

# FUZZY IMPROV

Mindset

Lesson 101-04

## **Playing from Emotion / Character**



[CW4SP.com](http://CW4SP.com)

Cls 4 Spring

04/25/2026

## CLASS RULES:

### To Do:

NAME TAGS

CHECK IN WITH TEAMMATES

## HELP CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

BE KIND: NO ISM, NO POLITICS. Do not be offensive or insulting to your teammates.

BOUNDARIES - PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL. Be gentle and appropriate.

NEW CHOICE AND TIME OUT. Use these to steer the scene away from (or stop) anything you find upsetting or out of bounds.

The Improv world abounds with venues for R rated material. But this class will always be G rated and family friendly.

**Class Structure:** The first 45 minutes of the class we be doing exercises and games that focus on the concepts presented in this handout. The last 30 minutes we will be creating scenes using the concepts we learned.

Note: [G X] at the beginning of an item indicates the page of [Improv As Improv Does Best Curriculum](#), Introduction to Improvisation, *Patrick Gantz 2020* at which the topic can be found.

[HD] at the beginning of the topic indicates materials that I have added.

**HAVE FUN!** Harold Dreibelbis

**Objective for this session: Focus on getting to and relaxing in emotional reactions. This is what scenes are about.**

**4.0 Emotion should be the core of our improvisation. Choosing to feel strongly about something made-up-in-the-moment is, well, insane. But it's fun to watch. Surprise! G28-9**

*Lessons:*

- **Practice emotion at the extremes** to become comfortable accessing emotions on stage.
  - **Feel and Feel More** - Committed emotion is all the “what” and “why” a scene needs.
  - **Start with Anything to Find a Feeling** - You can **start with emotion** and build the details of our character around that. **Or you can start with a detail** and build an emotional character from there.
  - **Agree;** 🧠 Don't negotiate the world of your scene. ★ If you agree, you can just be, you don't have to explain or defend.
  - Continue scenes by **heightening reactions** – Focus on how you feel about who you are, where you are and what you're doing, Focus on how you feel about who your TM is, where they are and what they're doing.
  - **React without words until the words come.** React without regarding why until the why presents itself. If you commit to your reaction, that's all the “why” an audience needs.
  - **If you invest in your emotion, the audience will believe that you have a reason for the scene even if you don't have a motivation in mind.** Just react emotionally. 🧠 Don't over-think an easy win.
- You don't need motivation. You just need commitment to the moment.**

**Lessons continued on next page.**

*Lessons:*

- **Emotions affect your relative distance** – TMs pull back from the circle with emotions like “afraid,” “shy,” etc. They move in with more aggressive emotions.
- **Heightening doesn’t mean volume** – As TMs are pushed toward emotional heights their inclination may be to get louder. You can get intense without getting too loud or shrill for the audience to be willing to listen.
- **Emote like no one’s watching or judging.**
- **Sometimes people struggle with emotions**, and that’s okay – **But improvisers must emote.** You don’t need motivation. You just need to **appear to feel.** Committed emotion is an improviser’s base. Exhibit the highest and lowest feelings on stage, practice emotion at the extremes to become comfortable in that space.

#### **4.1 Emotional Heights/Depths: Go for the low and the high of each emotion.**

G29

*Lessons:*

- **Push past comfortable** – Being vulnerable enough to share big emotions can be hard, but you must trust each other and this class is a safe place to “go big.” Support each other with applause.
- **Being bored or unaffected is hard to heighten** – Care.
- **Exude the emotion physically** - sadness can be sitting with head in hands and weeping.

#### **4.2 Emotional Context: Committed emotion is all the “what” and “why” a scene needs.** Emotion can add/change the meaning of our words and heighten the depth of our scenes. G29

*Lessons:*

- The **details gain weight with our emotional perspectives.**
- **Acting is emoting** – understanding a motivation can be hard and grueling. Committing to **an emotion without regard to “sense” is easy and fun.**



**4.3 Emotional Matching: If you agree, you can just be; you don't have to explain or defend. Have fun just being emotional together, trusting that your commitment to the same emotion is all the context for your relationship that's needed. G30**

*Lessons:*

- **BEING AFFECTED IS AWESOME – Allow yourself to change with another's perspective.** The bigger the emotion and the quicker the agreement the better.
  - **If you agree, you can just be, you don't have to explain or defend.**
  - **Trust that your commitment to the same emotion is all the context for your relationship that's needed.**

**4.4 EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVES MADE EASY: Great improvisers can immediately decide upon an emotional perspective and become characters that react with heightening emotion in-the-moment.** The path to an emotional perspective can **start with “just one thing”** – one choice you **expand upon and invest in.** TMs can find an emotional perspective **collaboratively – building on TMs' choices with agreement.** G31

*Lessons:*

-  **Don't let starting a scene be intimidating** –  all you need to start is **one choice**; you can find your emotional perspective for the scene by building on and diving into the decisions you have already made.

**4.5 No Pressure Initiations: Starting a scene can feel like a hard task. And yet all you need to do to start is anything. Get out there and make A Choice. The sooner you can get to emotion the better, but all you need to start a scene is...anything.** G32

**Make one decision ( where you are, how you stand, what you're doing/holding, etc.)and build the rest of the scene by investing in that .**

**4.6 Trusting Emotion Over “Sense”:** You don’t need to “know your motivation” before emotionally reacting. Find motivation through commitment to emotion. Make scenes “about” your characters’ patterns of emotional behavior . G33

*Lessons:*

- **Just feel** – You don’t even need words, just make and repeat an emotional sound.
- **Imagined objects can trigger our emotions** – Use location. Imagine an object in each quadrant that brings on that quadrant’s emotion.
- **Focus on reactions over conversations** – conversation will cloud each quadrant’s emotion. Commit to just reacting, the scene will flow smoother.
- **Emotion can propel you** – Use the stage space! Leap into the same quadrant as your TM as you feel “love.” Put distance between your TM as you explore “fear.”
- Language is not needed when expressing emotion.
- Language is not needed to initiate a scene.

## **HOMEWORK –**

**Study your friends:** Think about how particular people in your life stand, walk, talk, etc. Do their physical attributes reflect their emotional perspectives? For example: Do the happy people in our lives talk fast or slow?

**Work on an Impression** of someone you care about.

**Notice the objects in your life trigger an emotion:** What “things” in your life do you love? Hate? Be aware of interacting with those things in real life and how interacting affects your emotions.

**Practice in mime** interacting with something from real life you care about.

**Go see shows!** Report back to me next week with examples of moments where you laughed at a character’s emotional reaction and/or when a TM put on a rich character that you were compelled by.

## IN CLOSING:

**Overcoming fear**, a summary of pages from *Overcoming Fear, A guide for Budding Improvisers*, by Colin Thornton and Jon Ulrich. Visit the Fuzzy Improv page on [CW4SP.com](http://CW4SP.com) for its Amazon link.

> **Fear happens to everybody.** You may fear several things: the unknown, losing control, public speaking, past negative or critical experiences or not being accepted.

> Three expressions of fear that are toxic to improvisors are *Fight, Flight and Freeze*.

*Fear Expression # 1, FIGHT!*

Example, **THE BLOCKER**.

*The BLOCKER refuses to go along with a reasonable request.*

The Blocker typically fears a lack of control or the unknown. Rather than going along with a reasonable (or possibly even exciting) request from a TM, the improviser reflexively declines, which tends to block a scene's forward momentum and fun.

Improv's warm-up exercises and games can help us overcome freezing on stage.

***"Aging is a biological function, honor the journey and who you are."***

— Cameron Diaz



[Photo Info](#)

**Material for this lesson is based on**  
***Improv As Improv Does Best***  
Curriculum,  
Introduction to Improvisation  
by Patrick Gantz 2020.