

FUZZY IMPROV

Mindset

Lesson 101-05

GIFTS

Active Endowments for Emotional Reactions



CW4SP.com

Cls 5 Spring

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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: To make your scenes focus on how you feel about yourself, your environment, and your TMs. Choose to commit to your emotions. Give yourself, your surroundings, and your partner tangible attributes (Gifts/Endowments). This makes it easier to react and move your scene forward.

5.1 Imagined Endowments: Focus on giving and receiving gifts and endowments with which to build your scene.

Lessons:

- **React to imagined stimuli.** You are improvising. As you commit to something made up in-the-moment, you surprise the audience.
- **When you feel something about something,** then that something – or more somethings like it – can *make you feel* more. Create an Emotional Positive Feedback Loop (EPFL).
- **Think less and react more.** If you say, “I love cats,” you are just emoting.
★ If you say, “I love *this* cat,” and interact with it, you are emotionally reacting to something you can “see,” “touch” and otherwise interact with.
- ★ **Be specific and in the moment** - make the object of your emotion active in the scene. Make it tangible /observable/repeatable on stage. Now you can **react to something and not just talk about it.**
- *Establishing “rules” of cause and effect gives the world you have imagined power over you. What you imagine makes you feel.*
Capitalize on the power of patterns with clearly defined cause and effect.
- **When you imagine something active on stage with you and feel about it, you do not need another player on stage to create a scene.**
- **Remember Weight, Volume, and Tension** are the three keys to engaging mime!

5.2 Endowing Your Scene Partner: *You have your TMs to gift and react to. But don't focus only on your TMs – remember the other tangible presences on stage.*

Lessons:

- **Give your TMs attributes that trigger emotions. Give them something to work with in the scene.** The audience loves it when you give your scene partners power over you.
- **Give gifts** – ★ It's much more fun to be endowed with information (“My, you got taller”). 🤖 It is a burden to be requested for information (“What are you doing?”).
- **Want something? Feel the absence** – To avoid head-butting, don't “demand,” **focus on “desire.”** You can want something from your TM, but you don't want to become hogtied fighting for what you want. How does not having what you want *right now* make you feel?
- **Give the gift of freedom** – If you tell your TM, “I hate how smug you are,” your TM **does not have to directly respond to your feeling.** They can focus on what they are smug about (“I'm a golden god”) or they can do anything they want (“I'm tired of this wallpaper”). **Your scene partner is not constrained to address or discuss your feeling.**
- **Give the gift of dynamite** – If you are told, “Your tap dancing makes me so attracted to you,” you better believe I'm going to tap dance.

5.3 Setting Up Multiple Endowments and Reactions:

🤖 Too often scenes start with two TMs meeting center stage and having a conversation about something. **We want to see characters emotionally engaged in multi-faceted worlds. All TMs must strive to bring endowments and emotional perspectives to the stage that can be played with over the course of a scene.**

Lessons:

- **No justification is necessary** – If TMs' environments don't align, they don't have to make sense of why they're together. They can just accept and heighten what's happening.
- **Commitment is the only justification you need** – If your TMs' initiations don't align, you don't have to make sense of why you are together. Just accept and heighten what's happening.
- **What you start with is your rock** - You don't need another TM on stage with you to have a scene. Do not give up the scene you started the moment another TM appears.
- **Both TMs should engage the environment** – The “entering” TM should find something for themselves to do on stage.

5.3 Setting Up Multiple Endowments and Reactions:

Lessons: continued.

- **Keep it active** - If you find yourself in a scene talking about something off stage or otherwise not in the present moment, it's up to you to **stake the scene on an active element**. Another TM forces you to sit down in a psychiatrist scene with a "Tell me about your mother" initiation? Say, "I hate anyone who gives me advice. That's why I carry this knife." Suddenly the scene's on stage, not off stage in an imagined moment between parent and child.
- **Your goal is to react through rather than think through your scenes** –
🧠 Don't be in your head thinking through your scene: What's happening? What's my motivation? ★ Recognize the power of having BOTH something you care about personally AND an emotional perspective toward your TM.
- 🧠 **Don't think** where should this scene go?
- ★ **Instead, attach an emotional reaction to something** you imagine sharing the stage. Consider in the scene "if this then what?" Get into an EPFL with the imagined thing that you are reacting to. As your involvement increases your emotions increase. Now something is "happening" on stage. Your commitment to repeating your emotion is all the "motivation" you need. Now the scene heightens and evolves in-the-moment rather than according to some plot.
- **Seeing is believing** - 🧠 You may like to stand stage center with your TMs and talk, putting all the onus for the scene's humor on your lines. ★ I prefer to watch you engage in your imagined world. Be committed to seeing, feeling and otherwise experiencing your environment. You and your TMs will discover *inspired* lines. For example, two TMs argue about the need to produce architectural drawings. When one TM decides to just draw, she produces a spiraling squiggle and a bold dot. Then looking at her drawing, the TM announces that she has produced a spiral staircase and a fireman's pole.

Lessons continue next page.

5.3 Setting Up Multiple Endowments and Reactions:

Lessons continued:

- **Words smerds** - Saying you feel one way has less impact than feeling that way. In reaction to TM1 finding a plush dog on stage, TM2 explains, “Stuffed animals freak me out.” Clever. Instead, if TM2 shouts, “Yeargh!” – then **there’s actual dynamite on stage, not just the promise of potential dynamite.**
- **The choice is yours** - If you’re trying to “figure out” a scene, so is the audience. Everyone’s waiting for something to happen, but ***you and your scene partner*** are the ones with the power to make something happen. You don’t have to wait to react. Feel something about something. The sooner you do, the better.

5.4 Juggling Multiple Endowments and Reactions: In every scene each TM has the power to make a choice about how they feel about themselves, their environment *and* their scene partner. Finding the **rhythm** between all those endowments and reactions can help make for sustainable long-form improv scenes.

“How you feel about who you are, where you are and what you’re doing,” and “How you feel about who your scene partner is, where they are and what they’re doing” should be your focus in improv scenes. Let “How you feel” trump all else, especially plot and “sense.”

★ *Establish an emotional perspective, heighten the emotional perspective through reaction to active details, and edit – That’s scene.*

💀 **You want to avoid negotiation, conflict and the tepid, talked out “discovery” that stagnates scenes’ growth.**

Lessons:

- **Being DYNAMIC is awesome** – The audience loves your multifaceted characters. Strive to be more than one note.
- **Making sharp choices is fun!** – With every move she makes, you are falling more in love with your TM. You are almost bursting with love when you take a sip of your coffee when you realize “AAAhhhh, dang! This is not what I ordered!”

Lessons continue next page.

5.4 Juggling Multiple Endowments and Reactions:

Lessons continued:

- **Bold moves in different directions leverages a strength of clowning.**
- **Unsure of what to do next? Do more of what you were doing –** Invest more emotion, identify more details, expand the environment, etc.
- **Don't give up your thing –** Heightening your individual choices together is all you need to move the scene forward. Trying to “figure out” how your things mesh, fighting each other's thing or dropping your thing in favor of your partner's thing robs scenes of their potential.
- **Commitment avoids justification –** Explaining why two people are on stage often saps the energy from a scene. When two TMs commit to simply heightening their choices, no one will question the juxtaposition of even the most mismatched initiations.
- **Reactionary statements avoid negotiation –** 🤖 When you're not comfortable with and/or don't understand what's happening on stage, you revert to asking **questions that often bog down scenes.** ★ Simply making choices moves you forward and making *emotional* choices helps statements stand without defense (“What do you mean, I'm a pig?” versus “Oh, I'm a pig. You're a dirty rat.”)
- **Heightening avoids conflict –** “I want to kill you”/ “I want to hug you.” If these are the initiations, you don't want to debate or argue – *heighten the feelings*. You don't have to address the disparity between feelings right away (if ever). Heighten conflict/tension by **heightening your part of it**. Addressing/discussing conflict/tension takes the dynamite out of the scene.
- **Bored? React!** – don't know what to do in a scene? Have an emotional reaction to an active element.
- **Lost? Repeat!** – You scream. Why? You don't know. So, keep screaming, heightening the emotion of the scream. Don't stop what you're doing to make “sense” of it. Find “sense” through continuing doing what you're doing.
- **Be affected** - There's power in reacting in-the-moment to your TM's perspective/actions/choices. When you don't react to a fellow TM's move that deserves a reaction, you risk pulling the rug out from under the scene.
- **Feel first, understand second (if ever)** – Don't wait to “understand your motivation” before making a choice about how to feel. Lessons continue next page.

5.4 Juggling Multiple Endowments and Reactions:

Lessons continued:

- **Never feel trapped by your choice** – While TMs should be encouraged to push their heightening before changing course onto a new thing, TMs should never feel trapped by their choices.
“I love my teddy bear.” Heighten why you love your teddy bear - “He doesn’t judge” But you don’t have to react only to teddy. “I really love my fluffy duck; he has a lovely quack.”

HOMEWORK –

Remember Seinfeld: Many Seinfeld episodes would start with George talking about one thing and Jerry talking about another, seemingly without hearing (or caring) about the other’s topic. It was an awesome way to ground each character for the episode before they started dealing/reacting to each other’s “thing.”

Make dinner (or do a chore) with someone: Think about the way you interact with friends/family when engaged in an activity with them: Your dialogue is rarely all about the thing you’re doing. You might be cutting vegetables while discussing shock over a recent show you watched. Conversely, you might interrupt an argument to ask for something out of the refrigerator.

Go see shows! Report back to me next week with examples of a moment that really came to life because TMs with engaged in their active environment.

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 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: *Fight, Flight and Freeze*. Today's topic:

Fear Expression #2- FLIGHT Abandoning a scene by leaving the stage, skipping from topic to topic, or not being fully present

Example, **THE ESCAPE ARTIST.**

The *ESCAPE ARTIST* exits the scene.

You are The Escape Artist when you behave with escape-ready body language. You are ready to exit the stage: backing away from the audience, performing the scene far upstage or drifting toward the side stage exits. This prevents you from being fully present in a scene. You want the scene to end, and soon! So, you simply force it by exiting the scene.

Improv's warm-up exercises and games help train you how to remain in the scene.

"If I'd known how old I was going to be, I'd have taken better care of myself."

— Jimmy Durante



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