

Agenda

Introduction

Warmup
30 Minutes

Exercise and Practice
90 Minutes

Discussion
60 minutes

A Brief Introduction to Improv

Improv is the study and practice of reaction. On its face, Improv is a set of exercises designed to help participants think quickly and react in the moment. On a deeper level, Improv is a methodology that grants participants new ways of learning and understanding their relationships and themselves. Improv is powerful because it utilizes the same skills that make for effective leaders and creative thinkers.

In Improv, players create reality through individual action and honest emotion while at the same time they develop a shared vision with other players. Improv players gain confidence to allow their own spontaneity to flow without self-censorship, poise to allow the spontaneity of others to flow without criticism, and re-affirm their belief in their ability to solve problems.

Innovation

Practice following ideas to see where they lead you. Creative skills are strengthened by both not having a pre-determined agenda and being able to act on other people's visions.

Agility

Improv develops the mindset of adapting to change, saying yes to new ideas, and letting go of your assumptions.

Confidence

Face your fears. Confidence comes from being comfortable when out on a limb.

Team Building

Communication skills are sharpened by listening and reacting in the moment. The shared experience brings teams together.

From the Introduction to the book *Truth in Comedy*:

"One of the biggest misconceptions about improvisation is that only trained actors and comics can be successful. Actually, anyone can improvise. We all do it every day – none of us goes through our day to day life with a script to tell us what to do."

- Kim "Howard" Johnson

The Guiding Principles of Improv

Tips and Tricks

1. The mess is the thing.
2. Don't try to be funny.
3. There are no wrong answers.
4. Anything can work, but not everything does. That is okay.
5. Listen without judgement.
6. Be curious.
7. No Saying "sorry."
8. Stay Safe.
9. Check yourself at the door.

The Rules

1.

2.

3.

4.

The Six Paradoxes of Improv

To Demonstrate your Bravery . . . **Step into your Fear**

To Experience Freedom . . . **Embrace your Necessary Structures**

To Prepare for Victory . . . **Contemplate what you Give Up**

To Feel in Control of a Situation . . . **Relinquish the Need to be in Control**

To Exude Confidence . . . **Acknowledge your Vulnerability**

To Become Spontaneous . . . **Practice Spontaneity**

To Demonstrate Your Bravery...

Step Into Your Fear

Now that we aren't fighting saber-toothed badgers all the time, fear does more for us than our ancient ancestors. Fear defines our boundaries. Fear tells us the exact nature of the box we live in. That box keeps us safe, perhaps, but it also keeps us boring.

Exceptional people don't tend to be the kind who live inside the box forever. Fear is therefore not a tool for survival - it's a sixth-sense for greatness. "Here there be dragons" might serve as a warning, but if you want to be the person who kills a dragon, now you know exactly where you need to go.

Fear means you're in that space that few others would dare to be - the space where great things can happen. More likely than not, history's great leaders, inventors, and pioneers were all afraid of what they were doing at some point. They became great because they knew the secret: bravery isn't the absence of fear - bravery is carrying on despite it.

Spite your fear.

What fear do you want to face

1

2

3

How will you face that fear?

1

2

3

To Experience Freedom...

Embrace your Necessary Structures

Remember that scene from the end of *The Graduate* (spoiler alert) when the two main characters rode off together in the back of that bus? Their faces change from “we did it, we’re free” to the cold, harsh reality of “now what?” It’s the perfect allegory for how we treat freedom these days.

Telling someone they can do anything is about as helpful as telling them they can do nothing - with anything to go on, where does one start?

A life can really be boiled down to a series of choices, but there has to be something to choose from.

You can’t improvise around a refrain of music if you don’t know the refrain to begin with. You need to learn your box before you can learn how to think outside it.

What are your necessary structures?

Why are these unmovable?

What are your unnecessary structures?

To Prepare for Victory...

Contemplate What You Need to Give Up

The paradox here is that this isn't exactly a paradox. To make progress, you must make sacrifices - that makes plenty of sense. Then why is it so difficult in practice? As humans, letting go is a paradox in itself. I can't tell you what you need to let go of to make it in this world, that's something you must figure out for yourself. The key word here is "contemplate."

Sacrifice is a choice, and victory means whatever you want it to mean. Is it a promotion, a position or a place? Is it personal or is it public? What Victory do you want to achieve? And what do you need to let go of to make room for it?

Perhaps it is a mindset or behavior. Maybe it's a habit or a relationship.

Practice letting go of those things that hold you back. Only then can you make progress.

What victory do you want to achieve?

What do you need to give up to achieve it?
