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EVERYDAY  
CREATIVITY  
AND THE  
HEALTHY MIND  
Dynamic New Paths  
for Self and Society

RUTH RICHARDS



# Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture

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Both creativity and culture are areas that have experienced a rapid growth in interest in recent years. Moreover, there is a growing interest today in understanding creativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon and culture as a transformative, dynamic process. Creativity has traditionally been considered an exceptional quality that only a few people (truly) possess, a cognitive or personality trait 'residing' inside the mind of the creative individual. Conversely, culture has often been seen as 'outside' the person and described as a set of 'things' such as norms, beliefs, values, objects, and so on. The current literature shows a trend towards a different understanding, which recognises the psycho-socio-cultural nature of creative expression and the creative quality of appropriating and participating in culture. Our new, interdisciplinary series Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture intends to advance our knowledge of both creativity and cultural studies from the forefront of theory and research within the emerging cultural psychology of creativity, and the intersection between psychology, anthropology, sociology, education, business, and cultural studies. Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture is accepting proposals for monographs, Palgrave Pivots and edited collections that bring together creativity and culture. The series has a broader focus than simply the cultural approach to creativity, and is unified by a basic set of premises about creativity and cultural phenomena.

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Ruth Richards

# Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind

Dynamic New Paths for Self  
and Society

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Ruth Richards  
Psychology  
Saybrook University  
Oakland, CA, USA

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Praise for *Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind*.

“The human community desperately needs new ways of thinking about the individual and the community, the common good, the creative good, our place in the world. Our health and wellbeing depend on the kind of innovative thinking found in abundance in this book. Dr. Ruth Richards poses powerful questions and provides concrete pointers as well as expansive and profound visions of what could be. I hope the reader will feel empowered and excited by the ideas and stories in this wonderful and brilliant book.”

—Judith V. Jordan, *Director, Jean Baker Miller Institute, Wellesley College and Assistant Professor, Harvard Medical School, USA*

“Dr. Ruth Richards’s years of study of everyday creativity shine through in this new volume. She synthesizes a multitude of theories and resources, making everyday creativity truly accessible to everyone—bringing new hope to a world very much in need of healing.”

—Susan Borkin, *psychotherapist and author of The Healing Power of Writing and When Your Heart Speaks, Take Good Notes*

“A wonderful book. We are taken on a delightful exploration into the creativity that each of us, knowingly or unknowingly, harbors in our everyday lives. It is rife with examples of attitudes, actions, and situations that enrich each of our days with expressions of the joy of living.”

—Allan Combs, *Doshi Professor of Consciousness Studies, California Institute of Integral Studies, USA. Authored books include The Radiance of Being (Best Book Award, Scientific and Medical Network of the UK)*

“This is not the usual creativity book. Rather than viewing creativity as something you do, this book makes it clear that a key part of creativity is about who you are. What a refreshing take on creativity and its linkages to well-being and a life well lived.”

—Scott Barry Kaufman, *author and editor of books including Wired to Create: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Creative Mind*

“*Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind* is Ruth Richards’s latest and hugely compelling exploration of the relationship between creativity and health. Seeking to bring a more ‘qualitative’ feel for the subject, this big book captures the attention from the get-go. At times confessional, intimate, joyous, funny, playful, challenging, direct, provocative, deep, and wide-ranging, it is always engaging, run-through with erudition, and just ‘pops’ with ideas on every page.”

—Nick Wilson, *Reader in Creativity, Arts & Cultural Management, King’s College London, UK. Co-Editor (with Lee Martin), Palgrave Handbook of Creativity at Work*

“Enhancing human potential is a theme that has spawned numerous books and essays over the past several decades, but Ruth Richards has given it an original spin. In this provocative book, she digs deep and soars high to suggest ways that individuals can transform themselves and their social environment. *Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind* is bound to change the lives of many of its readers and, if its suggestions are followed, the direction of their world as well.”

—Stanley Krippner, *Alan Watts Professor of Psychology, Saybrook University, USA. Recipient of the 2002 American Psychological Association Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology*

“This book helps us see creativity as a way of life—that in fact we *are* the phenomenon of creativity itself. Taking a physiological, psychological, spiritual, and environmental approach, Dr. Richards eloquently describes the emergent processes revealed in all aspects of daily life, if only we become aware. Cooking a

meal, working in a garden, telling a story to a child are as creatively important as painting a picture or writing a poem. Dr. Richards provides ideas for increasing our ability to be creative. She also explains how the emotional and physical benefits of living creatively leads to a healthier life—and ultimately can contribute to the evolutionary future of humanity.”

—Marie diCowden, *Ph.D. Clinical Psychologist, Neuropsychologist, Saybrook University, USA. Founder of Biscayne Institute of Health and Living*

“Ruth Richards draws on her extensive experience as a clinician and a leading researcher on creativity. Her book is based on solid scientific information, yet is engaging to read and provides wise practical advice on how to lead a more creative and fulfilling life.”

—Dennis Kinney, *Senior Research Psychologist, McLean Hospital, Belmont, USA*

“Of all academic treatises, the topic of creativity should ideally be treated in ways that are novel, creative, and linked to the process of living. In this remarkable book, Ruth Richards achieves these goals. She walks us through a surprisingly diverse wonderland in which creativity appears in the practices of ordinary living. In fact, life itself is an inherently creative process expressing itself in the nuances and rewards of relationships and in the recognition and appreciation of beauty. The range of topics goes from finding the meanings of one’s identity to employing the process to transform destructive problems presented by the environment. This book is itself a creative adventure.”

—Marc Pilisuk, *Professor Emeritus, The University of California, USA. Books include The Hidden Structure of Violence, Peace Movements Worldwide and The Healing Web: Social Networks and Human Survival*

“Dr. Richards has long used her psychological and medical training in the passionate pursuit of health—of helping people to live deeper and more satisfying lives as individuals and communities. This book helps readers move toward happier healthier living through learning to be more present in the moment, and creatively aware of possibilities. This often results in finding new openness, meaning, interconnection, and challenge. The book provides pathways to enhancing experience and appreciation of life, in surprising ways.”

—Steven R. Pritzker, *Faculty, Saybrook University, USA. Former Prizewinning Hollywood Television Writer and co-editor of the Encyclopedia of Creativity*



“For years, I focused every last ounce of my creativity on writing poetry and chronicling remote corners of consciousness. Dr. Ruth Richards teaches all of us obsessed artists how possible—and necessary—it is for creativity to suffuse every moment of our lives, and at the same time she uncovers the often simple thought processes that underlie both everyday and artistic creativity.”

—Michael Ruby, *Author of American Songbook (poems) and Memories, Dreams and Inner Voices*

“‘All prayer begins in silence.’—Mother Teresa. It is with this silencing, not just radio, television, and cell phones, but the obsessive thoughts, the ‘ya ya’s’ that keep us from the inner quiet, that our aliveness and creativity is born. Ruth Richards’s book provides a path to silencing ourselves, and opening to the mysteries of consciousness, so our creativity can flourish.”

—Roger Cunningham, *Faculty, Psychology, Bronx Community College, USA and Co-Founder, Encompass New Opera Theatre, New York, USA*

“Dr. Ruth Richards draws on longstanding scholarship to assert that creativity is available to us all. Her enthusiasm is infectious as she shows how to recognize and nurture our potential for everyday creativity—for our own good and the good of the world.”

—Shan Guisinger, *Clinical psychologist, and Faculty Affiliate, University of Montana, USA. Theoretician in evolutionary psychology, and author of the Adapted-to-Flee-Famine Hypothesis in anorexia nervosa*

“Ruth Richards has been in the forefront of studying creativity and its relationships with both health and illness for years, leading the development of the Lifetime Creativity Scales and the construct of Everyday Creativity. This has allowed us to measure and understand the creativity of everyday activities of people at work and play, not just the great artist or scientific genius. In this book, Dr. Richards builds on her career as clinician and scientist, exploring in detail how creativity works, illuminating implications for human health and wellness, and explaining how each of us can tap into creative processes so as to enrich, deepen, and better our daily lives.”

—David Schuldborg, *Professor of Psychology, University of Montana, USA. Visiting Professor di Chiara Fama, 2016, and the Erasmus+ Program, 2017 and 2018, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy, and President of the Society for Chaos Theory in Psychology and the Life Sciences*

“A new book on everyday creativity by Ruth Richards is a call for celebration. Here is a unique dynamic and process look that can change how we see our lives.”

—James C. Kaufman, *Professor of Educational Psychology, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, USA. Lyricist/Librettist for the Off-Broadway musical Discovering Magenta*

“In her exciting and informative new book, Dr. Ruth Richards gives us an entirely new view of creativity in our lives, our relationships, and in our world. We realize that we, as human beings, are inherently creative. There is boundless originality in our everyday life, and this creativity has shaped human culture since the dawn of history. Richards also reveals how the creative aspects of our daily lives not only transform us but can profoundly alter the interrelated environment in which we live.”

—Tobi Zausner, *Faculty, Saybrook University, USA. Author of When Walls Become Doorways: Creativity and the Transforming Illness and a visual artist with works in national and international collections*

“Dr. Richards, who has devoted her life to the study of creativity, has given us a book that combines scholarly examination of creativity research with encouragement to all of us who may at times unknowingly incorporate creativity into our everyday activities. She offers insight into the importance of creativity to health and wellness, and intersperses this writing with witty and personal anecdotes that inspire and sometimes amuse the reader, who cannot help but apply them in their ‘everyday life.’”

—Antoinette Jakobi, *Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Rochester Medical School, USA*

“Creativity is increasingly recognized as a valuable commodity. These days it could even be the most important asset for both individuals and humanity. Yet too often the benefits of creativity are end results, outcomes, products of the creative process. Ruth Richards gives us a much broader, more accurate, and useful view of creativity. She explains how it is directly related to our health, our relationships, our happiness, and even our conception of life’s meaning. She offers a convincing view that creativity is a part of each of our lives, every day, and that process is as valuable as product. Richards has provided us with a volume that is engaging, practical, and based on accepted ideas from the science of creativity.”

—Mark Runco, *Founding Editor of the Creativity Research Journal, Distinguished Research Fellow, American Institute for Behavioral Research & Technology, USA and author of Creativity: Theories and Themes: Research, Development, and Practice*

“This book provides timely and fascinating insights into creativity, and Professor Richards forensically demonstrates that creative ability is something we all possess and can use *every day*. The book contains a wealth of theoretical and practical insights that both advance thought on creativity and show how vital an understanding of our creative capabilities can be for our well-being. Importantly, it explores the creative mind in ways that laboratory studies have struggled to capture, through drawing on individual experiences of creativity in a variety of settings. This book is an essential read for those studying creativity, as well as those interested in understanding the myriad of ways our creative potential can actualise.”

—Lee Martin, *Associate Professor of Creativity, Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies, University of Warwick, UK*

“This is a beautiful book—a dynamic book about the processes of creativity and everyday life. It is hopeful about the human condition, with creativity at the heart of it. Richards, in a novel fashion, interweaves a broad spectrum of viewpoints, theories, philosophies, literature, research, and personal life experiences into a grand synthesis with implications about how to live and grow. Plus, the book is interesting and fun to read. A truly original contribution to the field.”

—Sandra W. Russ, *Distinguished University Professor, Case Western Reserve University, USA. Author of amongst others Pretend Play in Childhood: Foundation of Adult Creativity and Affect and Creativity: The Role of Affect and Play in the Creative Process*

“Dr. Richards’s book offers an urgent appeal to expand our views of what it means to express creativity in life. She reminds us that creativity is our birth-right, and can also be important for our health and personal growth. She arouses the reader’s curiosity to find ‘oneself as a process-in-motion, an open system in an interconnected dynamic cosmos.’ Read this book and find the chance to expand your creative palette, walk with your muse, discover your personal creative recipe, and express your creative power.”

—Terri Goslin-Jones, *Chair Creativity Studies Specialization, College of Social Sciences, Saybrook University, USA. Board Member of the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association*

“Ruth Richards grapples with one of the most important issues of our time. Besides her rich and immensely useful picture of creativity she explores the complexity and importance of making meaning. She moves a long way beyond books that focus on novelty and careers. She emphasises that creativity belongs to everyone, not just an elite group of amazingly gifted individuals. Her message is that creativity is fundamental to our wellness and our humanity.”

—Jonathan Milne, *author of GO! The Art of Change and Managing Director of The Learning Connexion, New Zealand's school of creativity and art*

“This book is another step in Ruth Richards’ journey in bringing the concept of Everyday Creativity to the front stage. Not the type of creativity we are used to knowing. Richards invites every one of us to develop skills of Everyday Creativity, as a part of our worldview and basic attitude towards life. It is about time that creative thinking belong not only to the gifted and the exceptional. Ethically, Richards offers an essential compass for living in the twenty-first century.”

—Eyal Doron, *Ph.D., is Head of the Interdisciplinary Division of Psychology and Philosophy at the School of Psychology of the IDC Herzliya, Israel, and Head of the “Creativity in Action” Executive Program at the IDC Herzliya. He is researcher, lecturer, and author of the forthcoming book Creative Parenting*

*For Joey and Jake  
Creative young adults with their lives ahead of them  
and other family, friends, and companions on life's path  
Plus all those who have come before  
Toward a more joyous and healthy future*

## Foreword

In studying everyday creativity, Dr. Ruth Richards is the “go to” person and she has given us a precious gift in this book. She has been studying this topic for many years and is one of the world’s experts on everyday creativity, providing a brilliant, positive and hopeful examination of what constitutes creativity. In this book Ruth serves as a guide (sometimes a very playful guide at that!), as a curious questioner, inviting us, in style and with asides, to join her in this project.

The book shines with a spirit of inquiry. It does more than simply impart knowledge. Dr. Richards illuminates the ways in which we all can participate in creative moments, perhaps even building creative lives. This book walks us through important theories about creativity and presents us with rich and intriguing data. According to Dr. Richards, the two criteria of everyday creativity are originality and meaningfulness. The potential benefits of everyday creativity for us include awareness, openness, health, caring and collaboration to name a few.

This book encourages us to look beyond existing categories in psychology, philosophy and spirituality. It unfailingly takes into account not just the person but the context. Dr. Richards asks not just how can we support our own personal creativity but how can we “design environments to bring out the best in us.” This recognition of the part that context plays in

creativity supports movement away from highly individualistic explanations of creativity. In this emphasis there is convergence with relational theories of human development and wellbeing.

The book digs deep, questioning: What is our human nature? Why must we continually frame our understanding in closed systems when life is filled with change and uncertainty? When we try to control the uncertainty, we resign ourselves to old templates, often old pessimism. We get stuck in repetition or stagnancy. Being open is like breathing in or breathing out. Open, fresh, now, life-giving. New each moment!

Close to my own heart is the importance of openness and responsiveness; these are at the core of empathy. Where and how is something new and meaningful brought into being? In relatedness, in responding to the newness born in connection (with people, with animals, with nature, with a higher power). When mutual change benefits both people in a relationship, we move beyond the dualities of self versus other, selfless versus selfish. This is creative movement. We are open to being changed (that can be alarming or comforting). “This too shall pass.” Creativity is curtailed by status quo, static labels, linear mindsets. Being present, open, mindful and curious contribute to a kind of unfolding, aliveness—the blossoming of new possibilities, the development of deeper potential. Not only do we find resonance and growth in human relationships but in our interactions with the natural world, in the opening of our hearts to moments of beauty.

Everyday creativity is built around openness and increasing awareness of our interconnected being. Recently I had the privilege of being on a panel of five eminent scholars from the Harvard Medical School and His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. We were to explore the topic of psychotherapy and meditation. Although many important points were made, it was the quality of *being* that his Holiness brought that most moved me and stayed with me. Compassion, curiosity, a deep sense of connection and infinite kindness emanated from this smiling, laughing, loving wise man. I wish I could say the same about us scholars there, at best struggling to calm our prickly egos, at worst going all out to prove our intelligence and worthiness. His smiling, humble interactions with us provided an opening into hope. Perhaps we could come to an awareness of our common humanity, our interconnectedness. And with such insight, perhaps

empathy and compassion could come center stage, creating healthy individuals and growth supporting environments.

In the last decade neuroscience has confirmed that connection with others is essential for human wellbeing. We are wired to connect. We need growth-fostering relationships the same way we need air and water. We experience the pain of exclusion in the same way that we experience physical pain or absence of oxygen. Functional MRIs attest to the neurobiology of relationship, to our essential, lifelong need of others. Too often this biological interdependence is dismissed as “soft,” a sign of deficiency. Now we have bedrock data: we grow through and toward relationship throughout the lifespan. Exclusion and isolation hurt.

In connecting, we often face the unknown. We share the possibility of creating something new. But we all need to be supported when we move into new realms. We need to create a culture that embraces creativity and openness to difference and honors our longing to learn, to grow with others. We need to support the development of connectivity, a sense of being a part of something larger—whether it be community or the natural world. Overemphasis in our culture on separation and on becoming autonomous has led to widespread suffering, devastating levels of “loneliness” and depression. We need to develop a healthier culture. Revising our emphasis on individualistic models of development would contribute to an increasing sense of wellbeing.

This book is packed with ideas and wisdom. But more importantly it invites us to question and wonder and open to uncertainty. It is a book to read in its entirety but then to return to as an ongoing source of possibility and encouragement. My hope for the reader is that you will come away from this book with renewed inklings of your own everyday creative energy. I hope you will see movement into the open moments of life. And I hope questions will have arisen for you about your own creativity and how to pass the benefits of that on to others.

I believe creativity is nourished in relatedness, whether it be in internal conversations with old friends and mentors, real interactions with today’s family and friends, or in the awe and wonder of a particularly spectacular sunset. Somehow we are changed in a good way, and that change can ripple out to touch others. We are relational beings. We are selves-in-world (or selves-in-relation). The human community desperately needs



new ways of thinking about the individual and the community, the common good, the creative good, our place in the world. Our health and wellbeing depend on the kind of innovative thinking found in abundance in this book. Dr. Ruth Richards poses powerful questions and provides concrete pointers as well as expansive and profound visions of what could be. I hope the reader will feel empowered and excited by the ideas and stories in this wonderful and brilliant book.

Jean Baker Miller Institute  
Wellesley College  
Wellesley, MA, USA

Judith V. Jordan

Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

Judith V. Jordan, Ph.D., Director, Jean Baker Miller Institute, Wellesley College, Asst. Professor, Harvard Medical School, and Co-Developer of Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT). She has lectured and conducted workshops nationally and internationally, and has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show. Her awards include Winner of the 2010 Distinguished Psychologist Award from the American Psychological Association (APA) for outstanding lifetime contributions to the field of psychotherapy. She was honored to be included among five eminent scholars in dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Dr. Jordan is author, co-author and editor of books including (author) *Relational-Cultural Therapy*, 2nd Edition, APA Books, 2018. Series co-editor Jon Carlson lauded RCT as “one of the ten most important psychological theories today.”

# Acknowledgements

Never was a statement more true—about the essential parts of so many people without whom this work would have taken a different form or might not exist at all. In our complex, multilayered, dynamic and interdependent world, there are endless strands of influence we may never even know, or whose importance emerges only later: the great-grandparent barely remembered from infancy, the grandmother who gave a young girl book and crayons and encouragement, the father who showed how to develop pictures, and the mother who made fractal graphs of investments without even knowing that is what they were! The second grade teacher with name now forgotten—although I know that my daughter’s second grade teacher, Doug, was a huge force for that fortunate class. This was from the opening daily song with his guitar accompaniment, to sharing his own second grade memories, to the early village with a barter system he had the kids construct (creating their own personalized figures and enacting a culture and economy in miniature), to how he had us, on parents’ night, visualize ourselves back in second grade. His classroom came alive.

In that vein, here are some marvelous people, and powerful direct, and sometimes subtle, influences, persons still with us and others no longer present; they have each been central in their own ways to this work happening. They are presented alphabetically, with the understanding that there are numerous others as well, sometimes fully unsuspected. As we do our own work, we never know where our influence will take root.

With great thanks to you all including Fred Abraham, Maria Benet, Abbe Blum, Anna Joy Brown, Roland Brown, Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition ([www.BWAC.org](http://www.BWAC.org)), Jake Coffing, Allan Leslie Combs, Roger Cunningham, Marie DiCowden, Debbie Lee Dailey, Tom Eelkema, Fred Fulton, Helen Fulton, Terri Goslin-Jones, Tom Greening, Sylvia Gretchen, Shan Guisinger, Patti Hagan, Harold Hanham, Ruth Soule Arnon Hanham, Sandra Hoey, Toni Jakobi, Judith Jordan, James Zachary Holtz, Seymour Kety, Hyunmoon Kim, Dennis Kinney, Stanley Krippner, Virginia Latham, Edith Leslie, Lael Leslie, Christopher Lord, Steven Matthyse, Jonathan Matson, Nellie McCool, Ann Merzel, John David Miller, Alice Wilson Milne, Jonathan Milne, Thich Minh Duc, Ursula Monroe, Delmont Morrison, Shirley Morrison, Marta Davidovich Ockuly, Karen Packard, Judy Perani, Marc Pilisuk, Phyllis Pilisuk, Steven Pritzker, Susan Reed, Nancy Rhodes, Chet Richards, Dexter (Rick) Richards, Dexter Richards, Jr., Louise Taylor Richards, Dexter Richards, Donna Berlier Richards, Lauren Jo Richards-Ruby, William (Chip) Richards, Ruth Eleanor Fulton Richards, Linda Riebel, Andy Ross, Michael Handler Ruby, Mark Runco, Sandra Russ, Gregory Russell, Sandow Sacks Ruby, David Schuldborg, Jerome Singer, Kathleen Spivack, Deborah Strohbeen, John Strohbeen, Louise Lu Sundararajan, Khenchen Tsewang Gyatso Rinpoche, Suzanne Tuckey, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, Chia Tze, Laura Gellman Tze, Tobi Zausner, Eric Zeise, Fred Zeise, and Karl Zeise.

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## About the Author

**Ruth Richards**, educational psychologist and Board Certified psychiatrist, is professor at Saybrook University in Creativity Studies, and Consciousness, Spirituality, and Integrative Health. She has studied creativity in educational, clinical, social action, and spiritual contexts, as well as issues in aesthetics and awareness, consciousness studies, and chaos and complexity theories. Dr. Richards has authored numerous papers and chapters and a monograph, and has edited/co-edited two books: *Eminent Creativity, Everyday Creativity, and Health* (with Mark Runco) and *Everyday Creativity and New Views of Human Nature*, as well as writing *Everyday Creativity: Coping and Thriving in the 21st Century*. She is currently coediting, *Nonlinear Psychology: Keys to Chaos and Creativity in Mind and Life* (David Schuldberg, Editor in Chief, with Shan Guisiinger). She was also principal investigator and author (with Dennis Kinney and others) for *The Lifetime Creativity Scales*. Dr. Richards is on three editorial boards, for *Psychology, Creativity, and the Arts*, *The Creativity Research Journal*, and *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. She is Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA) and, in 2009, Dr. Richards won the Rudolf Arnheim Award for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement in Psychology and the Arts from Division 10 of the APA. A concern of hers is whether everyday creative process can bring each of us, as a creative *person*, to greater health and purpose, offering new ways to be present with ourselves, each other, our larger world, and life's possibilities.



# 1

## Introduction

Health for self, health for the world? This is our hope here. Along with imparting some healthful and joyous creativity, and seeing how this happens. Here too are ways to see oneself—fully and finally—as a highly creative person, a bit of a miracle, really, carrying a universal capacity, which is our very birthright.

*Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind* puts forth a more dynamic view of creativity, our “originality of everyday life,” as both process and way of life, and part of our universal human heritage. Here is our “phenotypical plasticity” as per evolutionary biologist Theodosius Dobzhansky, the vast and innumerable ways we can manifest and live within our inherent boundaries.<sup>1</sup> We change in each moment, and so does our world, and what we can creatively offer. Each moment is new—and how much more delightful, healthy, and *important* it can be for us to live this way. Truly we can come alive.

## We Turn the Camera Around

These chapters are framed by the “Four Ps of Creativity”<sup>2</sup>—Creative Product (the outcome) and then Process, Person, and finally Press of the Environment. After a look at creative product (object, idea, performance, etc) *we turn the camera around*. We look back at the creative person (that is, each one of us), and what we are doing, the creative process. We also look carefully at environments which on the one hand can help us blossom (think of a favorite and supportive teacher), on the other can kill our creativity (think of a negative judgmental boss). We also take a longer if speculative evolutionary view of how creativity came to be, in humans, in an emergent cosmos—and why this may be the most important time for it right now.

One may ask: What is this creative process, and what is it *doing for us*? What is it *evoking* from us? Can it change us? Expand our potential, unfold our inherent capacities? Can we discover parts of self we never suspected? Might our creating bring us new insights, beyond the creative product, both deeply into our selves and outwardly into our world? Can it change our relationships to others, our chances for intimacy, our wonder at life, awareness of beauty? Can it perhaps change us to be more caring, giving people; can it *change us for the better*? Since we humans can also change our environments to suit us, we consider too this incredible power, both for our own happier, healthier development and for living in a more caring and less crazy world.

## Creating What?: Most Anything!

We humans are not primarily creatures of instinct who, for instance, build our homes in the same way. Throughout countless ages and around the world, we have made houses, dwellings, palaces, gathering places, shelters, meeting halls, cathedrals, temples of every size, shape and color, and from steamy deserts to icy tundra. We have created arts, music, rituals, language, traditions, cultures, belief systems, and much more. Our everyday creativity helps keep us alive—whether escaping a dangerous



pursuer (and we have such examples later), and finding our way to safety when lost in the mountains. Our creativity helps us cope and survive—and also to find out what we are surviving *for*.

*Everyday creativity* is identified with two criteria only: *originality* and *meaningfulness*—it is new, and it is understandable. Beyond that, any activity can qualify. Whether we are landscaping the yard, fixing the car, instructing our child, advising a friend, or making a gourmet dinner out of some bare leftovers, we can be invoking our everyday creativity. Yet how many people know this? It need not be a “traditionally creative” activity to “count” though it may be one (e.g., painting, writing, scientific discovery).

In fact, seeing creativity throughout our lives involved opening our own eyes. With Dennis Kinney and others at Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital we developed and validated our *Lifetime Creativity Scales* to assess this “originality” through intensive interviews; our group ended up with high reliability and construct validity for the ratings, yet still found great complexity at first in identifying the creativity in a vast range of daily activities.<sup>3</sup> For instance, aspects of homemaking or home repairs one might normally take for granted. Or starting a rotating story with children at bedtime.

We found we began looking at the world differently. The “originality of everyday life” began appearing in places we might have missed it before!<sup>4</sup> If we, looking deliberately, did not even see it, it is not surprising that many people do not stop and acknowledge their own ways of being creative, and give themselves credit, when it has *not even been named* or acknowledged by others. Hence their creativity can *go under-recognized, under-developed, and under-rewarded*. Then what happens?

“I am not creative!” they say. “I cannot paint a picture!” How tragic this is. They are closing a door. Their creative potential will go unnoticed, when it could become recognized and more powerful than it ever was before.

Aside from the intrinsic joy that can come from our personal creativity (especially on the good days). I am also aware of these huge health benefits—and meanwhile how they are not very well known. Also unknown are various ways that more creative living can help us together, and help to improve our world. My intent here is to bring the background and

benefits forward, plus a more “qualitative” feel for the subject, so more people can find and understand their own creativity and its power. That is the reason for this book.

## Longstanding Study of Creativity—and Next Steps

I am an educational psychologist, Board Certified Psychiatrist, professor, researcher, writer, parent of a creative young adult daughter, and an occasional visual artist. I play three instruments badly (although that doesn't stop me), and sing reasonably well. My background also includes sciences and math, with a B.S. in physics (with distinction, receiving an NSF Fellowship in biophysics).

I became credentialed to teach physics, math, and art at the secondary level, before becoming interested in the psychology of creativity, and remarkably seeing that creativity, broadly defined, could apply to sciences, arts, and pretty much anything else. That was a huge insight (although others had had it, including philosopher John Dewey. Plus eminent researchers such as J.P. Guilford and Frank Barron). Yet I, along with many others, was still equating “art and creativity.”

In education I started wondering why the priority was often to help a student get 100% on somebody's test, and not to make up questions of their own!

I have studied some aspect of creativity ever since, through studies for a Ph.D. and M.D., whether in education, medicine, clinical psychiatry, including issues of psychopathology, mind-body medicine, humanistic and positive psychology, Eastern philosophy, social action, consciousness studies and spirituality, aesthetics and awareness, or chaos and complexity theories. I am a practicing Buddhist, also from an Interfaith context and group,<sup>5</sup> and this in turn has brought further depth and understanding to how I and others can see creativity.

Over the years I have published numerous papers, chapters, and a monograph on creativity, and was principal author of *The Lifetime Creativity Scales*.<sup>6</sup> Do know I wrote an early “lost” book on everyday creativity, *Everyday Creativity: Coping and Thriving in the 21st Century*<sup>7</sup>

(now found! available on Amazon) and have published two edited others, *Eminent Creativity, Everyday Creativity, and Health* (with Mark Runco), and another, *Everyday Creativity and New Views of Human Nature*, as below. I was privileged in 2009 to win the Rudolf Arnheim Award from Div. 10 of the American Psychological Association for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement in Psychology and the Arts.

Among issues that have concerned me over the years as clinician and academic, is the contrast between evident benefits of creativity, and certain misunderstandings and stereotypes which persist today. Let us stress the universality of creativity (vs. occasional special appearance, limiting it to a few) and the many rich connections (often misunderstood) with health. Especially now, when we as individuals, cultures, and a global culture can use new hope and new healing, it seems time to take another look.

## Precursor Edited Book—and This Volume

This new book, *Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind*, picks up in part on 12 integrating themes from that last volume, *Everyday Creativity and New Views of Human Nature: Psychological, Social and Spiritual Perspectives*. Emerging from the chapters, in a formal qualitative analysis, were 12 integrating themes. Chapter contributors, well-known in the field, were chosen to address both individual creativity and social issues. The themes, listed under “Twelve Potential Benefits of Living More Creatively,” are Conscious, Dynamic, Open, Healthy, Nondefensive, Integrating, Caring, Observing Actively, Collaborative, Androgynous, Developing, and Brave.<sup>8</sup>

A good time indeed to build on these findings and update knowledge about everyday creativity and its many benefits! Individually and socially—and, yes, spiritually as well<sup>9</sup> Plus to look more closely in areas not usually included in this type of book including empathy, relationships, beauty, and the sublime.

There is valuable literature here which crosses disciplines. Yet how, one might ask, could benefits of creativity coexist with seemingly paradoxical findings about creativity and creators—for instance where they are

sometimes portrayed as “not normal”—nonconformists who are disarrayed and marginalized, difficult, or frankly ill. How does this fit with creativity and healing? Or consider views of creators seeming too involved with self. Yet we are seeing ways creative styles can take one *beyond* self and even into universal themes and awareness. Looking more broadly our human greed, ignorance, or *lack* of reflection has exacerbated some serious global difficulties (e.g., Sixth Extinction,<sup>10</sup> or armed conflicts<sup>11</sup>); what if creativity can help? Can we encourage a path of self-development, and greater concern for others and the earth. Consider for instance humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow in *Toward a Psychology of Being*, and his hierarchy of needs, with movement toward *self-actualization*; Maslow saw this self-actualizing person, moving toward higher human potential, and their *self-actualizing creativity* as very similar. Their virtues also include greater concern for all.

Paradoxes? Or is it just that life is more subtle and delicately balanced than some viewpoints or methods of analysis might suggest. Plus keep in mind that everyday creativity is *universal*. Let us hope it works in the service of health. Some serious misunderstandings or oversimplifications need to be addressed. At the same time I have been co-editing a volume called *Nonlinear Psychology: Keys to Chaos and Creativity in Life and Mind* (Schuldberg, Richards, and Guisinger, eds.). The frame of chaos and complexity theory, has helped to unravel some of the controversy, while bringing the excitement of our topic of everyday creativity even more to life!

It is this author's pleasure to have *Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind* join the series “Palgrave Studies in Creativity and Culture,” with series editors V.P. Glaveanu and B. Wagoner. The interest in creativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon, culture as a dynamic and complex process, and the multi-level and cross-disciplinary expanse of investigation is welcome and far too rare. Too often creativity studies focus just on the individual. Meanwhile culture is thought to lie elsewhere. Yet one sees increasingly that it is all deeply interconnected, that we are dynamic open systems, and our highest creativity can draw expansively from all of life. Creativity is the inheritance of all of us—and also our business. It exists in an endless web with everything else.

## The Chapters

*Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind* has seventeen chapters, including the Introduction, and is divided into six parts. Parts I through III, three chapters each, focus on aspects of the Four Ps of Creativity. These are New Openings (creative product), Aha! Moment (creative process) and Living Creatively (creative person and press). Parts IV through VI concern issues and topics less usual in the creativity literature, specifically Normal and Abnormal (including “compensatory advantage” in pathology), New Directions (relationships, beauty, the sublime, chaos theory and nuance), and Now What? (looking ahead, three possibilities for mind, plus an Afterword). Chapters include vignettes, relevant literature, and at times, illustrative examples that also allow the reader personally to try a creative activity. Although not a primary objective here, this allows for a “feel” for the topic, and for adding first-person qualitative and subjective inquiry to third person conveyed information. If ever there is a time to look within, and learn from our own experience, it would seem to be in the study of everyday creativity.

- **Part I, New Openings (Creative Product).** Here chapters include “Missing Worlds,” on looking “without,” and issues of altered consciousness, how perception itself is greatly limited, has many flavors, and how our experience can happen with mindful awareness, in the moment, and as a creative act. “Creative Palette,” by contrast, is a look “within” at creative mind, imagery, conscious and unconscious, and integrated material then available for creativity (on the “palette”), in creative acts or in play. In “Change and Open Systems,” one meets evolving complex interdependent systems (including you and me) in a world of change and surprise—an introduction to issues in chaos and complexity theory and especially “who we are” as open systems when functioning as creators.
- **Part II, Aha! Moment (Creative Process).** Chapters include “Moments of Insight,” focused on the Butterfly Effect, with sensitivity to initial conditions, interdependence and feedback, with huge systems reconfigurations. Moving from a vignette showing global effects

of a single action in the world, discussion moves to the Aha! Effect in a creative mind. Next, in “Flavors of Mind” attention turns to neurological findings related to insight, along with state phenomena and the Default Mode of consciousness. Finally “Emergence of Life and Creativity” brings in evolution, speculating about emergence of life, then mind, and finally awareness and the meta-awareness to generate creative change, and finally weave it into a human future via *cultural* (vs. biological) evolution.

- **Part III Living Creatively (Creative Person and Press).** “Popcorn: A Model” highlights conditions for keeping creative insights and dynamic change going, as a personal style, first with a cognitive focus (within a welcoming affective set), including discussion of ongoing Divergent Thinking. “Creative Person” revisits this for personality traits, and other stylistic features including cognitive style. “Creative Space” shows environmental conditions that can not only spur creativity but open minds and change lives. Issues of delicate balances between multiple variables, within and between person and setting, nonlinearity and curvilinear relationships, and perhaps epigenetics, are important in this section.
- **Part IV Normal and Abnormal (Not What Some Think).** “Deep Sea Diving” concerns our personal unconscious mind and recruiting parts we can access while maintaining a delicate balance of openness and a loose adaptive control toward creative ends. Expressive writing and pretend play are examples, in this “balancing act.” “New Normal” confronts negative stereotypes of creators in our culture but also class sizes, norms, and teacher issues that may misread or mislabel creative kids. A “new normal” defining self through process, awareness, dynamic change, risk, and growth has advantages for knowing self and truth telling in the world. Yet difference can be pathologized, creativity even confused with mild thought disorder. In “Creative (Compensatory) Advantage,” one learns that a risk or diathesis for bipolar disorder or schizophrenia (plus spectrum disorders) in a family *can* have creative benefits. However creativity peaks most in the presence of relative health (state or trait). Further, romanticizing mental illness can be dangerous. Again here is a delicate nonlinear balance. Remember, “abnormal” needn’t mean pathological; it can mean usefully exceptional.