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## **How to Capture Creativity and Conquer Chaos**

I've always been interested in everything. My problem was not only was I interested in everything, I was good at a lot of them. I was interested, from a little kid, in drawing and music and painting and building things and writing and just all kinds of creative stuff. I was also interested in theology and science. Just anything that tickled my fancy.

It was easy to get scattered and not finish things. To go from one thing to another without getting to the end. So, I learned early on that if I was going to get interested in and learn something that I had to commit to it at least enough to get to where I could decide whether it was something I wanted to carry through with or something I just wanted to learn a little about. My parents were wonderful at teaching me how to do that and letting me be interesting

things and providing me with information and encouraging me to explore. But also, not to be discouraged if I said this is interesting but I don't think I want to spend any more time on that it turned into a project rather than a profession or that frequently I failed. But I kept going!

I started early on during my kid hood. I wrote and painted and did science and built things. I started businesses. I started a lawn mowing business when I was a junior high school and earned quite a bit of money and had regular customers. I planted  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre of tomatoes one summer when I was in high school and I presold my entire crop to the neighborhood. All I had to do for the rest of the summer was pick them and put them in a wagon and carry them to my customers in bags and pick up the money. I didn't have to go out selling. I had it pre-sold the entire crop. And by the way, I planted enough to where the bugs could eat their share, and I didn't have to go out and spend a lot of time cultivating and taking care of the garden. I hate picking cut worms off tomato plants.

In high school I got interested in electronics and did ham radio and but from ham radio I decided I would learn to repair televisions and radios and so I started my own radio TV repair shop when I was in high school and had customers all over the community. That led me to getting a job at Florida State University as an electronic technician in the nuclear science department and building experimental instruments for the science labs.

I was interested in music. My dad played the trumpet in a jazz band to pay for college, and my mom was a pianist and a piano teacher. I wasn't interested in those instruments. I was interested in guitars and banjos and folk music. So, I taught myself how to play the guitar and the banjo and then I went out and started meeting people and learning from them. I would go to concerts, and I would go backstage and meet famous people and learn from them and sometime made friends. I learned banjo from Earl Scruggs and guitar playing from Doc Watson. I took it seriously and wound up becoming pretty good. I earned a lot from my college education going out and touring and making a

few records and working in nightclubs on the weekends. I was not good enough to be a full-time professional performer, so it became an avocation. Along the way, I met and became good friends with Bernie Leadon, founder of the Eagles, Linda Ronstadt and Rita Coolidge, and many more. I had something to compare my talent with and knew that music was not my career. I still painted and drew. I still played music.

I was interested in doing something for a living what really interested me as a professional and was central to my personal talents. That was design and creativity. My first encounter with design was in the theater doing sets and lights and costumes and I've got a couple of degrees, and I wound up going to New York and working in the ballet and the theater. Off Broadway and touring the country. I became well known as a fledgling set designer in New York City. That was very exciting and interesting, I loved doing it. I loved the community, but it was a very up and down way of living from project to project and very stressful.

About that time, I became interested in being married, so I fell in love and got married. Then I decided I needed something a more stable way to earn a living. I thought, what can designer do that doesn't require moving around all the time and going on tour? A friend of mine, who was an architect, called me and said Fred, I've got a contract designing a theater here in Florida and I need a consultant to help me with the interior and theatre technology. Would you come and help me? So, I went down to Tampa and joined his firm. I got so interested in architecture and interior design. I studied and became an architect and interior designer. I did that for quite a long time.

Along the way I discovered that there was a piece of architectural design that I was pretty good at. Falling back to my ham radio and electronics technician days and my recent interest in computers. Computer Aided Design was just coming of age and using computers in the design of buildings and the development of programs and specifications was a massive and data intensive process, so I wrote programs in my spare time that supported our

architectural and design processes. I learned and became an expert at computer aided design and database design and programming and wound up starting a couple of companies to develop artificial intelligence tools to support the construction industry, architectural engineering, manufacturing of architectural products and more. Several Fortune 500 companies, including Herman Miller, Kohler and Lightolier, contracted us to create AI data and design systems to manage their products, so I started a company called Eclat Intelligent Systems. I raised venture capital and got good at business and entrepreneurial creativity.

Along the way, I discovered that CD-ROM's were a new invention and that you could put a lot of data on them and do interesting things. We used CD-ROMS to distribute huge interactive electronic catalogs and design systems to architects and engineers. My wife was an illustrator and a writer, and I had a daughter who had dyslexia, We discovered that there was a dearth of grade level texts and books available. The schools were using 2<sup>nd</sup> grade books with older children who were long beyond being interested in the subjects. So Judith and I got together and wrote a series of children's stories then animated them and digitized them and made them interactive and put them on a CD-ROMs using the AI technology we had developed for industry. We founded a company called e-Book Incorporated to make and sell electronic interactive books providing children grade level books. They boosted their learning with audio reading and interactive dictionaries and more.

Along the way I've written 45 books about technology, children's books, mystery, science fiction stories, books about architecture and design because one thing I learned early in life is if I wanted to know about something I could say well hell I'll write a book about it. So, I got a literary agent, and I was pretty good at getting that agent to convince publishers to let me write a book about design or about digital video or about AutoCAD or whatever they needed and that I was interested in learning more about.

So, I would learn how to do what I was teaching people to do, and I learned it well. Then I wrote a book and made money and a reputation for myself. I sold books, talked at conferences and trade shows and wrote magazine articles. I enjoyed meeting people who exclaimed “are you THE FRED JONES?”

So how did I get all this stuff done and accomplished? First, I was a pretty creative guy, but I have learned that creativity is a universal human attribute. I also learned that I was what psychologists call a polymath. I was interested in a lot of different things. But most importantly, I learned how to focus and pick. I had to learn how to make a project out of something and get it finished. Sometimes that project turned into a long-term interest and sometimes it was just a brief sideline or something that was recreational. But you would be surprised to know how useful many of those side trips became in solving a completely additional problem down the road. Both the information and the skill I gained became valuable. But I learned when to say this is a project and to move to something else. Not surprisingly, the something else was often connected to or grew out of what I was doing in the prior project. Like developing AI based CD-ROM’s for industry and applying it to children’s literature publishing. You can see the pattern. Not just moving from one thing to another but moving deliberately as opportunity and new ideas occurred. It required being thoughtful and mindful.

At the same time I was worried about and learning how to deal with the personal issues of being married, having children and being and relating to the world. There was enormous stress dealing with the trials of theater, architecture and and the venture capital world. I started practicing mindfulness and learning how to focus my attention emotionally as well as intellectually. I learned to apply creativity and problem solving to my thinking and work and it added power to what I created and what I could accomplish. This manifested from learning how to focus and follow through. How to analyze and discern what in the moment is important and should be emphasized and what should be left behind.

I would have been diagnosed with ADHD as a kid. There are a lot of ADHD diagnosed people who are very creative and very productive, Often as a result of ADHD itself. They've learned how to focus of that energy into something specific even though sometimes it's hard. You have to work at it. I became interested in learning how the techniques and process of mindfulness works. So, I studied psychology. I wound up getting a PhD. I was interested in clinical psychology, but while in graduate school in Berkeley. I got a job teaching interior architecture and design at the San Francisco Academy of Art University. I met architects and designers in San Francisco and was ultimately offered a job in a major national architectural firm as a project architect on a headquarter building for a Fortune 500 company.

I wound up eventually using psychology in the artificial intelligence world to help develop computer aided architectural technology. I used my training in cognitive psychology to design and develop Artificial Intelligence and Expert Systems for the firm and later for the Fortune 500 companies. I later became a licensed clinical and medical psychologist and have enjoyed helping people cope with their own life's chaos.

Somehow, I've connected all this together. Being focused, being mindful, being selective and being willing to get to the finish line on things is the foundation of my Practical Life. Sometimes it's not necessarily a lifelong career. Sometimes a project is short lived. I have learned how to pick between them. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes fail but always learn and proceed to something better.

So, what have I been doing now that I'm "retired." I still maintain a full-time private psychology practice and write and paint daily. Lately I've been reflecting on the process of creativity, the process of mindfulness, the of being an entrepreneur, of being a polymath, of being interested in lots of things. I have enjoyed exploring and learning sharing it with others. Being a psychologist, I have had to figure out how to teach and train and share that knowledge and experience with other people. I want to share what I have

learned from my successes and well as failures. From the chaos and the creativity, I brought to bear on controlling it. Sometimes failing is the best teacher and the best foundation upon which to build something better.

## **My Latest and Mabie Last Major Project**

I've developed a series of books that actually accumulate that some I've been working on for decades but they've accumulated in a series of little books practical mindfulness practical creativity practical empathy and cracked practical creativity these really take different take the same subject area in the personal level in an organization level and a social and societal level and they find ways of using those focus mindfulness creativity skills problem-solving skills to have a better result in personal life and communication and relationships and business and just in life so my next book is goanna be called **Practical Living: Conquering Chaos** and I'm working on it now.



## How does it Work?

Let me give you three recent examples of how I used creativity to unravel an issue in my personal life.

### **The Mountains and Valleys**

So I was offered a job in the northern mountains of California as the director of behavioral medicine for a series of rural health clinics that serve the seven 15,000 square mile area there as primary care and mental health when I first arrived there the I just I looked around and looked at the mountains and looked at the valleys and looked at Mount Shasta and Mount Bernie and the whole environment and realized that it was an incredible opportunity to learn about and absorb beauty and culture that I had never experienced before.

So I thought about what could I do that would help me focus and pay attention in a systematic and organized way, seeing and understanding the mountains and the valleys so I got my camera out and I started taking photographs concentrating on the what I was seeing not the photographs themselves. The scenes that were through the camera lens. I could focus your attention and make you very mindful about what you're observing and experiencing.

The process of composing the photograph is a mindfulness discipline. As I looked at it later, I realized that that I could even more intimately learn the area if I drew and painted scenes. I began to paint and draw. I had been a painter and artist my whole life, so this was a natural way to think about the countryside. It's a matter of digesting and absorbing and taking apart and putting back together the scenes. You need to understand the essence of what you're seeing. The process is an application of both mindfulness and creativity. The vision of the countryside and community began to unfold in a very rich way. I began painting nearly every day, painting both Plain Aire and from photographs. I made thousands of paintings, etchings, drawings and photographs of the area and it became a meditative process and a personal way of seeing and understanding the environment that I was living in. And by the way I learned digital photography several years ago by writing the book, ***Digital Photography Just the Steps for Dummies!***



**Mountain Road**

## **Finland**

Three years ago, my daughter Molly, who lives in Puerto Rico, invited me to get my DNA sample tested by 23andMe. She'd always been curious about the genetic history on our side of the family, and I was too.

I was adopted then as an infant in Florida by Bert and Robert Jones. They were wonderful parents. My parents were lovely, and I had a blissful childhood. But I was always curious about my birth mother and father. I had known I was adopted my whole life, they always told me, but I had known nothing about the parents themselves.

I started exploring my genealogy I began to learn about fiddling which was one of the primary countries that my great grandparents had come from and I've spoken discovered that I had a high affinity for Finland and Finnish ideas I began to study Finnish language not very good at it but I was very helpful in understanding the culture a red the collie Bola which is the national epic of Finland and in order to understand it better I painted 56 scenes or paintings of

each of the 50 cantos of the epic poem. I know no better way to understand something than to be creative with it. Ultimately Molly and I took a trip to Finland and have continued to follow its history, culture, art and the society itself. After our trip to Finland I wrote a short essay 40-50 pages about the experience of discovering my birth parents and unpacking Finland and what it was about. It is a reflection on my own journey and what I learned about myself in Finland. That little book is called ***Longing for Home That Never Was.***



**Street in Helsinki**

## The Attack on Empathy

My first reaction to hearing Elon Musk's quoted comment, that ***the fundamental weakness of western civilization is empathy***, was to say this is the voice of a sociopath. But after further thought I realized I needed to apply my principles of Practical Mindfulness to the situation and analyze objectively what he said and the context within which he said it.

Mindfulness in information processing means approaching data with focused awareness and non-judgment. Here's a brief process:

1. **Pause and Observe:** Before diving in, take a moment to notice your initial reactions (emotions, biases).
2. **Focus on the Present:** Direct your attention to the information itself, avoiding distractions.
3. **Notice Sensations and Thoughts:** Observe your thoughts and feelings as they arise, but don't get swept away by them.
4. **Evaluate Objectively:** Examine the information for facts, sources, and logical consistency, setting aside personal opinions temporarily.
5. **Reflect and Integrate:** After reviewing, thoughtfully consider how the information fits with your existing knowledge, and if any changes to your understanding are needed.

This process led to my research, editing and writing the book ***Practical Empathy: The Critical Importance of Empathy, Mercy and Reconciliation***. It was a use of creativity and mindfulness to explore an idea that was disturbing and challenged me to explore what I thought about the importance of empathy and to better understand the mind and motivation of Elon Musk and the MAGA. The process was therapeutic, cathartic and informative. It helped me sort out some of the contemporary social and political chaos overwhelming me and our country.

## **So Let Me Teach You How to Do it Yourself!**

Let me reassure you that I don't expect everyone to write a book when they have something they need to learn or stress needing reduction. I just happen to be pretty good at it and have a lot of experience doing it. It's comfortable for me and fun. More likely you will be using creativity and mindfulness in particular to deal with an emotional problem, a social problem, a political problem, a work problem, a relationship problem and more. It can be 5-minute thought process or an hour or two's of conversation or contemplation. It might be writing a journal page about it. It can be a painting or drawing that expresses your feels. It may allow your emotions to transition into your cognitive mind so you can sort out the problem more effectively. There are many simple ways that you can apply creativity. It doesn't have to be a major work of art by any stretch. I don't always write a book when I need to solve a problem. That's just happens once in a while. Presently our country is in crisis and its impact on my patients and my own life are crowding my mind. And they are both scary and demand understanding and action. Because of my life work involves psychology, sociology and theology I am moved in that direction.

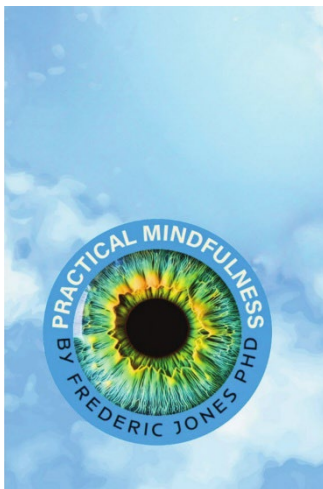
## Books, Blogs and Podcasts

Some of these projects summarize a lifetime of education, reflection and experience. Some are recent reactions to the news or a patient's questions or needs. I frequently research and write essays and handout sheets that support and respond to my patients in my psychology practice. Sometimes they are my own self-care and therapy.

### Practical Mindfulness

I have been collecting and learning about mindfulness for years and years and I have finally gotten to the point where it was ready to be assembled and shared in the book: ***Practical Mindfulness***.

Mindfulness has a profound transformational effect in practice. It promotes mental clarity and emotional. Resilience, and general well-being by rebuilding the brain through. attention management and nonjudgmental awareness. This age-old method fits nicely. As we learn more about the effects of mindfulness, we learn it is a way of life profoundly rooted in the present. I call applying mindfulness to real life situations and problems Practical Mindfulness. This book explores the roots of mindfulness as well as this extended approach. The book is based on 50 years of practice, research, teaching and therapy. Each chapter includes examples from my own life or experiences to illustrate the topic.





## ***Practical Creativity: Individual + Organization + Society***

In essence, creativity is a vital force that shapes our lives and our world. It is important for individual well-being, organizational success, and societal progress. The book includes my own experiences and reflections on the topics.

I started writing about and researching creativity long ago. This book contains a variety of essays and commentaries exploring the span of creativity. It is by no means complete or exhaustive. The essays and selections flow from my own study, experience, teaching and research into creativity as a process and as a fundamental human attribute. I have a lifelong interest in the subject. I wrote my first master's thesis on *The Teaching of Creativity to Elementary Age Children using Creative Dramatics*. It looked at the classroom environment as an architect and the use of theatre arts and creative dramatics as a primary teaching method. It synthesized two elements of my experience and knowledge.



## **Practical Creativity**

Individual + Organization + Society

By Frederic Jones PhD

## ***Practical Empathy: The Critical Importance of Empathy***

***Practical Empathy*** is an example of my own use of creativity in understanding my personal and our countries current experience with chaos. It also teach how to use the core human capacity to understand and motivate ourselves and others to crisis management, growth and reconciliation on a personal and social level. It is linked to the Core Beliefs book and blog. The process and motivation is shared in the first section above. This is a very personal journey through the issues



### **Practical Empathy**

The Critical Importance of Empathy

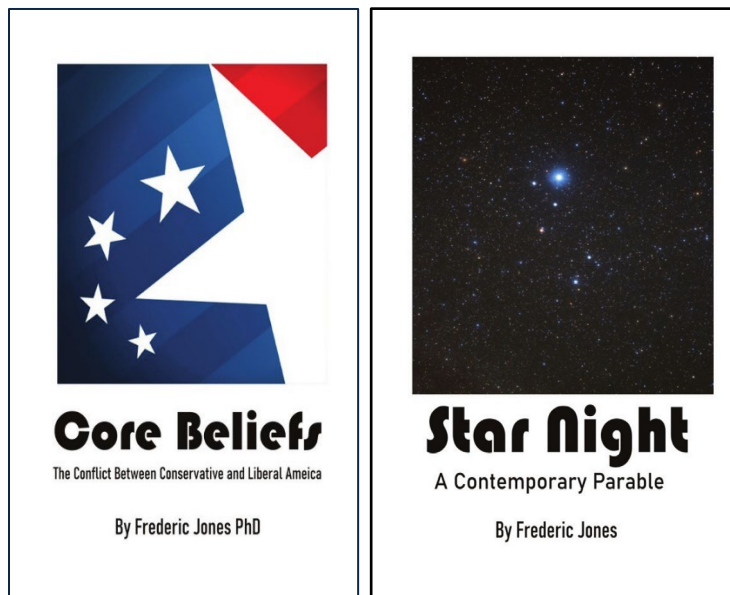
By Frederic Jones PhD

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***Core Beliefs The Conflict Between Conservative and Liberal America and  
Star Night: A Contemporary Parable***

***Star Night*** is a book about hope and a book about how we can rehabilitate our core beliefs. ***Core Beliefs*** is about how we got into the mess and how we allowed the light to get dimmed. The books collectively explore what happened in America and what would happen if we were confronted globally with the impending darkness overwhelming us. They explore how we rekindle the light of hope, of creativity, compassion and justice.



***In print at:*** [www.books.by/practical-mindfulness](http://www.books.by/practical-mindfulness)

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