

# Creative 8

Healing Through  
Creativity & Self-Expression

FRED R. MOSS, MD

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# INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in learning about the Creative 8!

The Creative 8 methodology is born of my conviction that *all healing arises from Communication, Connection, Creativity, and Self-Expression.*



With "creative" in the very name of the method, you might be tempted to think that it connects only to the "Creativity" portion of the foursome listed above. While it perhaps most explicitly ties to Creativity (with Self-Expression as a

close second), Communication and Connection are also both part of the practice, as you'll learn shortly.

In the next section, I will unveil the eight practices. Please avoid the temptation to look through the list and assume you've got it.

***The power does not lie simply  
in the practices themselves,  
but in approaching them in a very  
specific and deliberate way.***

To really catch the power of what's offered here, please carefully and thoughtfully read through to the end. And, lest you fall victim to the trap of confusing *reading* about something with *taking action*, where the rubber really meets the road is *in the practice*. So, in addition to reading and absorbing, commit to actually trying out the Creative 8 for at least two weeks before assessing whether you think it's helping or not.

# SO WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE CREATIVE 8?

In no particular order, here they are...

- ★ Music
- ★ Singing
- ★ Dancing
- ★ Drama
- ★ Art
- ★ Cooking
- ★ Writing
- ★ Gardening

Wait...you mean that's it? It's that simple?

Yes.

And No.

Did you read the Introduction above? (I admit, I typically skip Introductions and Prefaces, too.) I invite you to read the Introduction now if you haven't already. And then continue reading the rest of this book, as I will explain how to apply the Creative 8 for maximum impact.



# THE BASIC PROCESS

*So...now what? Am I supposed to do all 8 of these things every day?*



No, not all of them. Here are the essential guidelines I share when I've "prescribed" the Creative 8 to patients and coaching clients over the years.

- 1) Pick three of the practices from the list. Choose the three that appeal to you the most. (Or, if the thought of doing *any* of these presents a struggle for you, you may choose the three that repel you the least.)

- 2) Commit to doing all three of these practices every day for the next two weeks. (We'll talk about what the "doing" looks like in a moment.)
- 3) Pursue the creative endeavor, in the manner described below, for one minute per day. Yes, you read that right.

**One Minute.**

As in...

*Uno.*

*Un.*

*Eins.*

*Odin.*

*Wahed.*

*Bat.*

And so on.

# THE CREATIVE 8 MINDSET

For some people, just the mention of some of these practices can bring up unpleasant—and perhaps even triggering—memories from the past, especially from childhood.

*Getting a D (or worse!) in Art class.*

*Or Language Arts.*

*Being told (by others or yourself) that you  
"can't draw."*

*The embarrassment of forgetting a line in  
a play, musical, or skit.*

*Burnt cookies. Or pie.*

*A cake that topples over or collapses.*

*Or that time you mistakenly added salt  
instead of sugar!*

*Perhaps being "forced" to take unwanted music lessons (and being harangued about practicing!)*

If any of the above apply to you—or if you have a story of your own—then I have good news for you.

## ***None of that matters.***

Not for what I'm inviting you to explore with the Creative 8.

And it IS an exploration. In fact, that's how I'd invite you to view it.

The fact is, many of us may naturally approach the practices of the Creative 8 from the World of Measurement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Full acknowledgment to Rosamund Stone Zander and her husband Benjamin Zander, who introduce the World Of Measurement (and invite readers to pass from it into the Universe of Possibility), in their delightful book, *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Personal and Professional Life*. (Harvard Business School Press, 2000)

In the World of Measurement....we measure. We look at the results. We compare the current results to previous results, and to the results others have achieved. The comparisons can be either positive or negative.

*Well, at least this one is better than the last one.*

OR

*This painting isn't even close to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (sigh)*

OR

*Mine is waaay better than his. (He's a talentless hack!)*

**None of that is what we are about here.**

My deep invitation is for you to approach the Creative 8 via the World of Self-Expression. (I warned you we'd be hearing from that component of the critical foursome.)



In the World of Self-Expression, we are not concerned with Techniques.

Rules.

Best Practices.

Or Results.

For those of you who may have been concerned that you "don't have a creative bone in your body," you might actually have an advantage. For those who have been trained in the Arts (or in any of the Eight), you might have some baggage to let go of in order to fully embrace the challenge and opportunity.

Does that mean I'm asking you to throw everything out the window?

No. Not necessarily. Here's how I suggest approaching it:

Consider whatever training (I'm using that term broadly, to encompass skills, experience, techniques, developed tastes, preferences and opinions) you've acquired as optional tools in your belt. Rather than "rules" (*have-to's*, *must-do's*, *should's* and the like) restricting you, view them as tools to serve you in your expression.

If you find any of these tools are not serving you, you may keep them firmly fixed in your tool belt. And if even the sight of them in your belt is annoying you, you have

my full permission to toss them out the window when taking on these practices.

Besides, should they occur to you in the future as potentially useful, you can always retrieve them, and place them back in your belt—perhaps on a trial or probationary basis.



# INVITE JOY!

I want you to invite a friend to accompany you in your pursuit of the Creative 8. Her name is Joy. She's an old friend. You may already see her regularly, perhaps daily. Or maybe only occasionally. Or perhaps you find yourself questioning if you've actually ever even met her before. Maybe it's been months, years, a decade. Maybe...just maybe...you might even be convinced that if you ever met her, it was perhaps while in a dream state. Or maybe perhaps you had some fleeting encounters with her a really long time ago. Like, maybe before you passed through your mother's birth canal.

No matter where you find yourself—it's no problem. In fact, it's perfect. Really.

This is nothing more than an "invitation." I'm not commanding you to go out and wrangle Joy, and force her to come over and watch you create. I'm inviting you to put out an invitation to her.

I'm inviting you to enter into these practices with an openness to creating for the sheer exuberance of creating!





Even if you don't see Joy, if you don't feel her presence, or even if you're not even sure if she exists for you anymore—my invitation is for you, in your own way, to call out to the Universe, and invite her to join you. Put it out there as an open invitation. An invitation to Joy. To show up as often or as little as she may like. Consider it like posting a sign on the door of whatever room or space you may be creating in (and indeed, in your very heart, from which your Creation will flow): "Welcome, Joy! Come On In!"



# BUT WHAT DO I...DO?

You might be thinking this all sounds fine (or not), and wondering how to actually go about conducting the Creative 8.



The answer is—consciously exit the World of Measurement, and open the door into the World of Self-Expression. You can do this by visualizing a grand (or subdued....or whatever flavor you prefer) exit and

entrance if you like. Or just by reminding yourself of the distinction.

You can set a timer if you like. (That type of "measurement" is allowed, to ensure you actually Self-Express for at least one minute)

And then.....Create.

For its own sake.

And for the possibility of experiencing the sheer exuberance of Creating.

And if you don't experience anything resembling exuberance, that's perfectly ok, too. The purpose is to Create. Not to *force* anything. Not to even *feel* anything.

Just to Create.

And to Notice.

Notice the *experience* of Creating.

Without judging. Or labeling (either your "work" or your experience) as "good" or "bad".

**Create.**

**Notice.**

**Repeat.**



# OK, BUT REALLY... WHAT DO I ACTUALLY DO?

So, I've shared the eight practices. And I've provided some recommended guidelines of how to approach the practices.

Yet, you might still be really wondering what these practices would look like. As in, how do I "do" music? Or, do you want me to join a drama club or acting class, and show up for one minute and then leave? (Clearly, "no" to the latter.)

At the risk of being too proscriptive with my prescription (and perhaps stifling your creativity) it can be helpful to take a look at some possibilities of what these practices *could* look like, when approached with the suggested mindset.

For the sake of example, let's take a look at some possible ways to apply the mindset and methodology of the Creative 8 to Music.

# MUSIC

Your approach to Music (as well as all of the other practices) will be influenced by your degree of training in the practice. I'm not contradicting my earlier point—you are still free to throw all of your tools out the window. Let me explain.



Let's say you have experience with a particular instrument (and if you don't, please keep reading, because as I'll describe, you can *definitely* still choose Music as one of your practices). Let's say it's the piano.

You might be tempted to sit down and play what you know. Perhaps a song you've been learning lately. Or a song you played the last time you sat down...no matter how many months or years ago that may have been. If that's your approach, you might find it too tempting to slip into the World of Measurement and evaluating how well or poorly you are performing the piece. What if you love piano, and really want to incorporate piano into your practice of the Creative 8?

I have two possible suggestions.

First, if playing the instrument in the way you were trained feeds your soul, then go for it. And I'd also encourage you to pick two other practices that are out of your areas of expertise, where you don't already have a strong skill set. Or at least practices that you are willing to approach as a total beginner.

What does that mean? To approach as a total beginner?

It leads to my second suggestion. Approach the instrument as if you are encountering it for the first time. For a piano, that might mean tapping the keys with varying degrees of pressure—and listening to the sound

that comes out—as if hearing it for the first time. Perhaps playing two or more keys at the same time, or in succession, and noticing how the sound waves travel. Do they complement or collide? Do they contradict or coalesce? Listen to the resonance. Listen to the tension.

Sometimes those with a long history of playing a musical instrument may feel as if the instrument is an extension of their body. It just feels so...*natural* when holding that guitar gently in your arms. If that's the case for you, you might consider holding the instrument in reverse (e.g., if you normally have the neck in your left hand, flip the instrument, and put it in your right, so that the hand that normally strums is holding the neck). Let your fingers run along the fretboard in new patterns. Perhaps ignore the scales you've memorized, and simply let your fingers dance in interesting combinations, and listen to the sounds.

Another approach could be to come up with a very simple tune or ditty. A short combination of notes or chords....play it over and over, and just notice how it sounds. It can be sweet, or sad, or triumphant, or

silly...or even beyond classification. Consider putting words to it and singing along.



Now what if you don't have any experience playing a musical instrument? It's time to learn. And the good news is, you don't have to buy an instrument, nor pay for music lessons.

Have some old tin cans, or pots and pans and wooden spoons or other cooking utensils? Then you've got all you need for a percussion set-up—a makeshift drum set. Here's some inspiration:

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Or make an instrument with a comb and a sheet of parchment or wax paper and have a blast making music. Here are complete instructions to make and play this instrument:

**[www.welcometohumanity.net/creative8-videos](http://www.welcometohumanity.net/creative8-videos)**

Even an old broken, or incomplete, instrument can be redeemed for our purposes. In fact, one of my all-time favorite YouTube videos is of a man from Jamaica playing a song on a one-string guitar. I love how hard he rocks it, and how much sound he's able to produce. The song consists of only three notes on that guitar, percussion using the body of the guitar, and vocals. Take a listen, and don't blame me if the song is stuck in your head for the rest of the day.

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# REMINDERS

Whether you choose Music or any other seven practices, here are some important reminders to keep in mind:



Free-form (whatever that might mean to you) is *more than welcome* here.

Remember—the *exuberance of creation* is what we're after. (How exuberant would you say are the individuals playing music in the videos linked above?)

**There's nothing to achieve.**

**Nothing to accomplish.**

**No one to impress.**

**You are just Creating.**

**Joy is invited.\***



**\*Though we won't be upset or disappointed if she doesn't show up, as long as WE show up and do our part.**

# BUT WAIT...THERE'S MORE!

So, I know this whole methodology is called the *Creative 8*. However, based on experiences and feedback from my patients and clients, I've actually added two more practices to the mix. I call them the *Plus 2*, as in, *The Creative 8 Plus 2*.

(Because *Creative 10* just doesn't have the same ring to it). The ***Plus 2*** are:

**Photography**

**&**

**Cleaning**

## A WORD ON PHOTOGRAPHY

You might argue that Photography is subsumed under “Art,” and I would agree with you. However, many people have restrictive definitions of what constitutes Art, which may not allow them to consider Photography as an option. Additionally, with the prevalence of smartphones, most people these days have easy access to a camera. The kind of photography I'm talking about here is more than just snapping mindless selfies or dog pics (though both of those subjects are certainly acceptable).



The practice here has to do with intentionally looking for something or someone to photograph. It starts with Noticing—a scene, a moment, an object, etc. Choosing. And then framing it however you like. Put some thought into it. Consider light, placement, angle, zoom, and so on. Use filters on your smartphone's camera if you wish—to enhance colors, or to go black and white, for example. And snap away.

Your photographs tell a story. Or at least they contain the seeds of a story. The story of the object, the scene, the person or people. What stories do they tell? What alternate story or stories could you create? Not because you have to. Just because you can.

## A WORD ON CLEANING

When it comes to Cleaning, there's a particular type of cleaning that patients have reported to me is especially therapeutic, and which I have corroborated with my own experience.

This type of cleaning goes beyond the routine chores that occupy our day-to-day. They have to do with cleaning or organizing a place to which you wouldn't normally give your attention. For example, instead of scrubbing the toilet (unless you or someone else hasn't done that in six months...if that's the case, it actually might be a good choice for you), we are talking about things like organizing a closet. Or a drawer in a bureau. Or a desk drawer. Or doing something that moves beyond function (such as that provided by an organized drawer) to enhance and *beautify* a particular room or space.



# ANOTHER SECRET I'VE BEEN KEEPING

Ok, so you know how we started with this whole Creative 8 thing? And then I sprung the *Plus 2* on you? Well, the truth is, there's actually one more. And I promise, this is the last surprise (at least as of this writing). I call this one, *The Ace In The Hole*.

So it's actually the *Creative 8 Plus 2 & The Ace In The Hole*.

That's obviously a mouthful, so I hope you'll forgive me for calling it simply the *Creative 8*, and you'll look upon the *Plus 2* and *The Ace In The Hole* as bonuses. That's what they are. Hey, I like to over-deliver. Promise 8, and deliver 11.

So what exactly is *The Ace In the Hole*? It's this:

## Help anyone do anything.

*Wait...anyone?*

Yes. Anyone.

Well...anyone except your mother-in-law.

(Just kidding)

*Wait...anything?*

Yes. Anything.

*Ah, that's easy, you might think. I help people all day long. My family, my friends, my co-workers.*

And that is awesome!

And...my invitation here is to either find someone to help *whom you aren't already helping*, or help someone you might already help with *something you aren't already helping with*.

It doesn't have to be the same person every time. It doesn't have to be someone you know. And it doesn't

mean giving up a weekend. Remember, the minimum time is only 1 minute.

So that could be helping an older person navigate the crosswalk on a busy street.

Or, it could be taking on a simple task for someone at home, and doing it with the spirit and mindset of the Creative 8. You're doing it for the sake of Creating. For doing something that wouldn't have been done otherwise (at least not in the exact moment, in the exact way, by the exact person, and in the exact manner that it would have been done otherwise). You are doing it for the exuberance of Creating—in this case something for someone else.

And....and....it doesn't matter if they notice, or appreciate it or not. As long as it's an act of service or charity (and I don't necessarily mean giving money when I say "charity"), done with an intention of helping another, then it counts.



# PREPARE TO SHARE

You might find as you Create, you may wish to share your Creations with others. That's great! After all, Communication, Connection and Self-Expression are all sources of healing. And sharing touches on each of those. (In fact, while sharing is not formally one of the practices of the Creative 8, it is also a form of Creation. As sharing involves the creation of a moment with another person).

I have some recommendations about sharing your Creations.

When you consider sharing your Creation with another person, you might feel as if you are slipping out of the World of Self-Expression and into the World of Measurement. Here's how you can at least straddle the two worlds (if not stay in the World of Self-Expression altogether).

Remember, you are creating the moment by sharing (even if that invitation turns into a co-Creation, once the other person is involved). Therefore, you can set the

context. You get to choose and design the rules of the game.



When we share something we created, we often tend, by default, to use a win / lose metric. The cascade goes like this:

We share.

The person we share with responds.

We judge their response as either "good" or "bad," or somewhere in between.

If their judgement is more "good", then we win. If it's more "bad" or critical, then we lose.

That's not the game I recommend playing when it comes to sharing.

*Sharing is sharing.* The goal of sharing is simply *to share.*

I'm not suggesting there is no metric to use in sharing. And admittedly, a metric is by definition a measurement—after all we are playing a game here. The metric I recommend is not tied to *how your Creation is received.*

It's *whether you shared it or not.*

Did you share?

It's either a yes or no.

If it's a yes, that's automatically a success.

In fact it's a dual success.

The success lives both in the creation of *whatever you created that you are sharing*, and *the creation of the moment of sharing with the other person.*

A double victory!



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

***C'mon, Dr. Fred. Just 1 minute for each practice? A total of 3 minutes per day?***

Yes, really. If you only do three minutes per day (one minute each on three different practices), then you have completed the Creative 8 for the day.



Realistically, for some activities (e.g., setting up a canvas to paint), the set-up will take more than the time of creation. So plan accordingly, and be sure you are

actually in the process of CREATION for at least one minute. (Setting up the easel for one minute, and then walking away doesn't count.)

Further, I know that many people, in many cases, may actually spend much more than one minute on the practice. Often, the biggest challenge is overcoming inertia and mustering the necessary "activation energy" to begin the task. For example, have you ever gone out for a walk or run when you didn't want to, and noticed that once you started, you were glad you had chosen to do so?

So if you find yourself spending more than one minute per day on one or more of your three Creative 8 activities, more power to you. And if you spend only the required minute, my hat is off to you for showing up, and putting in your required reps.

### ***What kind of results can I expect?***

First of all, I suggest gently releasing an expectation of any specific *results* right out of the gates. Otherwise, it will be too tempting to be constantly measuring and assessing. I suggest not even looking for results for at

least two weeks of uninterrupted daily practice. And then, once you've completed two weeks with consistent daily practice, you can begin to look. Have I experienced any—even just a twinge—of the exuberance of Creation? Has our friend Joy showed up at all in any of my work? In the Creation process? In any sharing I may have done? If you haven't quite caught a glimpse of her, have you perhaps heard her gentle knock, or hear the rustle of leaves as she passed quietly by?

Joyful metaphors aside, with consistent practice of the Creative 8, I have had patients and clients report abatement, and sometimes even the disappearance, of various symptoms of psychological distress—including anxiety, obsessions, compulsions, depression, fears, phobias, and even symptoms regarded as more extreme, including suicidal ideation, hearing voices, psychosis, etc.

Rest assured, while the Creative 8 is not a "cure all" for all people and all symptoms and conditions everywhere, I have found that consistent practice leads reliably to a whole new way of self-expression. And when combined

with other regular, intentional practices related to Communication, Connection, and Creativity, it can open up a whole new world.

***How does all this talk about free-form self-expression apply to the practice of Gardening? There are basic requirements that must be met in order to have plants that actually LIVE.***

I concede the point. I would suggest the mindset to apply to Gardening might involve following (or even learning) some basics about what types of plants grow in what climates, and with how much watering, and what kind of soil and feeding is required, etc. (If you are a complete newbie, fear not—you can still do this, and you want to choose something really easy to grow, such as sprouts.) Try to let go of a focus on the *results*, and instead, enter into the *process*. The practice here is about the care and cultivation of the plants. And specifically, the process of planting something where it wouldn't have grown otherwise. Or caring for something

already planted such that it might grow and flourish in ways it would not have otherwise, if not for your hand in it's (co-)Creation.



***I am strongly repelled by the thought of doing any of the eight items on the Creative 8. What do you suggest?***

First, see above ("But Wait...There's More!" and "Another Secret I've Been Keeping"). There are actually three more practices to choose from.

Next, instead of choosing the practice that most appeals to you, choose the one that repels you the least. (Sometimes a simple switch in perspective can bring clarity.)

If that still doesn't work for you, then let fate decide. Take eleven slips of paper and write the name of one practice on each. Fold them, and put them in a small bowl. Commit to follow through on the first three you pick out of the bowl. Then pick out three slips, and let Fortuna have her way.

# SHARE YOUR CREATIVE 8 EXPERIENCES!

I invite you to **share with me about your experimentation with the *Creative 8*.**

Send me **stories, photos, or videos** of your Creations.

Tips, tricks, trials, tribulations, and transformations—they are **ALL** equally welcome.

**drfred@welcometohumanity.net**

I also invite you to **share your Creations and your *Creative 8* insights on social media.**

You can use the following hashtag: **#mycreative8**

**facebook:** [fb.me/drfredmoss](https://fb.me/drfredmoss)

**instagram:** [@drfredmoss](https://www.instagram.com/drfredmoss)

**twitter:** [@drfredmoss](https://www.twitter.com/drfredmoss)

**linkedin:** [www.linkedin.com/company/dr-fred](https://www.linkedin.com/company/dr-fred)



LET'S DO GREAT THINGS TOGETHER!

**The *Creative 8* is just the tip of the iceberg.  
The next two pages show ways we can  
collaborate.**



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# ABOUT DR. FRED



***Dr. Fred Moss** is a graduate of Northwestern University Medical School and a licensed psychiatrist who has served the mental health industry for nearly four decades. During that time he has consulted patients, practitioners, medical facilities, non-profit organizations, and community groups.*

*While his initial interest in psychiatry was to expand on communication as a primary healing tool, a shift in the medical paradigm in the 80's led to physicians prescribing "magic pills" as a primary way of dealing with emotional distress. The medications, which initially seemed to briefly quell the symptoms, appeared to be exacerbating—even causing—the symptoms they were prescribed to treat.*

*In 2006, Dr. Fred began taking a new approach with his patients, working with a chosen few to assist in reclaiming their lives from the clenched fists of medication. Over time he saw that those who persisted gradually and reliably improved once they were free of the medication. Patients began to report frequent success stories that began to open up a whole new set of questions about the actual definitions of mental illness and mental health and the conversations that are created around those definitions. It is around these basic principles that Dr. Fred began to shape his methodology and his work with clients.*

*In 2018, as a matter of conscience, Dr. Fred walked away from a lucrative position at a California State Prison after only one week, due to this growing and ultimately unignorable conviction that sometimes psychiatric diagnoses and medications do not serve in the patient's best interest. He has since dedicated his efforts to establishing his brand, Welcome To Humanity, as a "home base" for his work as a speaker, consultant, and advisor, and for his mental health and life coaching practice as a "non-medicating psychiatrist".*

*Dr. Fred is the founder of Global Madness, a breakthrough new documentary series currently in development that explores the global state of mental health, with a mission to discover new ways of talking about, diagnosing, and treating "mental illness" through authentic and inspirational storytelling.*

*In 2020, Dr. Fred launched the Welcome To Humanity Podcast ([welcometohumanity.net/podcast](http://welcometohumanity.net/podcast)) to share enlightening, inspiring and empowering conversations with thought leaders and change-makers committed to making an impact for the good of humanity.*