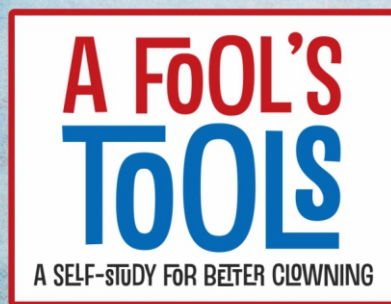


*“Out of clutter find simplicity.
From discord find harmony.
In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”*

— Albert Einstein



Mike Bednarek

IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, A FOOL'S TOOLS MAKES BETTER CLOWNS

The coronavirus pandemic has created a challenging environment for performing artists like clowns. No live audiences, public gatherings, or gigs.

Who better to face difficulty head on and turn it into an opportunity than the clown?

But in responding to COVID-19, there's an unexpected gift amidst the uncertainty. Clowns now have time on their hands. And Facebook and Zoom have become untapped media.

BOOM! Out rolls an opportunity to use that newfound time to improve our clowning, A Fool's Tools: A Self-Study for Better Clowning, a 21-day program to make us better clowns. [A full description of the program, including its goals, framework, and resources, appeared in the May-June 2020 issue of Jest for Clowns.]

Posts on A Fool's Guide to Clowning (AFGTC) Facebook group began promoting the program on (appropriately) April 1. Interest led to the launch of a first-ever Fool's Tools Study Group on Facebook, convened on Zoom on April 18, the first day of its 21-day study period.

Weekly Zoom sessions provided coaching, an environment to try new things, a place to generate ideas, peer motivation and accountability, and collegial support and encouragement for the study group members. 13 A Fool's Tools Study Group members completed their studies on May 9 with a rousing wrap-up and celebration event on Zoom, complete with performances, stories, laughter, applause, and the awarding of Ta Da! Certificates of Completion.

The composition of the AFT Study Group was diverse, with clowns from many different clown performing arts disciplines and experience levels. Their goals and focus areas for the 21-day self-study were just as ambitious and creative:

- Improve juggling skills
- Start a YouTube channel
- Put together a birthday party routine
- Record and edit videos of performances
- Design a coloring page
- Complete a storytelling performance project
- Create new art-based routines
- Construct and learn how to walk on stilts
- Learn how to build props
- Better define my clown character
- Learn new balloon sculptures
- Develop new walkaround gags
- Create a new, musical clown doctor character
- Develop ways to incorporate musical comedy in performances
- Search and discover what I want to do with my clowning
- Make my clown funnier
- Get past the beginner level on the ukulele
- Learn and build confidence in clown movement skills
- Learn puppetry and scripting
- Perform and produce live shows online
- Learn what makes me laugh and why

Whoa! That's a ton of learning to take on for a 21-day study period!

You should hear the stories in their own words from this incredibly hard-working, creative, dedicated clowns of the April-May 2020 A Fool's Tools Study Group. You know what? You will!

In the next few weeks, Jest for Clowns will publish a Special Issue spotlighting that first-ever A Fool's Tools Study Group. Watch for it, and be prepared to be inspired by their heart and dedication to the

art of clowning and becoming better clowns.

What about you? Want to devote 21 days to making yourself a better clown? Want to make the commitment of time, focus, and energy to A Fool's Tools Self-Study for Better Clowning?

Then, let's go! Pull up the article on A Fool's Tools in the May-June 2020 Jest for Clowns. Read it and get your clown creative juices going. Grab your notebook. Set goals. Identify the resources you'll need. Find someone to support you. Commit the time. Join the AFT

Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/AFoolsTools/.

And commit the next-21 days to improving your clown performing art. Then, let's meet back at the AFT Facebook group after 21-days and talk about how we're become better clowns. **JFC**

Mike Bednarek is a physical comedian (Buster), hospital clown (Dr. Fun E. Bone), and clown teacher and coach who lives in Salem, Oregon. He is a work-in-progress in his 40th year of clowning.

I always wanted to be a clown. When the pandemic hit, I was out of work, and

decided to devote my time to perfecting my clowning skills. The AFT self-study was just the structure I needed.

I have come a long way. My clowning career is off and running.
—Phil Nichols



I was able to create a new way of presenting my clown. I highly recommend the class to new and seasoned clowns.

Bonnie Corcia



I'm applying the simple Fool's Tools Self-Study learning model: Observe, Reflect, Apply, and Do. Repeat/repeat/repeat and grow!
—Gracie Gilb

