

Jeannie Lindheim's
HOSPITAL
CLOWN
TROUPE



The Art & Joy of Hospital Clowning Training Program

by Jeannie Lindheim

“Your book changed the course of history for me and hospital clowning here. It gave me confidence, knowledge and ideas how to go about starting my own training program. The war changed everything but since the beginning we were daily in shelter for refugees and hospitals and applying clowning. Thank you, Jeannie, pen is stronger than the sword and thru your book, you influenced so many lives here.”

*With warmest hugs and love from the Ukraine,
Jan Tomasz Rogala*

Sold in 20+ Countries



The Art and Joy Of Hospital Clowning

Also by the Author

Trusting the Moment: Unlocking Your Creativity and Imagination

Whispers of Grace: Living in Rural Vermont

Whispers of Beauty: Quotations on Nature, Serenity and Solitude

The Goose Who Lost His Honk

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	vi
<i>A Special Word about Mass General Hospital for Children</i>	vii
Introducing Our Fabulous Clowns!.....	ix
Our Board.....	xi
Big Clown Hugs and Thanks.....	xiii
Introduction	
Introducing Hearts & Noses Hospital Clown Troupe.....	xvi
About the Troupe.....	xvii
About the Training Process.....	xviii
Purpose of This Program	xx
Description of This Training	xx
How to Use the Program Materials	xxii
Background on Jeannie Lindheim.....	xxii
We Can Train Your Group in Hospital Clowning	xxv
Session One	
It's All About Love.....	2
Clown Birth	3
Discovering Your Clown.....	4
Key Concept: The Gift of Presence.....	5
Exercise #1 My Name Is.....	6
Exercise #2 Clown Walk and Centers Theory ▶▶	7
Exercise #3 Improvisation with Centers Theory	8
Exercise #4 Status ▶▶	9
Developing Your Clown Walk.....	10
Exercise #5 Sense Energy.....	10
Exercise #6 Marionette Skit ▶▶	11
Exercise #7 Asking Permission to Enter a Room ▶▶	12
Exercise #8 Problem Solving and Clown Logic ▶▶	15
Exercise #9 Lunch Break and Clowning at the Supermarket.....	16

▶▶ This symbol throughout the book indicates that you can view examples of the topic on the video.

Hygiene: JLHCT Practices and Policies	17
Precaution Signs	18
Other JLHCT Practices and Policies	20
Clowning at Parties.....	21
Exercise #10 Clown Prom and Other Places▶▶.....	22
Review	23
Questions and Answers	24

Session Two

Why Be a Hospital Clown?.....	30
Initial Feedback on Hospital Visits.....	31
Questions and Answers	31
Key Concept: Swinging Between the Trees.....	33
Technique Reviews.....	34
Exercise #1 Machine Add-On ▶▶.....	34
Exercise #2 Working with Props ▶▶	35
Developing Your Clown Voice	36
Exercise #3 Using Props to Find Your Clown Voice	37
Exercise #4 14 Shticks and Magic Tricks	38
Exercise #5 Lunch Break and Clowning at the Deli	43
Key Concepts: Review	43
Key Concept: Spotlighting.....	44
Exercise #6 Role Playing – Initial ▶▶	44
Exercise #7 Clown Tableau	45
Exercise #8 Role Playing – Doing It Wrong	46
Exercise #9 Role Playing – Clowning with a Quiet Child	46
Exercise #10 Environments	48
Questions from the New Clowns to the Spicy Clowns	49
Review.....	51

Session Three

Inspiring Quotes.....	54
What We Love About Hospital Clowning	55
Key Concept: Wiping Your Feet at the Door	57
Exercise #1 Sound and Movement Improv ▶▶.....	57
Exercise #2 Clown Playground – Using Guided Imagery ▶▶.....	58
Exercise #3 Improv Magic Tricks	61
Exercise #4 White Light Technique.....	63
Lunch Break and Clown Visit to a Beauty Shop	65

What Kills Creativity	65
The 14 Commandments of Clown Leadership	66
Questions and Answers	67
Pop Quiz.....	69
Exercise #5 Float the Judges Away	72
Exercise #6 Role Playing.....	74
Exercise #7 Un-Birthday Party.....	77

Session Four

Key Concept: Be in the Present Moment	81
Greatest Challenge?	83
Disappointments?	84
Clowning in the PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit)	85
About the Environment.....	85
About the Children in the PICU.....	86
About the Parents in the PICU	87
About the Staff in the PICU	88
About Entering the PICU	89
About Your General Clown Manner in the PICU	89
At the Bedside in the PICU	90
About Taking Care of Your Clown Self in the PICU	91
About Visiting the PICU	91
Exercise #1 PICU Role Play.....	92
Q and A to Dr. Agus About Clowning in the PICU.....	95
A few stray points	96
Exercise #2 Improv with Textures.....	96
Exercise #3 Improv as Martians	97
Exercise #4 Improv as Animal	97
Exercise #5 Improv with Being Thrilled.....	97
Exercise #6 Improv with Curiosity, with a Prop ►►.....	97
Exercise #7 Improv with Curiosity About your Costume	98
Exercise #8 Improv with a Towel.....	99
Exercise #9 Psychological Gesture	99
Parting Words►►.....	101
Review.....	101

Appendices

A. Glossary of Terms and Concepts	104
B. Contents of Video/DVD	109

C. J LHCT Health Requirements	110
D. <i>J LHCT Infection Control Guidelines</i> by Michael Agus, MD.....	112
E. Clowning with Kids on Precautions	117
F. Clowning for Special Children.....	120
G. Responsibilities of J LHCT Clowns	122
H. More Shticks and Games and Magic!	125
I. <i>Cultivating Gentleness</i> by Shobi Dobi	129
J. <i>I'm in Heaven When You Smile</i> by David Langdon.....	132
K. <i>Exploring Our Intention in Service</i> by Frank Ostaseski.....	136
L. <i>Clown Principles</i> by Avner Eisenberg and Julie Goell	142
M. J LHCT Self-Assessment	145
N. Self-Check – Ways in Which We Can Flub Up	148
O. The Art of Group Leadership	149
P. More Inspiring Quotes	177
Q. The Spiritual Side of Clowning.....	179
R. Resources.....	180
S. Quotes from Children, Parents, and Organizations	181
T. Magical Moments	184

Introduction



*Hearts & Noses Hospital Clown Troupe
is dedicated to
bringing children happiness
. . . one clown at a time.*

The specially trained members of our Troupe invite children into Clown World, providing relief for sick children and their families. While our visits are certainly entertaining, our clowns strive to do more.

Our primary goal is to **engage and empower the children**. This is an enormous gift to children, who are seldom given choices about their care in the hospital. Our style of improvisational clowning gives them the sense of control over some aspect of their world. This control starts with the first appearance of the clowns at the hospital door. The clowns **always ask permission** to visit a child. If the child's answer is *Yes*, the clowns begin to connect with the child. We clown to the light behind the child's eyes. Our clowning is sweet, gentle, and age appropriate for each child. If the child says *No*, we honor that decision by blowing kisses and melting away.

We want each child to feel that she has her own personal clown.

A former clown, Anne-Marie Audet, said, As hospital clowns, we use the simple human gifts of kindness and respect for each other's inner beings. We seek to uncover and cherish the hidden spirit of joy and creative energy that lives in the heart and soul of every child and those who love them, a spirit so often hidden away by the frightening experience of disease and disability.

Our clowns offer silly improvised poems using the child's name, ask for the

child's help with a magic trick, offer the child magical marionette strings to make a clown dance around, or do the child's favorite music: rap, hip-hop, or whatever! The child is **empowered** to make choices offered by the clowns.

As clowns, our main approach is to have problems with every single thing we do. Obstacles are a clown's delight. This also empowers the children because they tell us how to do it correctly. Our clowns learn more than 60 shticks they can do with the children, but the real key to our way of clowning is "swinging between the trees" and improvising whatever feels appropriate for that particular moment.

We ask the child what they love and what their interests are, then make up wacky improvisations tailored to that specific child.



Of course, if the child is too sick to interact, we may play with a puppet or do some silly antic so they can enjoy our color and goofiness. We might take out a tiny music box and play a sweet tune. If the child is too sick, we offer the music box to the parent to play for their child, thus **empowering** the parents.

The family and friends love to see the child acting like a child again, enjoying our wackiness. The whole family can forget the pain it might be feeling for a moment, and enter Clown World!

About the Troupe

Begun in 1997, our Troupe now has 22 volunteers who are trained in doing improvisation-based, child-centered hospital clowning. We have formed a special relationship with the nationally recognized MassGeneral Hospital *for* Children and clown there several times a week. The Troupe also regularly visits the Franciscan Hospital for Children in Boston.

We have also visited other Boston-area hospitals, including Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Boston Shriners Hospital, Tufts-New England Medical Center, and Boston Medical Center. The Troupe also participates in events including Why Me, Inc., Helping Children with Cancer; Make-A-Wish Foundation Holiday Party; Massachusetts Special Olympics; The Jimmy Fund Annual Summer Festival; Boston Living Center (HIV/AIDS) Party; Tufts-New England Medical Center Holiday Party; Catholic Charities Easter Party; AIDS Walk; AIDS Action Committee; Easter Seals Camp Reunion; Making Strides Against Cancer; Breast Cancer Walk; Christmas in the City; Progeria Foundation Fundraiser; Jordan

Brothers Camp Reunion; Boston Medical Center Party; Masquerade Ball; AIDS Action Party; American Diabetes Association Party. In our first eight years, we have clowned for more than 21,000 children.

About the Training Process

Our initial training consists of four daylong workshops that are augmented by processing sessions held at the end of each hospital visit. Additionally, for the next eighteen months to two years, new clowns are accompanied by experienced clowns who provide on-site support and supervision. After new clowns have “graduated,” they join the Troupe in four ongoing trainings. We also bring in guest artists to teach our clowns many other skills. To top it off, we hold an annual clown retreat where we play together and learn new techniques to further develop our clown characters.

The training period for a new clown is eighteen months to two years. New clowns are always partnered with more experienced clowns in the hospital. This mentorship is crucial due to the sensitive hospital environment.



We continually work to strengthen our skills in interacting with sick children and their families, as well as our skills in comedy, mime, improvisation, and magic. Our magic is unlike traditional magic. We mess up the trick – do it incorrectly – and ask for the child’s help. By giving us a magic word or smile or blink, the child enables the clown to do the magic trick successfully. Often, we teach them the trick so they can show their friends. Again, it is always about empowering the child.

During our extensive training we learn:

- Hospital hygiene; we share love, not germs.
- How to work with hospital staff so that we don’t get in the way.
- How to ask the child’s permission before we enter his room.
- A sensitivity to the moods, needs, and conditions of the patients so that we are able to sense moments such as when a child has had enough, when quiet companionship is what’s really needed, or when a parent needs privacy.
- How to work in this often heartbreaking atmosphere without losing heart, yet without distancing ourselves. Our training gives us specific techniques to stay in character and connected to the child.

Our training entails practicing the core skills of our style of hospital clowning:

- Moving slowly and gently so as not to overwhelm the child.
- Modulating our voices and energy for the hospital environment.
- Creating new material – constantly improvising – as we almost never know who we will meet in each hospital room.
- Adapting our clowning to the needs of each child: the energetic, the drowsy, the bored, the timid, the excitable, the heavily medicated, the toddler, the teenager, etc.
- Working in rooms with Precautions, which requires a sensitivity to special issues and entails wearing masks, gloves, and gowns.
- Working as teammates, coordinating and modulating our silliness to match the energy of the child.
- Spotlighting – giving and taking focus – so the child is not overwhelmed by clown antics.
- Role playing so our clowns can better understand what it is like to be the child in the bed or the parents/caretakers visiting their child.

Parents and hospital staff have said to us *She hasn't smiled like this in days!* or *We usually can't get any reaction from him, and you have him laughing!* Nurses will occasionally call us into a child's room to distract the child from a painful medical procedure. It isn't that we are irresistibly hilarious clowns. It is that we carefully and thoroughly reach out, give love, and make connections with these children as only a hospital clown can.

Clowning is not about being funny. It is about the gift of presence.



Throughout our initial and ongoing training, we are focused on:

- ♥ Creating an environment that promotes healing.
- ♥ Alleviating fear, anxiety, and stress in children.
- ♥ Inviting the child and family to enter the magical Clown World where, for a moment, they can forget illness.
- ♥ Encouraging positive and joyful energy in an environment that can be sterile and frightening.
- ♥ Supporting children by promoting joy.

Sprinkled throughout the book are “Magical Moments”, interactions between hospital clowns and patients that make us marvel at the healing power and

spiritual magic of clowning. The names and personal attributes of the people described in these Magical Moments have been changed so as to respect confidentiality.

Purpose of this Program

This book and the accompanying video/DVD have been created to support the growth and professionalism of improvisation-based hospital clowning for children. These materials were developed to:

- Serve as a reference for the clowns in our Troupe.
- Provide new concepts for clowns who are already clowning in hospitals, primarily in the areas of:
 - ♦ Empowering the child,
 - ♦ Giving choices,
 - ♦ Using improvisation, and
 - ♦ Developing a clown character.
- Introduce other interested readers to many tools and techniques used in the wonderful world of improvisation-based hospital clowning for children.

Description of the Training Presented in this Program

Throughout the training, we focus on empowering the child, giving the child choices, and asking permission. The technical part of the training is divided into three parts:

- Characterization techniques, in which trainees learn techniques for transforming honestly and organically to a clown. These techniques develop stage presence, free the body to take risks in movement, increase movement vocabulary, and develop the freedom and relaxation needed for characterization.
- Improvisational techniques, in which trainees learn many improvisational tools and techniques to use specifically in a hospital setting with the children and families.
- Role-playing, in which trainees experience being the visiting clown, the child in the bed, and the child's parents, siblings, caretakers, and friends. To be an effective clown, it is important to understand all of these roles.

PRAISE FOR The Art & Joy of Hospital Clowning Training Program

“We’ve all heard about how good it is to be a caring clown. Here is the manual on how to develop a spontaneous hospital clown group. Best of all, it comes from the heart – not the makeup and costume. All clown groups, whether you work with children or adults, singles or pairs, experienced or inexperienced, can benefit from adapting the exercises, experience, and wisdom to your programs. I recommend it highly.”

*Shobi Dobi, The Clown
Shobhana Schwebke Publisher
The Hospital Clown Newsletter*

“Given Jeannie Lindheim’s extensive background in theatre and drama education, it is no small surprise that this manual is chock full of exercises and insights from the likes of Viola Spolin, Michael Chekhov, and Avner the Eccentric. These elements, along with Jeannie’s own unique contributions, provide a practical, user-friendly introduction to Jeannie’s improvisationally-based style of hospital clowning.”

*David Langdon
ChildLife Specialist/Therapeutic Clown
Winnipeg, Manitoba*

“This book will be truly useful and inspiring for hospital clowns.”

*Camilla Gryski
Therapeutic Clown
Toronto, Canada*

PRAISE FOR Trusting the Moment: Unlocking Your Creativity and Imagination

A handbook for individual and group work

“If experience is the best teacher, then Jeannie Lindheim is the next best thing — a teacher who has created 50 powerful experiences that help people learn how to be fully alive, compassionate, courageous, creative human beings. This book is a goldmine of ideas for anyone interested in the burgeoning field of experiential education. I recommend it enthusiastically!”

*Richard Borofsky, EdD,
Clinical psychologist
Co-founder of the Center for the Study of
Relationship*

“The book is like a toy store for teachers who love to teach: so much fun, expanding the possibilities, making the impossible seem possible.”

*Ken Baltin,
Actor and Teacher
The Boston Conservatory*

“What a lovely, eclectic cookbook for learning to live more creatively in the here and now.”

*Stephen Snow, Ph.D., RDT-BCT, Chair
Department of Creative Arts Therapies
Concordia University*

Jeannie Lindheim, MFA has taught acting, movement, improvisation, creativity, auditioning and characterization techniques for thirty-five years. She is the founder of the Hearts and Noses Hospital Clown Troupe in Boston, which has entertained over 50,000 children.

Visit the author’s website at www.center4creativity.org