1 (below) gives a list of intentions we have fulfilled in this way since we began working together three years ago.

TABLE 1. Year-By-Year Tangible Results From Intentions Since 2002

The Honoring Institute	non-profit corporation	2004
The Fungus Model paper (Aftergut, et al. 2004)	conference paper and presentation	2004
<a href="http://www.honoringinstitute.org">www.honoringinstitute.org</a>	website	2003
<a href="http://www.elderboomer.org">www.elderboomer.org</a>	website	2002
Elderboomer shirts	individually numbered shirts from 1 to 76 million	2002
Ways of Honoring (Honoring when it’s difficult)	workshop	2002
Ways of Honoring (Intergenerational honoring)	workshop	2002
Ways of Honoring workbook	workbook	2002
Ways of Honoring	workshop	2002
Ways of Honoring paper (Aftergut, et al. 2002)	paper and conference presentation	2002

In tackling the conference theme of “Stand and Deliver” for this year’s 5th CGT, we considered what delivering would look like in the world this year, and then we declared 10 goals to be accomplished by May 2005.

- (1) to have sold 1000 Elderboomer shirts
- (2) to have the Elderboomer Project be in the media in all four of our cities – Portland, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, and Tampa
- (3) to have led our trademarked workshops on honoring conflict as an opportunity for transformation and on intergenerational honoring in at least 10 cities other than our own
- (4) to have been interviewed as a group on the radio
- (5) to have had our book accepted by a publisher
- (6) to have launched an email newsletter that has 1000 subscribers
- (7) to have been accepted to present a workshop and have our paper published in the journal of the 5th CGT
- (8) to have been accepted to present as a group somewhere in addition to the 5th CGT
- (9) to have completed the Elderboomer Project business plan by September 2004
- (10) to have received state and federal tax exempt status for our non-profit organization, The Honoring Institute

The ninth goal had a different target date from the outset, and that date came and went without our achieving our goal, and notably we have not recommitted, made a new promise, or declared the idea complete. This uncertainty may be having an impact on our being able to hold the other intentions before us with any power.

A familiar pattern for us as a group is to pull things off at the last minute. One month before the 2nd CGT (held in September 2002), we had all but given up on presenting our paper, having a

website up on the World Wide Web, having Elderboomer shirts to wear during our presentation, having a workshop of any merit (in terms of value produced for participants), and having a workbook available to hand out during the conference. In the end, we accomplished all five goals just in time for the conference by continuing to hold our intention and take actions, even when we didn't know which actions were necessary or sufficient to produce the result.

If we take a look at what we are actually doing regularly over time, we can identify practices that – when we are using them – keep us on track and lead to both intended and unintended results. These practices (or regular actions on our part) are listed in Table 2, below. When we stop doing them, results drop off and we lose momentum. When we pick them up again, nothing short of miracles occur.

TABLE 2. Regular Practices That Work

Develop ability to hold an intention and know how long to hold it for (using muscle testing) – learn to when and what to promise and for when to promise it
Have conference calls with group, taking notes throughout the call and sending copies to everyone as soon as the call is over
Submit intentions to submit papers in response to CGT Calls for Papers
Write papers, articles, email, and books from the notes from conference calls
Submit papers and poster sessions to CGT and other conferences
Attend conferences as representatives of the promise
Begin compiling and maintaining a complete list of everyone you know and the next actions that will have them begin to engage the promise
Accept invitations to speak anywhere and everywhere
Conduct regular surveys of the people you know now and invite them to gather additional responses from everyone they know now
Mentor others in their promises and ours

Table 3 below lists some of the “direct” results we have produced by holding intentions in this way. This is followed by a discussion of some of the “indirect” results that have taken us completely by surprise. “Indirect” results are those we have not yet owned as having caused. The latter could be called “miracles” and could be said to be “undeserved” and happening for no reason.

TABLE 3. Direct Results Of Holding An Intention, By Year

Friendship Adult Daycare Center program	program expanded to Seattle	2005
Honoring Conflict for Attorneys	design and lead workshop	2005
Honoring and Money	design and lead workshop	2005
Elderboomer certificates	certify individual Elderboomer numbers	2005
The Outcome of Honoring is Peace	design and lead workshop	2005
Participatory Honoring	design and lead course	2005
Public Policy America	convene roundtable discussions	2005

<a href="http://www.honoringinstitute.org">www.honoringinstitute.org</a>	update website to working level	2005
Dreamboarding and Visioning	lead workshop	2005
What's in a paper? Team	mentor people in sharing their promises through writing	2005
Study abroad in Turkey	participate in college study abroad program	2005
Languaging subsection of <a href="http://www.promisers.com">www.promisers.com</a>	design website section for mentoring people in sharing their promises in jargon-free language	2005
Protégé e-marketing	learn and implement program	2004-2005
Article published in Creation magazine	magazine article on honoring	2004
Honoring as a legacy and the process of growing older	workshop in Tampa	2004
What is honoring?	workshops in Tampa and Santa Barbara	2004
Institute for World Courage	design and lead workshop	2003, 2005
The Mastery Foundation	sponsor participants in programs in Ireland and Mississippi	since 2003

The adoption of the theme “honoring the world we live in” by a European organization completely caught us off guard and launched us far beyond the circle of people that we already know. Judith shared our first paper with the organization’s secretary general after an event in Portland three years ago sponsored by The Performance Center, a community of consultants that she is a member of. He posted it on their website. Since then, “honoring the world” has been a theme for events in The Netherlands and Beirut, and the paper has made us known with leaders and change agents involved with the organization, which has 77,000 members in 27 countries. When it announced a "Daring to Dream -- Honouring the World" program, Judith presented ideas and practices of honoring at a January 2005 Winter Camp in Estonia, The paper -- like her new title as Executive Director of The Honoring Institute -- has given her (and us) an evolving new sense of stature as change agents and leaders. We are grateful for their partnership of this community in the U.S. and in Europe.

At about the same time, we received an unexpected email from a Landmark graduate in the UK whom none of us had ever met. Representing a group of graduates in Europe, he had found us through the "impossiblepromisekeepers" WebRing that Ruth had created in 2002 and wrote to offer all of us support with our website and with the fulfillment of our impossible promises.

A similar surprise has been the invitation Ruth received early in the New Year. Hearing from David Abramson, another person with an impossible promise, that Challenge Day had held an event at her high school in Ohio, Ruth contacted a teacher who still teaches there 25 years after her graduation to offer support for transforming the school. The teacher wrote back sharing that he was in charge of Agora Week in April 2005, a week off from regular classes during which parents and adults in the community teach courses on their hobbies and passions. Given what Ruth had shared with him in her email, he was writing to ask, “Would you like to come as a guest speaker for the day?”

At first, it looked to us like we had had nothing to do with these surprise results. Taking a closer look, however, allowed us to identify the seemingly innocuous actions that produced what for us seemed like miracles – sending our first paper to someone, adding a link to our website, or writing to an old teacher. No one other than ourselves had taken these actions, so who were we to say we hadn't been part of producing the “fruiting bodies” that resulted!

### IN SEARCH OF “ALL OF US”

To be able to recognize that things are moving and that they are moving with respect to our promises, we need first to be able to claim them as results we had something to do with. We turn now to something that is becoming more and more clear to us as we begin to claim ownership of “fruiting bodies” around us – that every single result we have noticed has come to us through our connections with people that we know or people that we know now. We have developed a number of methods for incorporating this insight into the core of our work together.

For example, in our presentation of the Fungus Model at the 4th CGT (Aftergut, et al. 2004), we led 80 participants through two exercises designed to give them an experience of being connected both with one another through their promises and with people already enrolled in their promises around the world. Participants wrote their names and promises on Post-It notes, stuck them on a 30-foot banner of butcher paper, and used markers to draw lines connecting their promises with those they saw theirs were related to. Then everyone stuck 10-20 colored dots onto maps of the world and North America on the cities and towns where they were already in conversation with someone about their promises. The count and spread of the dots are shown in Figures 2 and 3, below.

FIGURE 2. A quick sampling of people enrolled in Impossible Promises worldwide

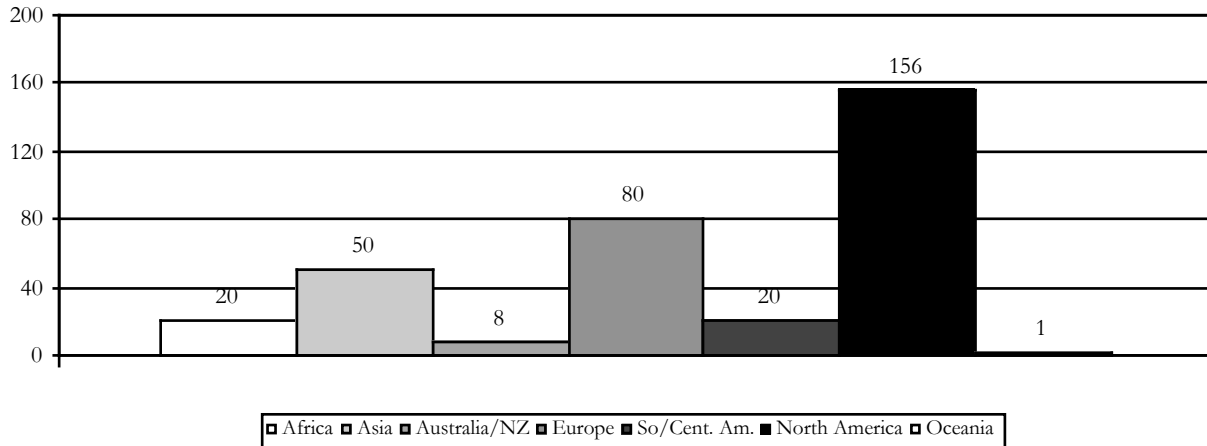
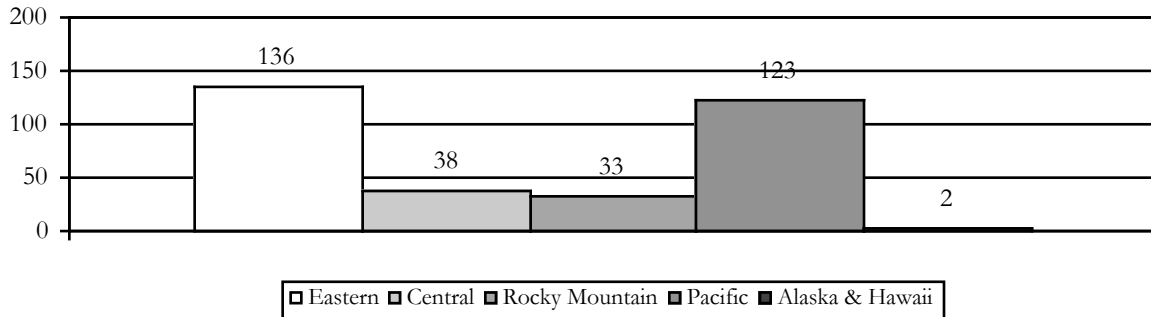


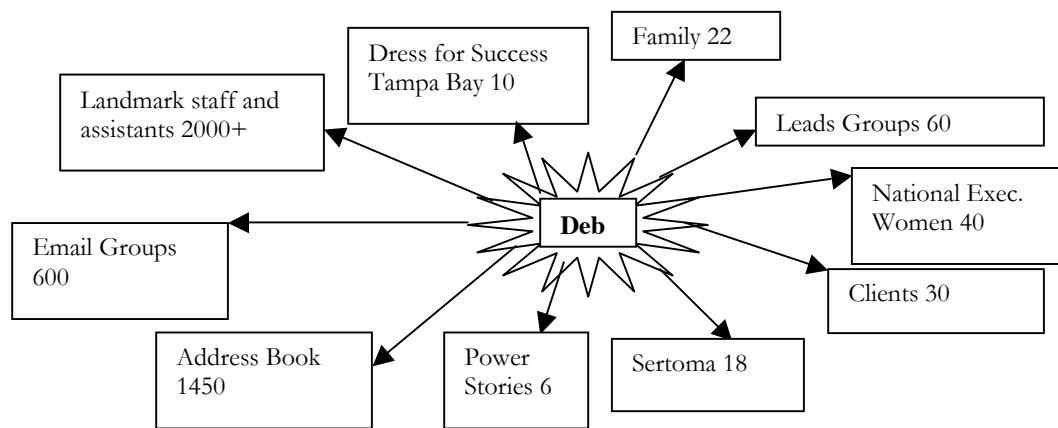
FIGURE 3. People enrolled in Impossible Promises in Canada and the US, by Time Zone



The impact of these exercises was immediately apparent. Participants saw the value of adding practices of regularly tracking who they know where and which of those people already enrolled in working to fulfill their promises. Staying connected with everyone else with impossible promises allows all of us to tap into each other’s resources. “Need to contact someone in Trinidad and Tobago? No problem! We have someone there, and we know others who know others there.”

Another way to get a grasp on “everyone we know” is to start compiling a list of the people we actually know. We interviewed Deb and Sharon to come up with our estimate that, collectively, the five of us probably know and are known by more than 20,000 people personally by name. We can represent part of the interview results in Figure 4 (below).

FIGURE 4. Partial Count Of Everyone Deb Knows



Designing our database to include not just names but when and where we met each person and who connected us with them can be extremely valuable. Since 1994, when she first participated in the Landmark Wisdom Course and started paying attention to the people who were passing through her life, Ruth has also kept track of the person without whom she might never have met each person. While her partner Leslie may have spontaneously introduced herself to Ruth when they first met in 2004 at a Landmark course, Ruth credits her sister Ebeth with connecting her to Leslie because Ebeth is the person who first connected her with Landmark in 1992-93. (If Figure 3 were a

summary of people Ruth knows, instead of people Deb knows, the “Landmark staff and volunteers 2000+” would be the people Ruth credits Ebeth with having connected her with.)

Another powerful practice Ruth is known for is finding people she used to know on Google and reconnecting with them. Helping create class reunions and family reunions and visiting former professors to thank them for the difference they have made in her life – all of these activities have arisen from Ruth’s looking at her relationship to people in the world, noticing the distance from herself to others, and taking actions to reduce that distance. Table 4 presents a summary of actions we can naturally take next with people depending on whether we know them or not.

TABLE 4. What To Do Next With People We Know Or Don’t Know

Our relationship to other people	Actions we can naturally take next with them
people we know now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ survey them</li> <li>▪ invite their participation</li> <li>▪ practice honoring with them</li> <li>▪ have them find people they knew from before now</li> <li>▪ have them share honoring with people they know now, who we don’t know</li> </ul>
people we knew before now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ find them (have them become people we know now)</li> </ul>
people we come to know for the first time now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ practice honoring with them</li> </ul>
people we don’t know, but people we know now know them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ have people we know now share honoring with them</li> </ul>
people we don’t know, but people we know now knew them before now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ have people we know now find them (have them become people they know now)</li> </ul>
people we don’t know, and people we know now don’t know them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ create media to share honoring with them</li> <li>▪ create media that includes invitations for them to participate with us (have them become people we know)</li> </ul>

Looking over Table 4, we see that we can survey people we know now or come to know now, and we have been doing just that. One way we have learned to talk about honoring is to define it as “listening to another person, being glad that person is alive, and feeling something good because of that.” Because we use honoring differently from its everyday usage, we decided this year to find out what other people say honoring is, collecting responses from people we already knew and from people we had never met through e-mail discussion groups and mailing lists. Our email survey “What is honoring?” elicited 50 responses, seven request for copies of our papers, and two requests for us to continue the inquiry with them by phone. All the responses were thoughtful and touched on the poetic. Antonio Davis (p.c.) echoed our own definition, using seeing instead of listening as the means of connecting: “Honoring ... is seeing the best that you believe exists in humanity within the person in front of you, whom you're trying to honor, and making every attempt to continue to see that 'best' irrespective of whatever that person in front of you does or says.”

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