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## Conference Information - Atlanta

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## ICF Annual International Conference

### A Newbie's Musings

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Last year was my first ICF conference and I thought it was very nice that they gave me a special ribbon for that. And since Chicago is my hometown (where the conference was held) I got another ribbon for that, too. And since I volunteered to be a Greeter and a Room Host, as well, I got even more ribbons. So there I was, registered, "ribboned" to the hilt, raring to go, and off to be standing beside 1,400 similarly ribbon-clad coaches at the 6th Annual ICF Conference Extravaganza. Ribbon-Fest, I thought I'd call it. Until, that is, I found out about the dots.

You see I was one of the Thursday-morning Greeter people and my post was at the table across from the Registration Desk. Perhaps I greeted you there with a "Hello," or "Greetings!" or "Hi there!" (I certainly had the Greeter lingo down pat, didn't I?) Yet aside from "Where do I register?" and "Where's the coffee?" the most popular question was "Where can I get some dots?" For those of you that maybe didn't attend the Conference, the dots were colored little circles that people put on their name tag (along with their ribbons) to help identify their coaching specialties. There were red dots and blue dots and green dots and yellow dots and more. Most people put 2 or 3 different dots on. One lady, though, did 6. And all red! "I do an awful lot of family coaching," she said. I guess so!

So here it was, only 60 minutes into the Conference - before even the first keynote - and Dot-Mania had quickly overtaken the Ribbon-Fest as the preferred subtitle of this Coaching Extravaganza.

And then there were the hugs.

Okay, I admit it. I like hugs. I don't mind saying that hugs may be one of the reasons I most enjoy hanging around - or at least saying hello and goodbye to - coaches. You, too, huh? There's a whole Art-and-Science to good hug giving (and getting), don't you think? The body contact. The energy transfer. The fun! There's a rejuvenative quality to a good hug. An unspoken language. To me, a good hug is like the warmth of the sun after the cold Chicago winter. But I digress.

I didn't stay at the hotel. Instead, I commuted and arranged for a sitter to watch my kids during the day. Thursday night, she asked me what it was like. "Imagine a hotel filled with happy, balanced, grounded, open, friendly, eager, supportive, and loving people all wearing ribbons and colored dots, walking around, smiling and giving hugs to each other."

"That sure beats the crowd I hang out with," she replied. "That IS the crowd I hang out with," I

said with a fair share of pride in my voice.

The non-newbies (oldbies?) told me that it was important to know what I wanted to get out of the conference. So I made a list:

- Meet some old friends
- Make some new friends
- Learn about assessment tools
- Attend some interesting sessions and keynotes
- Be open to some amazing possibilities
- Have fun!
- Find myself a new coach

I didn't want to tell anyone about that last item. It was my secret. Not that I particularly wanted to keep it a secret, mind you. It's just that every time I thought about telling someone, I got this vision of ants on a drop of sugar water. Best I keep that particular disclosure under the radar, I thought, until afterwards.

Well, I'm happy to report that I covered all the ground I hoped to - and more. Mission Accomplished - and on all fronts.

I think the biggest surprise, though, was how much of my Conference Learning was actually more like remembering. Remembering the things I'd learned about myself time and time again - and remembering that my light shines greatest when I'm near my core.

More specifically, I remembered that

- It's not about me; it's about the client
- 'Struggle and Suffer' is something I can just let go of if I so choose
- Enthusiasm, language, wit, creativity, connecting with people at a deeper level and personal warmth are some of my strongest - and most underutilized - attraction attributes (and that gives me LOTS to work with, thank-you-very-much)
- Making good things happen sooner for clients is what my coaching is all about
- Coaching truly is a special honor bestowed upon me by my clients, friends and colleagues
- When I come from the place of gratitude and caring, my coaching and my life - is its most compelling

So whether you attended the 6th Annual ICF Ribbon-Fest, Dot-Mania, and Hugville Coach Extravaganza or not, I encourage each and every one of you to do some of your own remembering this week. Keynote Margaret Wheatly said, 'Fear not the strangeness that you feel. The future must enter you long before it happens.' I get what she means and agree wholeheartedly.

Hugs (and ribbons!) to you all!

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