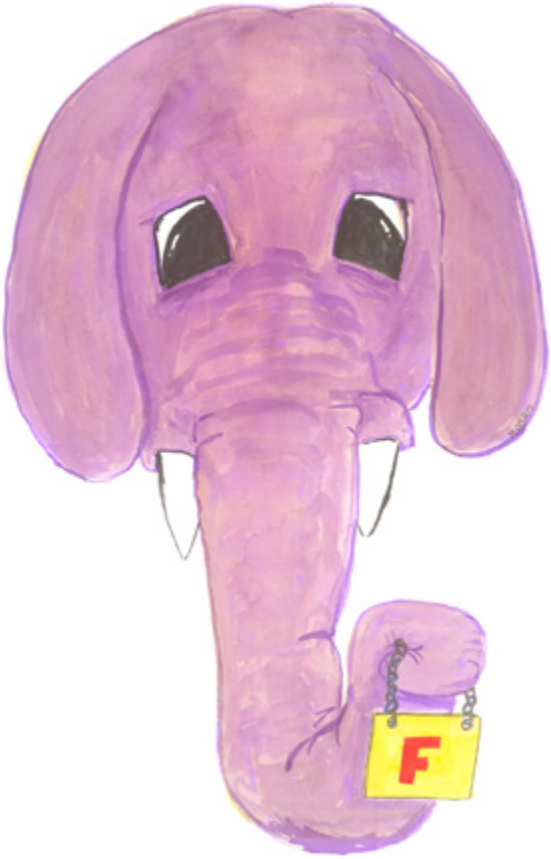
The *FRED'S STORY* Workbook



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

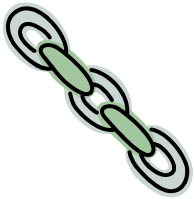
CHAPTER THREE

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**

time, method and severity of the *lashing* than to leave it to others."

- **"Do the world a favor and withdraw." They don't need you in there trying, messing up the works. Nobody needs failures around." (The "bad guy" finds a way to be the "good guy.")**

Describe how you have used these strategies in your own life. Identify the perceived "pay offs."

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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**

out" when the external world became too threatening:

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?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Fred's father chose to vent his rage on one vulnerable target, Fred. It's hard to hate the *villain* unless the *villain* is objectified and dehumanized. Fred's father saw him as the inanimate *agent of death* rather than as his son who was also hurting deeply.

- **How has a lack of empathy with yourself or someone else contributed to your acting out in anger on yourself or someone else?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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
"I am awful, bad."	
"I make other people hate and hurt me."	
"I could have stopped what happened."	
"I deserve what happened."	

After his father's inexcusable berating of his son, Fred is left without being noticed or comforted. On the other side, there is the perpetrator being consoled, pampered, and valued rather than the one left devastated.

- **How do you relate to this kind of experience? How have you tried to make sense of it? How has this betrayal and abandonment affected you?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

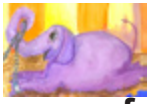
_____

For Fred, the present seemed distorted by the revelation of child parts within. In the past, there existed another

distortion. He would look at the past and judge his history as if he were an adult at the time and had insight or responsibilities that he really could *not* have had at that time. He would label himself as guilty, selfish, stupid, and irresponsible, based on this unfair measuring stick.

- **How have you judged your current or past behavior unfairly due to this sense of "always being the adult?"**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____



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**

search of the "better" or "best."

_____

_____

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?**

_____

_____

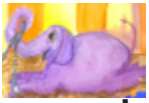
_____

_____

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)**

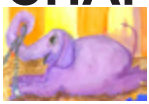
- **In what way has your life felt controlled by others? In what ways have you allowed others to control you? What are some beliefs you hold that may be contributing to your choice to not be assertive?**



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 also struggled with the assumption that the past would dictate the future. For instance, he believed that, if people were cruel before, the future would be the same.

- **How has your adopted "life script" of *negative future likelihoods* interfered with some potential positive options for you?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

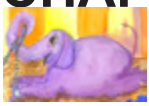
_____

_____

_____

_____

CHAPTER TEN



Fred's nightly rituals of preferred privacy with his chain buddy were no longer available. Fred was now confronted with way more transparency than he wanted. There could be no more hiding. As far as Fred was concerned, these new onlookers were just *in his space*.

- **Describe your level of comfort when you are in social situations. In what ways is transparency undesirable for you?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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 ELEVEN

Fred was surprised to witness people who seemed to be happy to see and meet him. The positive words and gestures seemed nice, but they just felt too strange to be good, *Fred thought*.

- **How do you respond to the positive strokes you receive from others? How do you block or discount them?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

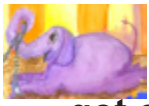
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

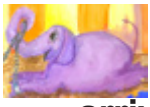


As the approaching crowd of peers got closer, Fred was triggered by one particular elephant. His "fight, flight, or freeze" mechanism was engaged and he was on autopilot! It would seem, Fred had confused the past with the present.

- **How do you tend to confuse the past with the present as you react to certain people or troublesome situations?**

Fred's evaluation of his "first impression" was less than kind. He had little empathy for the effects of what he had been through and assumed no one else would either.

- **How do the standards you hold for yourself sometimes not take into account what you have been through and the impact it has had on your life? How do you tend to judge yourself when you notice you are struggling in some area?**



Fred's subsequent conclusion, arriving shortly on the tail of his self-bashing, was that this "poor performance" might be his *ticket* to get people to leave him alone. Keeping them away, *he thought*, was best for all concerned.

- **How have you sabotaged certain interactions with others in a subtle attempt to create more of a *safe* distance?**

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?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Fred had mixed emotions about the doctor's caring ways. He did cling to his "undeserving" personal assessment.At the same time, for the *first* time, he was able to question whether or not he was as fond of the old way as he was before.

- **Describe this similar kind of ambivalence pattern in your own life?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

EPILOGUE

What are some of the most important or significant discoveries, insights, and decisions you have made while reading and processing *Fred's Story*.

NOTES