

FUZZY IMPROV

Mindset

Lesson 101-01

Confidence and Acceptance



Class Rules

To Do:

- NAME TAGS
- INTRODUCTION OF INSTRUCTOR
- INTRODUCTION OF TEAMMATES (TM) - What do you imagine this class is going to be like?

- **CLASS RULES:**
 - **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 away from (or stop) anything you find upsetting or out of bounds.
 - The Improv world abounds with venues for R rated material. This class will be G rated and family friendly at all times.

- **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 pgX] 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

1.1 Focus Outward:

[G 8]

1.1 Focus Outward: There is a ton of material to mine in your improv scene if you are committed to *seeing it, hearing it and embracing it*. Don't be in your head worried about *making* something happen. *Follow* what's already happening, progress to a collaborative end.

Related Exercise:

ACTION PASS - Each TM observes an action and passes it on.

[G 9] *Lessons:*

- **See head to toe** – See all that TMs are giving you; Where are their toes pointed? How are their shoulders squared? What face are they making?
- **See more than you're given** – Noticed and repeat the things a TM does subconsciously or accidentally. What did they do before and after the action?
- **There are neither mistakes nor the one right move** - There is only “what has happened” and “what’s happening now.”
- **Repetition is heightening** –
🌀 Don't create material unrelated to what is already at play. ★ Collaborative evolution is fun enough; don't force difference for difference's sake.
- **It's about the group, not you** – The laughter ebbs and flows (often with the rules of 3). Commit to your repetition so the *next* person can get a laugh. Serve the team in this, and 🌀 don't try to force a laugh.

{G 9} **1.2 Make Each Other Look Good:** Embrace your TMs' contributions without hesitation or judgment. Move forward, begin with “yes.” Build momentum with enthusiastic acceptance.

Related Exercise:

PASS “YES” AROUND – TMs accept and pass being chosen.

Lessons:

- **Choose and accept** – Don't waste time worrying, over- thinking or obsessing about looking silly.

Related Exercises:

AWESOME! – TMs accept everything with an enthusiastic “Awesome!”

Lessons:

- **Acceptance is fun** – Don't waste time judging; the audience wants to see TMs enjoying one another.
- **DETAILS are fun** – Be specific about something real rather than vague about something “fantastic” (ex: A Wizards' War) .
- **OUR LIVES are fun** - Focusing on our actual lives reveals DETAILS that connect with the audience. **Leverage your life's details.**

1.3 Be Yourself:

[G 10] **1.3 Be Yourself:** Without scripts, as an improviser you depend on what's in your head – details from your life and your personal ability to access emotion in-the-moment. The audience *loves* seeing *you* on stage.

Let the audience see *you*. Give them the ability to connect with you and ultimately root for you. YOU ARE “AWESOME” just the way you are. Subduing personal ticks when you're trying to act like someone else shows you are “projecting” instead of “acting.”

You are most believable as yourself.

Related Exercise:

CAFÉ SCENES – 2 TMs have a conversation as THEIR ACTUAL SELVES.

Lessons:

• **Share your opinions** –

☠️ Avoid “getting to know one another scenes.” They are boring.

★ Instead, assume **you've known your TMs for at least six months**. Boldly commit to what you already *know*. A bold emotional statement charges the scene with interest.

• **Be YOU In-The-Moment** - The audience reaction of “I would have said that!” is a satisfying response for any performer. In improv, that power is compounded as the audience knows that your reaction was “your” reaction in-the-moment.

• **“No questions (as a rule)”** –

☠️ In improv, questions are often a desperate calls for information. They show you're afraid to make a choice.

★ Instead, make informative statements. Get to the information. Instead of asking “What do you do?” say “I'm a lawyer.”

• **Stay in the Present** -What you *did* or what you *will do* is ultimately less interesting than what is happening right now. Talk about the present. Talk about what you *feel* or what you *care about*. Note that when a TM tells a story about the past or future what's most interesting is the way they *emote in-the-moment* when telling the story.

• **Be specific** –

☠️ Don't try so hard to be funny.

★ Just be specific. Surprise captures the audience, a surprise that is specific in-the-moment is more satisfying yet.

• **Focus outward and react** –

☠️ Don't be in your head thinking about what to say.

★ Focus on your TM. What do *you* see? How do *you* feel about that? Share observations and feelings. (“You have your collar unbuttoned; I never know what to do about those buttons.”)

• **Be Confidently Vulnerable** – Honest reactions are endearing; be endearing instead of calculating. Don't just “listen” and “respond.” “Hear!”

1.4 In-The-Moment Emotions:

[G 11] **1.4 In-The-Moment Emotions: The audience loves watching you care in-the-moment about imagined stimuli.**

Choose to feel; it doesn't matter "why." Continue to *feel more about* the same or similar stimuli. This is all the motivation you need.

You don't need motivation to react.

SELF-CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENTS (SCES) - ABOUT:

SCESs express in-the-moment emotions. They are **what you'd say if you were alone on stage.**

SCES state your situation. They let you build your own reality.

"I'm dying" versus "Am I dying?"

- **SCES should express what you feel about what is *actively* on stage with you.**

- **SCES let you react through rather than *think through* your scenes.** Use them to **create a positive feedback loop** (+FBL, bigger input = bigger reaction = bigger input =...) to heighten your reaction.

 **Do not dictate the scene to your partner.**

- ★ Saying "I'm dying" **allows your TMs to choose how to join you.**

-  But "Doctor, I'm dying," forces your TM to be a doctor.

The scene will be more engaging when TMs make their own choices. The audience knows when a choice was decided or dictated.

[G 11]

Related Exercise:

SELF-CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENTS

TMs give Self Contained Emotional Statements around a circle.

Lessons:

- The sooner **you care about something** on stage the sooner the audience reacts to you.

- While there are many prompts for initiating scenes, you are on solid footing as soon as you "**feel something about something.**"

- **The "Self-Contained Emotional Statement" (SCES) is a useful initiation format, and it is EASY:**

- "I love this cat."
- "I'm afraid of the dark."
- "This pretension makes me punchy."

- You **don't need to know why you feel what you do.** You just need to *feel* like you do.

EMOTIONS CHART

[HD]

Core Emotions			
Happiness	Joy	Sadness	Anger
Fear	Surprise	Disgust	

Expanded	Emotional	Palette		
Excitement	Nervousness	Confusion	Curiosity	Embarrassed
Pride	Shame	Guilt	Hope	Despair
Love	Affection	Jealousy	Envy	Relief
Determined	Resentment	Awe	Wonder	Frustration
Contented	Regret	Suspicion	Playful	Sarcasm
Vulnerable	Confident	Lonely	Empathy	Indifferent

Related Exercise:

[G 11] **EMOTIONAL CACOPHONY** – All TMs emote at once.

Lessons:

- **Heighten the emotion:** exaggerate even a subtle feeling to make a scene more engaging.
- **Switch emotions suddenly:** flip from joy to anger or fear to relief to create dynamic tension.
- **Layer emotions:** characters often feel more than one thing at once (e.g., nervous but excited).

Continue 1.5 Agreement: Agreement is a cornerstone of improv.

[G 12] **1.5 Agreement: Agreement is a cornerstone of improv.**

You're on stage creating something out of nothing. Create just one thing, then you have something. Build that one thing up and out. Don't debate the validity of something made up. The audience loves to see you enthusiastically agree with details imagined in-the-moment.

🐞 Too often our default position in life is disagreement or refusal to commit when uncertain.

Suggested Exercise:

SELF CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENT CASCADE – TMs pass a SCES to their neighbor who adds to it.

Lessons:

- **Enthusiastic Agreement gets a reaction** – the audience gets relief from watching TMs support one another.
- **Commitment to One Another gets a reaction** – Whether *you* agree or not, choose to *agree with your fellow TM's perspective*. This earns the audience's good-will.
- **Following Heightens** – Agreement to and building on ONE idea focuses the funny faster.
- **Repetition Heightens** – Don't know what to say? Repeat exactly what you heard with more gusto.

1.6 Yes, And: “Yes, And” is improv’s pithy mantra.

[G 12] **1.6 Yes, And: “Yes, And” is improv’s pithy mantra. You make a choice and your TMs build on that choice.**

Related Exercise:

TWO LINE LAY-UPS – TM1 give a SCES, TM2 adds to it.

Lessons:

- **The Self-Contained Emotional Statement grounds us** – 🧠 Do not enter a scene dependent on your scene partner to initiate. ★ Initiate the moment you take the stage. Have something to do (object work) that you can continue even if no one joins you.
- **Make Agreement your default in scenes** – 🧠 Do not protect yourself with a “no” or a “but.” ★ The audience loves it when you commit wholeheartedly to your scene partner’s reality.
- **Force agreement** – “Yes, and” keeps us from arguing, denying or negotiating.
- **Force choices** – There’s no room for questions in “yes, and.” “Yes, and” demands that you add information to the scene.
- **Repetition alone heightens** – “Yes, and I am also afraid of that rock” is perfectly acceptable. *The agreement should be prioritized over cleverness.* “Yes, and me too” is great collaborative building.

[G 13] **1.7 [Accept], And: While “Agreement” is excellent, your “Yes” need not always agree if it “accepts.”**

You do not have to agree to something you might find offensive because “Yes, And” dictates it.

Related Exercise:

TWO TM LAY-UPS with ONE LINE EACH – like 1.6 lay-ups but with options.

Lessons:

- **If you are Accepting, you’re moving forward** – 🧠 Denials and negotiations of reality keep you (and the audience) from being in the moment.
- **The more you Care, the better** – Notice your contributions that got a laugh because you emotionally reacted to imagined stimulus.
- **Committed juxtaposition is all the “sense” a scene needs-** If you’re in an art gallery and I have a dog, we don’t need to “make sense” of the reality in which those two facts are both true, we just accept that both exist and commit to feeling about them.

1.8 To Continue the Scene, find the [HD] Positive Feed Back Loop (+FBL):

[G 14] **1.8 To Continue the Scene, find the [HD] Positive Feed Back Loop (+FBL):** If your scene is going nowhere, find your Positive Feedback Loop. Pick something that is actively on stage, let it *make you* feel more. Make your improv more reaction-based rather than thinking-based.

Related Exercise:

TWO TM LAY-UPS WITH MORE LINES EACH – like 1.7 but with more lines.

Lessons:

- **Committed juxtaposition is all the “sense” a scene needs** – If you’re in an art gallery and I have a dog, we don’t need to “make sense” of the reality in which those two facts are both true, we just accept that they both exist and commit to feeling about them.

- **Active Elements make us React** –

☠️ Too often improv showcases two improvisers *talking about* something.

★ *React* to the moment you’re in. Imagine stimuli that actively exists with you on stage – **see it, touch it.**

You can make the audience feel along with you. Keep your improv in-the-moment.

[G 14] **HOMEWORK** –

- **Focus outward during your interactions:** Instead of being in your head thinking up what to say, really listen and see what’s happening outside yourself during an interaction. *Have what you say be inspired by the moment.*

- **Make another person look good:** If I say, “Great Game of Thrones last night,”

☠️ don’t say, “I don’t own a TV,”

★ say “Yeah? I’d like to hear more about that.”

- **Notice what you care about, and how what you care about makes you feel:** Be conscious of those moments in your day-to-day life where “something makes you feel.”

In Closing:

[H] **At the end of each lesson, I will have a thought about overcoming fear.** These are summaries 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 the unknown, losing control, public speaking, past negative or critical experiences or not being accepted.
- > Three expressions of fear are toxic to improvisors
 1. Fight
 2. Flight
 3. Freeze

How to overcome fear:

- Don't be in your own head, i.e., don't worry by asking “what if...?” questions about how your own performance might go!
- A little fear is good. It keeps us focused, excited and energized.
- Be kind to yourself. Don't search for your “failures” but for your accomplishments.
- Experience, coaching, and practice help overcome the fears you might face by doing improv.

“We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.” — George Bernard Shaw



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