

## **Excerpt from ITP Newsletter 2007**

### **Faculty Spotlight on Arthur Hastings**

#### **Psychomanteum Research Receives Funding**

Dr. Arthur Hastings is a very modest and extremely effective faculty member. Not only has he developed the psychomanteum -- a highly effective approach to healing bereavement -- but he has also attracted significant funding from multiple sources in support of his research. One major anonymous donor has recently added \$24,000 to his initial \$100,000 gift in support of Arthur's work. The Fetzer Institute of Kalamazoo, Michigan, also recently chose to grant \$10,000 to ITP in support of Arthur's work, because it furthers the Fetzer Institute's purpose and mission, by exemplifying the power of love and forgiveness. Several ITP alums have also contributed financial support to his work.

"Participants in the psychomanteum are given the opportunity to move toward healing," he explains. "As Jung said, 'The self moves toward wholeness.'" According to Arthur, this is what happens with the psychomanteum process. People have many different reactions to the death of a loved one: love, grief, longing, guilt, anger, resentment, and more. There is no one way that people grieve, and all forms of grief are okay. Participants in the psychomanteum, even those with anger, pain, grief and sadness, are soothed through their experience. "I remember one participant who came in angry with his father for being so strict with the family," recounts Arthur. "In the psychomanteum, he saw the situation through his father's eyes and was able to forgive him."

More than half the participants feel they've had some kind of contact with their departed, most often through a mental conversation or feeling their presence. Sometimes it is visually or through touch. Sometimes the departed is not present, yet nine out of ten participants feel a sense of resolution. "We can't predict what will be the most healing experience," says Arthur. "We simply arrange it so an experience can occur that will be healing."

#### ***The Psychomanteum Process:***

Anyone with unresolved feelings about the death of a loved one can volunteer for this three-hour process. Sessions are offered once every quarter on a weekend. A trained facilitator asks the participant to describe the person who died, their relationship with them and when, where and how they died. They are asked, "If you could speak to them, what would you like to say? If you could hear them, what would you like to hear?"

Participants then sit alone in a dark curtained booth about the size of a large closet, with a mirror at one end (tilted so the participants do not see their own reflection) and a big, comfy recliner in the center. They sit (or recline) there for forty-five minutes thinking about their deceased loved one. Some will see visual images, streams of light, or may feel touches or other bodily sensations. About 64-65% of participants feel they've connected with the person who has died. After they leave the booth, they review their experience with their facilitator.

The entire process is surrounded by research measures , i.e., before and after standard measures of bereavement, like need to communicate, sadness, grief, guilt, and unresolved feelings. Most show marked improvement. In fact, the results have been highly statistically significant -- especially noteworthy for a three hour process. These results have been published in a professional journal, and presented at several conferences.

Are the contacts really the spirits of the deceased? This is an open question. "We don't interpret what people are experiencing. We allow the participants to decide for themselves," says Arthur. However, thanks to our donor, Arthur and his team of psychomanteum student researchers are now able to measure effects in the environment. With the recent additional funding, they will soon begin measuring environmental and physiological changes, including electromagnetic and geo-magnetic fields, changes in room temperature, infrared phenomena, galvanic skin response, and brain waves.

The psychomanteum's major benefactor remarks, "The discipline of the scientific approach is critical to getting other people to buy into what Arthur is doing, to get him more attention, more funding, and to build an audience and belief system around his work." This donor believes that there is more happening beyond "normal" reality than western science allows us to believe. He wonders, "Wouldn't it be great to verify participants' experiences through instrumentation and scientific measures? Our ability to develop sensors that measure what is going on is critical to getting the 'scientific' stamp of approval for this important work."

Besides the scientific research and the community service, the study gives our ITP students first hand practice in research methods and in skills that are used in therapy, spiritual guidance, and counseling. Four students from the team are completing dissertations growing out of the psychomanteum research.