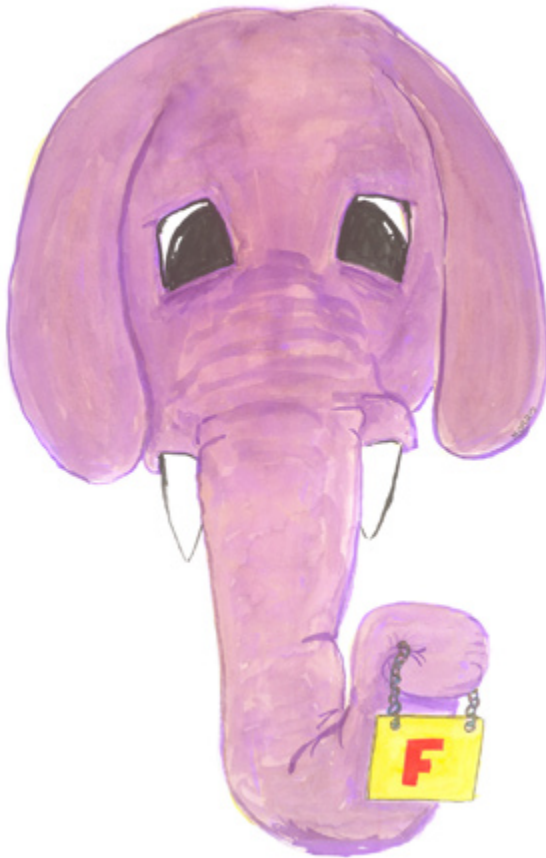


The *FRED'S STORY* Workbook



A pdf copy of this workbook can be downloaded
without charge and used without further
permission from www.rossinst.com.

CHAPTER ONE



Fred's parents were influenced by their family history and culture. When "it's always been done that way," the "it" is often accepted as the normal, accepted and best.

- **What were some of the passed down "norms" or "rules" you witnessed or experienced in your family?**



Fred's parents had an attachment with their ancestors and had a desire to conform

and belong. Compliance seemed to be the key protection against rejection and isolation.

- **What were some of the consequences or fears in your family related to being perceived as “disloyal” in thinking or behavior?**



Fred's parents had a common case of ambivalent feelings about doing things differently than what was expected and accepted. And, there was the assumption that these internal struggles would automatically resolve if a geographical cure was applied.

However, Fred's parents discovered that neither the death of others nor physical separation from them would stop the emotional conflict.

- In what ways have you tried to convince yourself that this kind of struggle within no longer exists?**

- What evidence is there that the struggle is still affecting you?**



Fred’s mother experienced some of the physical effects of emotional distress. Bessel A. van der Kolk wrote that, “The Body Keeps the Score.”

- **Using the “B” alliteration below for the areas or systems often affected by patterns of stress and emotional pain, list the symptoms you have had or are experiencing that may be related to your trauma.**

Brain: _____

Bones: _____

Belly: _____

Bowels: _____

Breather: _____

Beater: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

CHAPTER TWO



Fred’s father blamed him for two things, even though Fred didn’t have control over either one. Fred was blamed for *the death of his mother* and for *being born*. When something benign precedes something tragic, the benign is sometimes blamed in an attempt to pinpoint a cause of the tragedy. Then, while in severe pain, a suffering one sometimes demands an answer when none is currently available. Unable or unwilling to accept feelings of being out of control or vulnerable, an “answer” is wrongly assigned.

- How have you been blamed for the tragedies and/or traumas in your life?



Fred's father spent a very brief period questioning his own culpability in his mate's death. His initial theory was that the "all seeing eyes of the ages" were able to both detect and punish one who was disobedient. It is also apparent that this enforcer's retribution was disproportionate to the "crime" as well as being merciless.

- In response to perceived infractions, when and how have you assigned yourself consequences that were both overly-critical and cruel to yourself?**



Fred's father quickly dismisses this hypothesis, believing that he could not fathom or tolerate in any way being connected to the loss of his beloved. From here he engages in *projection*: seeing in another the "evil" he fears or cannot own in himself.

- **When and how have you been blamed for the guilt (true or false) others were unwilling to address within themselves?**

- **When and how have you acted out the guilt and shame belonging to others?**



Fred's growing years would be replete with unwanted occurrences. These would be painful. Deeper and more complex, however, would be the wounds resulting from what did *not* occur.

- **What are some of these pervasive unmet needs that you have brought with you into your adult years?**

Peace

Love

Approval

Acceptance

Protection

Nurturing

Support

Celebration

Encouragement

Companionship

Boundaries

Autonomy

Individuation

Comfort

Security

CHAPTER THREE



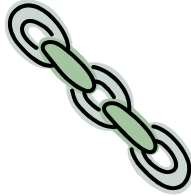
Fred’s introduction to captivity was not by choice. He was bearing the consequences for others’ behaviors.

- In what ways have you had to suffer for the infractions of others?**



Fred was not happy with his new chains. No doubt he yanked and yanked on them for quite some time. Eventually,

when no amount of effort worked, and no one came to rescue, Fred realized how useless and painful it was trying to make things change or experience freedom. So he stopped fighting. Helplessness is learned. Captivity is chosen, surrendered to, in order to block the pain of hope which always seemed to lead to disappointment.



- What are the areas in your life in which you currently feel helpless?

- **Where do you think you first learned this helpless mindset?**



Fred's learned helplessness led to an attachment to the state of captivity. The enemy was now ingeniously turned into an ally. Fred did not have the opportunity to become bonded to his mother as he desperately needed. She was with him for a while, but then she was just gone. Fred could not survive without

something to cling to that he could call *his*. In the absence of the ideal, make-shift substitutes are often created. Fred would attach to an object. It was always there when he needed it.

- **When people weren't there for you, what replacement(s) did you turn to for security? (Some of these things may be those familiar things you haven't let go of yet.)**

- **What are the things you may still be holding on to that now have become your**

way of avoiding connection with others?

CHAPTER FOUR



Fred had nearly reached the point of despair trying to please his trainer “at least once.” Contributing to this kind of despair are the following *false* assumptions/beliefs:

- The one he was trying to please was willing and able to be pleased.

(Assumed goodness/willingness)

- The one he was trying to please was being *forced* to be unhappy due to Fred’s imperfect performance.

(External locus of control)

- The one he was trying to please would *have* to be happy if Fred could just do it right.

(Cause and effect thinking)

- The one he was trying to please was confirming that Fred must be bad because he kept doing something wrong.

(Being = doing)

Which of these false assumptions relate most to you? How have they affected you in the past? How are they affecting your life now?



Fred’s introduction into circus life was an intense lesson that, in some social dynamics, it is considered “awful” for those under us to make mistakes. The “house rule” is, “Make me look good!” as if you are merely a reflection of them. Sometimes extreme reactions are displayed either when the “reflection” is perceived to have tainted the image of the narcissist, or when the “reflection” is being

acclaimed for his/her *own* accomplishment and praise seems to be withheld from the narcissist for his/her *perceived* contribution.

- **Can you identify any of these types of individuals in your past or present? How have you been affected by their influence?**



Fred's strategic thinking, after repeated disappointments with trying to gain the approval of his trainer, might have deduced that this endeavor was both futile and impossible. So, Fred could have taken one or more of these approaches to the option of "trying."

- “Do **nothing.**” “It’s just not worth the effort. . . and if I don’t try, I can’t be evaluated.”
- “Do **as little as possible.**” “It won’t be enough whatever I do . . . but at least they can’t say I didn’t try.” “Just do enough to get by.”
- “Do **something to sabotage it.**” “I need a good excuse for not performing well.” “That way, it won’t look as bad.”
- “Do it **110% all the time.**” “I’ve got something to prove . . . I’ll show them I’m not a failure!”
- “Do it **only if you can guarantee success.**” “Do only what you do well. . . avoid all risk of failure. . . it’s about winning not enjoying”
- “Do it **better than the rest.**” “I can’t let myself or others know how inferior I feel. . . the best mask against this is to appear as superior.”
- “Do **your own criticizing and self-punishing.**” Better to be in control of the

CHAPTER FIVE



Fred was gifted with a creative mind, which came in handy during those rough days and long lonely nights. For Fred, the world of reality continued to feel very foreign to him, and he wanted a world of his own. It seemed to Fred that the external world was neither safe nor accepting. That world could not be controlled or manipulated. On the contrary, the inside world could not be breached and it did not need to be escaped. The possibilities in this world extended as far as the imagination could take them. These dissociative rituals began quite automatically at first, but Fred was quick to realize their disconnecting powers. Before too long, he became quite adept at setting up the flight sequence.

- Childhood is the period of the *open window* for imaginative play and thinking. Here lies the optimal potential for the development of dissociative patterns. What were the traumas in your past where these coping maneuvers first began? Describe the ways you were able to “check



Fred would illustrate how dissociative behaviors are prone to become increasingly automatic to the exclusion of other forms of coping. Once the benefits of the behavior are experienced, survivors often learn to use this skill at will. Dissociation is a creative and necessary adaptation during the original period of trauma. Then, survival was the only priority. Now, this same skill can actually result in negative consequences of increased vulnerability, unhealthy forms of disconnection, and a deterioration of other coping abilities.

- **From your own history, describe your tendencies to withdraw and escape mentally. How has the overuse of this coping skill now become ineffective or counterproductive?**

CHAPTER SIX



Fred was having a fantasy affair with his chain. He could pretend it was exactly the “person” he wanted it to be. It would have no expectations, would never get upset, and would like everything about him. It was a no-risk relationship. Fred could ignore what it really was and remain fixated on what he thought it was. He just needed to have someone. . . something.

- What past or current relationships have you convinced yourself were better than they actually were? What or who do these people remind you of from your past? Is there a common pattern in these relationships, whether in the traits of people you are attracted to, or in the way you interact in these relationships?**

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Fred's father had become consumed in his own misery. Although a true victim of horrendous loss, he had become clouded in self-absorption. Self-care was absent, premature aging was present, and his moods were becoming more and more unstable to the point of severe bouts of violence.

- From your childhood, how was the expression of anger modeled for you? What are your learned beliefs regarding your own anger and the anger of others? What are the symptoms or evidence that your anger is not being managed or expressed in healthy ways?**

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Fred heard some very painful announcements and/or lies from his father. He was too small to understand the fallacies in his father's words. What Fred heard that day led to some commonly held misbeliefs accepted by many trauma survivors.

- **Challenge these common thinking errors with reality based truth**

Misbelief	Truth
“My existence has hurt others”	
“If my parents didn't love me, no one else can.”	
“I'm responsible for what was out of my control.”	
“I deserve to die for what happened.”	

Misbelief	Truth
<p>“I am awful, bad.”</p>	
<p>“I make other people hate and hurt me.”</p>	
<p>“I could have stopped what happened.”</p>	
<p>“I deserve what happened.”</p>	



This was a day Fred decided he didn't deserve to feel any of his emotions of loss and, again, traded the feelings of grief for shame and guilt. He minimized his pain and maximized his self-loathing. He turned off the faucet for his tears and sought protection from his feelings rather than healing for his pain.

- **How do you “feel” about your feelings? Do you allow some to surface but avoid others? What thoughts or beliefs contribute to how you relate with your own emotions? _____**

CHAPTER SEVEN



Fred was certainly out of touch with how his body was changing. Growing up. . . and out. . . he was getting bigger than he used to be, yet, the child within was ever-present. Chronologically, he was advancing, but emotionally he was stunted due to uncompleted developmental accomplishments.

- As you look in the mirror, do you see someone who is not a child anymore? Yet, at times, do you feel like anything but an adult? Describe your current struggles with the parts of you that are still trying to *catch up* emotionally.



Fred discovers the “coping skill” of self-injury, sabotaging the opportunity to be in touch with the feelings he fears or hates. His feelings have become the enemy, when the actual enemies are the

painful lies he has chosen to believe in light of his many heart wounds.

How are each of the following rationales for self-harm detrimental to your recovery? What are more healthy alternatives for emotional expression and regulation?

- ***Redirect* emotional pain to “less threatening” physical pain:**

- ***Re-enact* the abuse you experienced:**

- ***Release* pent up energy or anxiety:**

- **Render a punitive sense of justice/judgment against self for *perceived* wrongs:**

- **Relieve experiences of being emotionally *numb* or *dead*:**

CHAPTER EIGHT



Fred wasn't under the illusion that the life he had grown accustomed to was "all that good." But, it was predictable. Fred wasn't choosing a bad option over a good one. There was no doubt. . . in his mind. . . that the only two options available for him were *bad* and most likely *worse*. His decision seemed to make sense to him and his history. He would whine about his predicament periodically, but that didn't mean he was planning on going anywhere else.

- **Although recovery is an opportunity to start moving out of the "pit," sometimes we choose to just decorate the pit rather than put up a "for sale" sign. This is the "ambivalence" every survivor struggles with, and it is an important part of recovery to "count the cost" of the move. What are your current fears about the "move" including those things you may have to give up or leave behind? There may also be some "good" things that may be lost in**



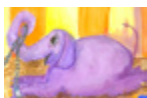
Fred did **NOT** like anything about the word **CHANGE**. Even “good” change (*not that Fred believed there was such a thing*) was **HARD!** Change means starting over. . . moving out of automatic drive into manual. The brain craves repetition and is all too willing to create short-cuts for us when a pattern has been detected. Before the pattern is detected, however, the “good” changes that have been begun just don’t instantly start to *feel* good.

- What are some new positive habits you are willing to pursue, knowing that the transition phase will involve facing and processing your issues of ambivalence?



Fred didn't have a voice about his life decisions. Others assumed:

- he didn't **deserve** a say
 - he didn't **want to** have to say
 - he didn't **have anything worthwhile** to say
 - he **couldn't** be understood (he was an elephant)
- In what way has your life felt controlled by others? In what ways have you allowed others to control you? What are some beliefs you hold that may be contributing to your choice to not be assertive?



Fred got very panicky about the move and even doubted his own ability to “keep it together.” Fred had his father’s legacy of “lack of control,” and Fred feared that his father’s genes might take over at any point.

- **How has the fear of “turning into my parents” given false credence to some of your helplessness/hopelessness beliefs?**

CHAPTER NINE



Fred’s ride to his new zoo home was *unpleasant*. Fred wasn’t a real fan of bumpy roads and motion sickness, but he was less of a fan when it came to the idea of change. Fred struggled to categorize the opportunity of change in anything other than a negative frame. He saw it as frightening as well as a possible punishment for bad behavior.

- How have you labeled and responded to the possibilities of change and/or new starts in your life?



Fred became perplexed at the realization that his audience wasn't interested in any staged performances. Although a relief in some aspects, this increased closeness created anxiety for Fred who feared his "worthlessness" would be that much more easily detected.

- How has closeness to others been a trigger for you, creating some unhealthy reactions based on fear and shame?**



Fred must have muttered, “And the hits just keep on coming!” when the increased visibility revealed that he wasn’t the only one on his side of the fence. He was already missing his old friend and didn’t want to feel any more *salt in the wound* by having to open up to anyone else.

- **There’s often an uncomfortable transition phase encountered when you are confronted with the presence of mutual companionship when all you’ve felt safe with before was some replacement for true peer intimacy. How have you developed patterns of emotional or physical isolation when responding to feelings of “loneliness” or “rejection” in social situations? What are your triggers or beliefs that lead to your choices to isolate?**

CHAPTER TWELVE



Fred’s encounter with the zoo doctor introduced some new relational dynamics to the table. Nevertheless, it brought some initial caution and mistrust toward such an *unknown* guest. Fred couldn’t help noticing that this bag-carrying man did not resort to anger, nor did he require emotional pampering.

- How have the relational roles of perpetrator-victim-rescuer been embedded in your mind as evidenced by how you relate with others? How comfortable do you feel when more healthy patterns are offered?

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