

**The most dangerous weapon of mass destruction is child abuse.  
And, we are all responsible...in order to stop the violence, we need to  
expand our understanding of child abuse.**

**A. Awareness**

Hi, I'm Linda Redford founder and president of Honor Kids International, a non-profit organization whose vision is to prevent and eliminate child abuse. My hope today is that my passion is contagious and that it inspires you to see differently. After years of private practice as a counselor, I realized people suffer primarily from, what Indigenous people call, a Spiritual Malady: a disconnection from the animating principle or the vital essence of life. When one is disconnected from this spontaneous and life giving source, the separation is experienced psychologically as death. A spiritual malady is a progressive dis-ease that often manifests in the forms of aggressive and compulsive behavior. Aggression, as in violence, or compulsion as in addiction, both serve as substitute forms of connection. Although these substitute forms of connection de-power rather than empower a person, human beings are social animals and our need for connection is vital.

**B. How does a Spiritual Malady develop?**

What I have found as the origin of spiritual maladies, my daughter Anne coined as Infected Belief Systems (IBS). Infected belief systems are complex and personal reactions to overwhelming experiences that impair the mental, emotional, and physical functioning of a person. The mind (neo cortex) experiences IBS as persistent harmful or threatening patterns of thought. The emotional (limbic system) experience is an internal state of anxiety fueled by unconscious fear and shame. And the physical (reptilian brain) experience is involuntary and recurring sensations in the body, the residue of unresolved trauma. If infected belief systems are left untreated, this attack on the self leaves one feeling powerless and disconnected. This human condition motivates many manifestations of aggressive and compulsive behavior (Violence and Addiction).

IBS are passed down intergenerationally and they are shaped by family and cultural practices that are rooted in fear and shame. Some are passed down consciously and with intent, but often IBS are the result of unconscious internalization. Any system of belief that objectifies human value teaches practices of separation and therefore imprints fear and shame. For instance, racism and sexism are IBS and wherever you find these infected beliefs, you will witness varying levels of aggression and compulsion.

IBS are the antecedent conditions that give rise to the many forms of illness and destructive behavior existing in our society today. I am convinced that in order to stop child abuse, prevent violence, and heal addictions we must believe on an entirely different basis. We must become willing to see with different eyes ... this vision I hold out for you to consider.

My daughter Anne called one day with a quote that read: "If you can be objective... you don't have all the information." We laughed till tears rolled from our eyes because it has taken me years to direct my anger and sadness regarding child abuse, into something creative and productive. This endeavor we have called the Honor Project.

In the beginning, I went in search of a cultural model where child abuse didn't exist. Could there actually be a place? The answer was yes... and I didn't have to look far. I began to research Indigenous cultures and more specifically my own Cherokee heritage — pre-colonization. This is where I discovered the word **HONOR** — and the ways in which this principle was lived. Honor is the foundation for this culture because Indigenous people believe all forms of life are interdependent upon each other. They believe they are connected to all that was created and thus honored the existence of all things.

Think about that for a second. How do you treat something or someone that you honor? To honor... what does that mean to you? (you would value it, cherish, be careful, be sensitive, it would be sacred) The point is “to honor” something or someone changes the way you see, think, feel, relate, and interact with that something or someone. When you honor something, you recognize its significance. Through the eyes of honor the ordinary becomes extraordinary. And this is the animating principle or the vital essence of life that so many of us are disconnected from.

Further research revealed Indigenous cultures view wrongdoing as a misbehavior that requires teaching or an illness that requires healing. Both are considered a spiritual malady that results from the absence of a connection to the animating principle or vital essence of life.

One of my Cherokee relatives refers to this as “a mind divided”. When a Cherokee person stepped outside the bounds of good law or was of two minds, a Peace Village was available for teaching and healing. A Peace Village was a place of sanctuary where even those who had broken the law could come to purify and remove negative patterns of thought and speech. After this was accomplished, a person could return and be accepted as whole by the people. This approach to transforming the impact of infected belief systems has proven to succeed where Western practices have failed.

Among Indigenous people the most important thing you have is your word. It is important that people are accountable when they say “I will do this, I will follow through.” Words and actions were congruent. For most non-native people to come to understand the importance of the word is a process. Indigenous people understood that spoken words reflect inner thoughts... and thoughts motivate actions. Spoken words reveal a lot about a person and a culture. The traditional Cherokee Peace Villages were outlawed in this country in 1839. Prior to that time, mental institutions and jails were not necessary.

While I was studying the Peace Village philosophy, I also became interested in psychology, but I was in search of a model that made room for the invisible. And by invisible I mean the magic — the unexplainable — and that not yet known.

I found the work of Dr. Roberto Assagioli who created psychosynthesis in Italy in 1910. Dr. Assagioli was a colleague of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. He was not only interested in the broken and fragmented parts of the self but also in the transpersonal: those qualities of consciousness that extended beyond the individual. Dr. Assagioli advised that “Psychology must embrace the soul as well as the libido, the imagination as well as the complexes, and the will as well as the instincts.” In other words, this approach to human development affirmed the spiritual dimension of the person (or the transpersonal self) which was believed to be a source of wisdom, inspiration, and meaning in our lives. Again, what we're talking about here is the animating principle of life and when people are disconnected from this spontaneous and life giving Source, the result is dis-ease.

I was beginning to see with different eyes ... and this was exciting. I began to integrate Cherokee Peace Village philosophy with concepts of psychosynthesis. From this, I developed the Adawee teachings which evolved into my teachings of Reassociation - the foundation of the Honor Project (Adawee in Cherokee means Guardian of Wisdom). These Teachings are based on 4 imperative assumptions which in turn shapes

a value system with the intention of Honor. To Indigenous People, this would be known as the **Code of Right Relationship**:

1. all forms of life are interdependent upon each other
2. all forms of life have significance and equal value
3. all forms of life are moving toward realizing the inherent potential
4. all action must consider the impact beyond the self and beyond the now

### **C. Antecedent Conditions**

I want to share with you a little about my own childhood which might help you understand.

When I was 10 years old, IQ tests in the educational system labeled me as gifted and I was moved ahead two grades. A year later I found myself skipping school, drinking alcohol and hanging out with people 10 years my senior. By age 12, I had completely dropped out of school, was living on the streets and had attempted suicide. The question is: **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GIFTED YOUNG GIRL?** What was missing in her life, her family, and her community that failed to encourage her potential?

#### **Some Infected Beliefs developed during my childhood years:**

The world is not safe.

I'll never amount to anything.

I'm not enough.

I should be ashamed of myself.

I deserve to be hit

I am bad

I'm always wrong

I'm an ugly, no good, dirty, damn Indian.

What I have learned is that my actions were not based on my potential, my actions were based on my infected beliefs. And when a person is under attack, either by their own internalized beliefs or those of the outside world, there is no potential. They are disconnected from their unique expression, a place of belonging, and a sense of creative purpose (Vital essence).

Today, I am 18 years in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction. My addiction to alcohol and drugs was an aggressive and compulsive act against myself but at that time it protected me from the fear and shame tied to my infected beliefs. Here was my potential: gifted... and the results were: rage, alcoholism, homelessness, hopelessness and attempted suicides.

What was missing in my life as a child, I believe are the same things that are missing in the lives of many children today. They are:

1. Authenticity: a sense of unique identity and personal expression that is deemed valuable and significant by the self and others.
2. Connection: a sense of belonging generated by consistent and nurturing relationships.
3. Purpose: a sense of creative power driven by personal meaning.

Dr. Assagioli stated: "... the most effective, and at the same time the higher, way of controlling both the sexual and the power drives is the acceptance and recognition of every human being as a 'Thou' to be respected, and not as an 'object' for the gratification of our pleasure, nor an 'it' to be dominated and exploited."

## D. Solutions

Infected belief systems are devastating on a personal and social level. For the individual, they become disconnected from a positive sense of self, the security of belonging, and a meaningful purpose. This internal world of fear and shame is then manifested outward in the form of aggressive and compulsive behavior which we are witnessing in alarming numbers. Any social or educational program aimed at prevention and intervention must address these antecedent conditions. And it needs to be said that these programs must not only focus on the identified problem individuals but on the environments that shape them.

Having said that, let's talk about the Honor Project. This project embarks upon a promising and optimistic social transformation. It's an educational endeavor focused on creating a more beneficial relationship amongst individuals and their environment; and it emphasizes the necessity of a common goal whereby differences are valued, belief systems are explored, and strengths rather than limitations are reinforced.

This Project is not a "do as I say" philosophy — it's a "we will do this together" philosophy where teachers, parents, and community members, take part in the learning and healing along with the children. The Honor Project is comprised of three phases and I'll briefly outline each.

**PHASE ONE: PREVENTION** — introduces the Honor Set (T-Shirt and Journal workbook titled *My Right of Passage; An Adventure In Self-Discovery*, co-written with my daughter Anne). This book is more than words and images, it's the tool for personal and social transformation.

IN 1929, anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep coined the term "Rite of Passage" to describe the universal practice of ceremonializing life's major events. Rites of passage were ways of consciously recognizing and supporting human identity and development throughout the life-span. The honoring of such events brings about an increased sense of stability and connection with the self, others, and the environment.

Let's look at the chart for a minute. Although I don't have time to go into each of these, let's talk about numbers 1 and 4. "BEGINNING and ENDING Rites of Passage". Beginnings are transitions between old and new ways of being; and Endings are terminating events that can bring about relief and satisfaction but also a sense of loss and emptiness. A time of letting go of the old and moving into the new. (The words between the parenthesis are examples of Rites of Passages from our American culture)

### **rites of passage\***

1. **BEGINNINGS:** a transition between old and new ways of being.  
(*Birth, First Step, Puberty, New Job, College Entrance, Gray Hair*)
2. **MERGINGS:** the capacity and establishment of relatedness, integration, and commitment — the unifying of opposites. (*First Love, Wedding, Taking in a Pet, Family Meals*)
3. **CYCLES:** a cyclical return of important events that increases our relationship to time and larger forces. (*Anniversaries, Birthdays, Holidays, Summer Solstice*)
4. **ENDINGS:** a terminating event that can bring about relief and satisfaction but also a sense of loss and emptiness. A time of letting go of the old and moving into the new.  
(*Divorce, Death, Graduation, Menopause*)
5. **HEALINGS:** a movement toward balance and increased consciousness of relatedness.  
(*Physical Illness, Crisis, War, Natural Disasters*)

\*Beck & Metrick, "The Art of Ritual"

Remember the GIFTED YOUNG GIRL who moved ahead two grades? That was an ending and a beginning. The problem was there was no preparation and no support or celebration, as a matter of fact there was shame. My siblings treated me with disdain and my mother was so busy trying to make them feel better that she failed to nurture and celebrate what was happening for me. So what could have been the acknowledgment of a talent or gift became a traumatizing experience which was acted out later by skipping school, drinking and attempting suicide?

This is an example of a time of transition. It was a scary time for me. Everything was now unfamiliar and I didn't know what to expect. There was no connection, nor common goal between what was going on at home and what was going on in the classroom. The original classroom represented safety, constancy, praise, encouragement, and value. My identity, as well as the connection to my vital essence of life, was with my fifth grade teacher. Without warning my safe world became overwhelming and unsafe, and the connection was severed. The infected belief I carried from this experience was "success brings punishment" and until I made this conscious connection and was able discharge the fixated energy in my body, I reenacted this trauma many times in my life.

Development, like life, brings about unexpected changes and Rites of passage were used to buffer and support individuals through times of transition. Indigenous people begin their day with ritual and rites of passage ceremonies are practiced daily. For example, gratitude for the morning sun – needed rain – menstrual cycles – blessings for food – family – relationship – birth – naming ceremonies, etc.

Although American culture embraces some of these rituals, I think it is safe to say that life, for many people, has lost much of its meaning... and I think our social conditions clearly reflect our disconnection from this animating principle or vital essence of life.

**The Journal provides the key ingredients for experiencing a rite of passage.** It incorporates **Initiation**: which is the willingness to learn something new. It involves **Demonstration**: which is the ability to teach, model, or guide. And it brings about **Attainment**: which is an inner contentment and sense of purpose.

## **International Honor Pledge**

I want to introduce you to our International Honor Pledge, found in the Journal. It is a consistent and inclusive value system that depicts our common goal: the commitment to Honor. The Pledge is a vision for this project, it is not a quick fix or a simple solution. It is an experience... a process of discovery that unfolds over time — from the inside out. Each individual comes to his/her understanding in their own time. Notice as we go over the Honor Pledge, it incorporates the four assumptions of the Adawee Teachings.

### **1. I honor myself.**

Our hope with this statement is that individuals begin to recognize their own significance, their unique value and importance to the world, not solely defined by performance or the opinions of others, but by their own authenticity.

### **2. I live by principles that benefit future generations.**

This concept seems to be far removed from our society but thinking beyond the self and the now is an imperative shift in consciousness. This shift will require greater sensitivity and discipline in choice and action. In doing so we are less likely to make irreparable mistakes that we and the planet will have to endure.

### **3. I communicate in a peaceful manner.**

This simply means that we communicate in non-abusive ways. In ways that do not provoke hostility and violence. Conflict and anger are a part of life but they do not have to result in violence.

### **4. I respect all cultures and honor our differences.**

We see diversity offering the opportunity for growth and enrichment. Learning to see difference from this perspective moves toward recognizing the significance and value in others.

### **5. I acknowledge that males and females are equal in their importance.**

Sexism, like racism, is an infected belief system that not only limits potential but breeds self hatred. Where self hatred exists aggression and compulsion can be found. So again, this belief represents an imperative change of consciousness.

### **6. I understand what I believe about myself and others creates my world.**

As we discussed earlier, thoughts shape choice and action. In order to create a peaceful world we must be at peace with what lives inside of us. This belief strives to empower each individual with responsibility and awareness.

### **7. I am connected with all creation.**

This is a foundational principle in that we are always in relationship to someone or something. Our interdependence requires that we live with honor. When we live with honor we move toward balance.

That is our International Honor Pledge, and it's power is unlimited. The more who participate, the more powerful the impact.

Rollo May, in his book *Power and Innocence* describes POWER as the ability to cause or prevent change. The Honor Project has the ability to bring about change with the focus on nutrient and integrative power.

**5 KINDS OF POWER** — Power is the ability to cause or prevent change.

**Exploitive** – power that subjects the weak to the strong with no concern for the weak.

**Manipulative** – power over another through the collusion or cooperation of the weaker.

**Competitive** – power used against another person.

**Nutrient** – power used to meet the needs of another.

**Integrative** – power used with another to build a better life for both.

## **E. Transformation**

The Journal begins an adventure of self discovery. It is divided into 12 monthly themes representing 12 Universal Principles. Here are just a few of the questions that are explored:

Who am I?

What do I value?

What is my purpose?

How can I go about meeting these needs?

How do I fit in?

What do I need to change?

How do I feel?

Am I valuable?

How do others believe?

How can I help others?

Do I want to fit in?

Do I accept myself?

Exploring principles such as honesty, responsibility, and forgiveness, develops:

self-awareness  
critical thinking  
interpersonal skill

self-discipline  
self-esteem  
social responsibility

There is a color picture preceding each month which visually supports the monthly theme. Images or mental pictures and ideas, tend to produce the physical conditions and the external acts that correspond to them. Combining words and images are very powerful — take a look at the entertainment our children watch and the power this entertainment has on their world.

An entirely new consciousness develops replacing IBS and violence with strategies built on the concepts of Honor. These tools creatively explore identity and conflict by discovering attitudes and belief systems that continue to promote, racism, sexism, violence and prejudice. Children, and adults, learn how to understand and harness their aggressive impulses by utilizing these new strategies.

Rather than wait for serious aggression to unfold and send people to jail, the Honor Project embraces a value system and preventative healing strategies commonly used by indigenous cultures for thousands of years.

**PHASE TWO: INTERVENTION** — introduces the Peace Village, which is an on site structure set up to deal with personal issues, interpersonal conflict and problematic behavior. Facilitators assist individuals in resolving various situations by learning new ways of understanding and communicating. What is unique to the Peace Village concept is the opportunity for reintegration, that is the restoration of relationships and reputations. This is a process by which accountability and amends can generate forgiveness and repair where harm has been done. Because destructive behavior is driven by IBS, the problem exists beyond the individual manifesting symptoms. It extends outward to also reveal a larger social deficit. For this reason, family, school, and community members are encouraged to be involved in this process of problem solving and potential building.

Change within the Peace Village setting, does not emerge from the ethic of “an eye for an eye”, nor from a course of punishment and alienation, like in Western law. The transformation of infected belief systems develops through a patient and committed social process of healing for the individual and their community. Although individuals are held accountable for their actions, the notion of responsibility is shared because it is understood that criminals, whether it be a lust murder, a rapist, a gang member, or a bully, are not born... they are socially constructed.

This understanding shifts the focus from scapegoating with labels and blame, to a process focused on restoring human relationships. Defensive and aggressive behavior is only needed when people feel they are under attack and alienated from others. Through teaching, reconnection and support, problematic behavior begins to change, helping all those involved to move toward a more healed existence.

**PHASE THREE: MAINTENANCE STAGE** - Enthusiasm and validation will encourage individuals to apply their new principles outside of the Peace Village setting. Each school, with its student body and faculty, can participate in this phase by creating a symbolic Adawee Peace Pole, to be displayed on the school grounds. The visual presence of the Adawee Peace Pole would be a constant reminder of the common goal we are all striving to achieve. In addition, one day out of each month can be designated Honor Project day, where the student body and faculty all wear their Honor Project T-shirts.

Community members and businesses can support this educational transformation by a simple gesture, such as Honor Project bumper stickers or a poster in the window. We speculate that when young people feel supported and valued by the larger community, they will be less likely to rebel, vandalize or steal from those representing it.

Children are not cruel - they LEARN to be cruel and as our pilot project 1st grade teacher discovered, children can learn to HONOR.

“I have begun a journal time in my first grade classroom where the children write about their experiences and share their feelings about these experiences. The children write for 10 minutes and draw a picture to go with the writing. When the writing is complete, we assemble in a circle where the children share their writings and pictures. Only positive comments are given from the other children. Some of these comments relate to skills being taught in the classroom. (Example, I like your picture. I like your drawing. I like what you said. I know how you feel. I like your printing. I like the way you capitalized your Is. Etc.) Because of the positive nature of the circle, the children all come prepared and everyone always volunteers to share their work. It has become a favorite activity for many of the children.”

— Shelly

The HONOR PROJECT is an attempt to meet developmental and educational needs by empowering individuals with a cultural value system that facilitates their right to unique expression, a place of belonging, and a sense of creative purpose. By cultivating the seeds of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-discipline, individuals prepare for self-realization. We feel this adventure in self-discovery is a “right of passage” where being is of value... in and of itself.

So, let me summarize the power of the project:

1. Confluent Education: actively engages the whole being.
2. Consistent value system: honors and guides development and potential.
3. Common Goal: provides unity and relatedness.
4. Individual Exploration: builds authenticity and self-esteem.
5. Simplistic: easy to understand and implement.
6. Aesthetically Stimulating: elicits the creative process: imagination, emotion and sensation.
7. Agent of Social Change: the transformation of both individual and cultural Infected Belief Systems to bring about a new collective consciousness

We feel the Honor Project has all the necessary ingredients for a successful prevention program!

In closing, we believe every child has the potential for greatness — even those who have made many mistakes. However, we must first expand our idea of the individual, and second, we must provide our children with an environment that allows all aspects of their being to develop and mature. Along the way we must guide their natural rhythm while teaching them to consider the impact on others and the environment. If we desire a world where children grow up to be happy and productive members of a society, then we must educate more than their minds. We must prepare them to be human beings.

“Where there is no vision the people perish.” We can adapt to the complexity of our changing world, if we have the tools and the courage to transcend that which no longer serves.

To you who listen so patiently and who strive to create healing for so many, I thank you —  
bye for now.

Please visit our web pages: [www.honorkids.com](http://www.honorkids.com)

Don Jacobs, Teacher 6th Grade Honor Project Pilot Program

Q. How did the Honor Project affect you personally and as a teacher?

DJ: “Both personally and as a teacher the project has forced me to re-examine some deeply held beliefs and to become aware of some traits and characteristics which I thought I had left behind years ago. I am a bit more conscious in some of my choices and I tend to place less importance on ‘getting the job done’ and more on ‘doing it in a positive way’. More than anything else, the project has made me aware of how important attitude and belief systems are, and how much work I have to do to liberate my own higher Self.”

Q. How have the attitudes of the kids changed?

DJ: “Most of the kids have become much more open to new ideas, less judgmental of others based solely on “differentness” and a great deal more honest and self-aware. Some kids have actually sort of ‘blossomed’, carrying the ideas of the project into their family lives.”

Q. How was the atmosphere different in your classroom this year as opposed to other years?

DJ: “I think this is the first time we have had an attempt to deal with these issues in a collective way. It has created a feeling of togetherness and unity I haven’t seen in other years. It has also shown me what a BIG task this is and how much work there is to be done!”

Q. Do you have any other comments about the Honor Project?

DJ: “We tapped into the potential of the project. It was like a seed germinating. I’d like to see it expand not only in our schoolroom but in the whole school and our community... and get the parents involved. Seldom do we work together on other goals outside of schoolwork ... I learned how strong and powerful a group is when working on the same goal. Working on the Journal questions each day, getting below the first response ... it was really challenging to get through the blocks to the meaningful stuff.”

Comments from the pilot program 6th Grade Kids:

Robert: “I learned to be thankful for everything and to have friends and not enemies.”

Jessica: “I learned to treat people differently, even those I don’t like, to give them a chance and now they are my friends.”

Johnny: “I learned not to say the word ‘should’ like — in a shaming way.”

Sego: “If you don’t like a person you don’t have to make an enemy of ’em. Whether a person is a friend or enemy you can treat them equal.”

Mikey: “I liked Sparkle Magic in the storybooks.”

Alisah: “I learned not to make fun of people and to be more open with my mom.”

Jason: “I learned not to hit people.”

Angie: “I learned every human’s special. What goes around comes around and that I have to love myself before I can love anyone else.”

## **Endorsements**

“When children recognize their uniqueness and the love inside them, their lives with their families are easier, richer and more fulfilling. . . . In a time where there is so much confusion and violence in our world, I so appreciate Linda Redford’s efforts in the Honor Series of Entertainment and Educational Tools to help children learn the skills to honor and respect each other and our world, and to find peace and wisdom within themselves. It is certainly a valuable contribution in our search for balance, healing, and love.

...imagery, journal writing and art can be useful tools to help transform a negative self-image and view of the outside world as a scary, dangerous place to one where children can feel secure, comfortable, and good about themselves.”

Charlotte Reznick, Ph.D.  
Educational Psychologist and  
Assistant Clinical Professor of  
Psychology at UCLA

“The ideals and tools of the Honor Series of Entertainment and Educational Tools are clear, accessible and practice what they preach. The Honor Project materials are unique because they respect children, rather than preaching to them with heavy doses of condescension.

The project deals with the practical, concrete realities of children’s lives, and prompts kids to look at their world in a more nurturing light. Best of all, the material facilitates positive, powerful children’s activism to make the world better.”

Joe Kelly, Editor  
New Moon Network  
Duluth, MN