

FUZZY IMPROV

Lesson 101-01

Confidence and Acceptance



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.

- **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

1.0 Warm-up exercises:

[HD] **Stretch:** Get Centered, focus on Improv!

Instructor (I) and 3 teammates (TMs) lead a short stretch.

[G pg8] **Crazy Eights:** To get the blood flowing.

[HD] **Zip, Zap, Zop:** ATTENTION, see and hear, work together.

- Stand in a circle.
- A TM claps, points at a TM2 and says "Zip."
- TM2 claps, points at a TM3, and says "Zap."
- TM3 does the same, saying "Zop."
- The pattern continues. The goal is to keep a steady rhythm and focus.

Yes, And: Build the essential Improv! skill of ACCEPTING and building on ideas.

- Stand in a circle.
- A TM starts by making a simple statement (e.g., "I went to the store today").
- The next person responds with "Yes, and..." adding more details to the story.
- Continue around circle.

[G pg8]

1.1 Focus Outward: There is a ton of material to mine in your improv 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.

Suggested Exercises:

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.

Game on next page.

[G 8] **ACTION PASS, the game –**

- In a circle, a TM turns to his left and executes an action, any action – without sound.
- The next TM sees that action – head to toe.
- Turning to the TM to their left they try to recreate it EXACTLY.
- Continue around circle.

Progression:

Do it once through. Discuss what the group experienced and saw.

- What changed? What was dropped? Call out the little things.
- What made them laugh? – straight repetition, embracing something “accidental.”

Do it again focused on slowing down. Notice all the nuances of a TM’s action and work to repeat the action *exactly*.

[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.**

Suggested Exercises:

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.

PASS "YES" AROUND, the game–

- A TM points at and makes eye contact with another TM who *accepts* by saying "Yes."
- The accepted TM walks across the circle to stand in the place of the TM who said "Yes."
- The TM who said "Yes" points at and makes eye contact with another TM who says "Yes" so they can exchange physical position.
- Repeat till all have played.

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.**

AWESOME!, the game –

- Around the circle,
- TMs share something they've done that day (ex: "I ate pancakes," or "I got a parking ticket") .
- To which the rest of class enthusiastically (regardless of implication) responds, "Awesome!"

[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.

Suggested Exercises:

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.

Lessons continued next page.

[G 10] Continued Lessons for Cafe Scenes:

- **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!”

CAFÉ SCENES, the game –

- 2 TMs sit in chairs facing each other.
- They have a conversation as THEIR ACTUAL SELVES – not characters.
- Do not ignore the people watching you!

[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.

Lessons and Game on next page.

[G 11]

Suggested Exercises:

SELF-CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENTS

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.

SELF CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENTS, the game –

- TMs give Self Contained Emotional Statements around a circle.

[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).

[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

EMOTIONAL CACOPHONY, the game – All TMs take part simultaneously (but can choose different emotions), so don't worry about what you look like.

- “On the count of 3, I want you all to feel a feeling.”
- “Happy. Sad. Angry. Excited: 1,2,3 Feel.”
- “Feel more.”
- “Express your feeling *physically* not just louder.”
- “New emotion. 1,2,3 Feel.”
- “Bigger, but quieter.”
- New emotion. 1,2,3 Feel.

[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.

SELF CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENT CASCADE, the game –

- TMs stand in a circle.
- TM1 says a SCES (I love the beach).
- TM2 agrees with that SCES and **adds to it** with their own SCES (I love relaxing on the sand).
- TM3 does the same and so on.
- TM1 is the last to build a new SCES on top of the original (Pink sand? I love it).
- And then TM2 starts the next cascade with a brand new SCES.

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

Suggested 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.

TWO LINE LAY-UPS, the game–

- Create two lines on either wing.
- One side is the initiation side, tasked with entering the stage with a SCES.
- The other side is the Join side, tasked with **agreeing with TM’s perspective and providing more details to feel about.**

Example: TM1, *“I hate this painting.”* TM2, *“Yeah, it looks like a 5-year-old painted it.”*

[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.

Suggested 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.

TWO TM LAY-UPS with ONE LINE EACH, the game – Here TM2 is tasked with entering stage and contributing **their own SCES** which can **agree with the initiation, relate to it or not relate to it.**

💀 But it **CAN’T contradict** to the reality of the initiation.

Good Examples:

- “I hate this painting.” “Yeah, it looks like a 5-year-old painted it.”
- “I hate this painting.” “I like the way it makes me feel.”
- “I hate this painting.” “Damn dog won’t stop barking.”

Bad Examples:

- “I hate this painting.” “It’s a sculpture.”
- “I hate this painting.” “You’re wrong; it’s impressive.”

[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.


Suggested 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.

TWO TM LAY-UPS WITH MORE LINES EACH, the game–

- Create two lines, one on either wing.
- One side is the initiation side, tasked with entering stage with a SCES.
- The other side is the Join side, tasked with entering stage and contributing their own SCES.
- The Joining player’s SCES can agree with the initiation, relate to it or not relate to it.
-  All it CAN’T be is in contradiction to the reality of the initiation.
- **The players continue their scene by heightening the emotion and details of their first feeling.**

Example: “I hate this painting.” “I like the way it makes me feel.” “It’s just three stupid black lines and one dumb red circle.” “I see a happy clown face.”

[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."

[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