



Empowerment Improv

Promoting Self-Confidence & Assertiveness

Developed by: Jeff Jantz, Wayne State University, C2 Pipeline

Empowerment Improv was developed to give high school students an opportunity to address tough situations that they may be faced with while in a safe environment. The goal is for students to gain experience and learn to use conflict as an opportunity to be successful in school and in life. The program has been extremely popular with students in the 15 Wayne State University, C2 Pipeline, 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool programs.

The curriculum was developed in a high school (grades 9-12) afterschool setting and designed to be used in 1 hour blocks over 8 sessions. The sessions can be adjusted to fit different time frames and benefit younger students. Content and discussion topics would need to be revised to be age-appropriate.

The Wayne State University, C2 Pipeline program has made this curriculum available to other educational programs at no cost. We ask that all participating program staff, facilitators, and students take a brief online survey to provide feedback for continuous improvement of the curriculum. We will collect data on the reach and effectiveness of this curriculum. As a facilitator, please note changes and additions that prove to be successful in your program and share them with us.

Surveys:

Facilitator Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q2VMG8W>

Student Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JTWM7QC>

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Objective/ Skill Development: The learner will develop public speaking, problem solving and critical thinking skills while addressing self-esteem, social emotional skills, diplomacy, cultural awareness, and public relations by participating in improvisational skits.

Learning Standards/Day School Connection: Speaking and Listening – Comprehension and Collaboration; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

General Knowledge Needed for Facilitator (what you need to know and do to be successful):

- Understand the *Empowerment Improv Guidelines (page 12)*,
- Read through and understand the terms and concepts students will explore in each activity.
- Review the questions in *Topics of Discussion* sections
- Let the students learn from the process
- Avoid lecturing

Supplies/Equipment/Resources/Classroom Setup: Circle of chairs with open space in the middle (with larger groups you may need to use a theatre style setup).
Video camera and playback device (optional).

General Session Instructions: Begin each activity with a facilitated group discussion. Use the Discussion Questions and allow students to express their thoughts about the topics. After group discussion run the improv session, give students scenarios and settings similar to situations discussed during group conversation, only replace actual racial, cultural and personal traits with fictional traits. You may want to utilize concepts like werewolves, vampires, wizards, space aliens, etc. Be sure to talk about the relevance to actual issues after the skits. Remind students when addressing a fellow actor/character to keep things imaginary, don't make fun of (or even bring up) a person's actual skin color, hair, clothes, race, personal business etc., ***The Fiction Rule (Keeping It Fake)*** (*Empowerment Improv Guidelines, no. 6, page 12*).

You are the moderator you hold the imaginary remote, you can utilize pause and reflect, as well as, rewind and re-do during a skit as you see fit. Explain to the students that you will announce when to **start** a skit and can **Stop, Pause, Rewind** or replace or add an actor at any time. Have two or three students stand in the circle give them a scenario than say, "go," "action," or "play." If students are having trouble getting started, give them a setting or ask the audience for a setting. You can also provide an opening line. Remind students of the *Empowerment Improv Guidelines, (page 12)* throughout the skits as necessary and encourage the audience to do so, as well. If the skit is going nowhere or becoming inappropriate, pause or stop. You can "rewind" and or replace or add an actor or "stop" and start a new scenario. If a teachable moment arises, seize the moment to elaborate on it. Have students revisit some scenarios to reinforce the lesson.

Utilize the audience. Any students who are not acting should remain seated during a skit. Make sure they understand they are the audience and can interact a little but need to be respectful of the actors and hold commentary until the end of the skit. After a skit or during a "pause" ask the audience how the characters handled the situation, what could they have done differently and where did things start to go wrong. Have individual audience members elaborate on the decisions made and ask them to offer suggestions on how the conflict in the story can be resolved or handled differently. Be sure the audience is aware that the discussion is about the **way in which the conflict was handled** and not a critique of the performance.

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Facilitation Note: Each of the eight sessions will take at least 1 hour to facilitate including the group discussion. The activities could be expanded upon and revisited to include a deeper dive into the issues. Feel free to come up with new scenarios and also try to include scenarios that may be similar to experiences discussed during the group discussion.

Incorporating Technology (Optional): A video camera can be a very valuable tool to utilize during improv. You can use a tablet or smartphone as well. There may be students who are not comfortable performing in a skit but may enjoy being behind the camera. Whoever is videotaping make sure the camera is right up in the action it can be difficult getting recognizable audio if the camera is too far away and a wide static shot can be very boring. If using a smartphone or tablet be sure to hold the device in a landscape format (horizontally) this will ensure the video can be utilized in other formats, viewing devices and editing programs.

Utilize the footage as a reflection tool. Students will enjoy reviewing past performances and as the facilitator you can literally pause and rewind the video while asking the students to reflect.

Closure/Reflection:

Every session should end with reflection time. Ask students:

- How did the characters handle the situation?
- How could things have been handled differently?
- When did things start to go bad or good?
- How did he/she feel in a given moment?
- How did their character feel in a given moment?

Avoid telling students they handled a situation poorly instead, ask if a scenario could have been handled differently or ask about the potential consequences. “What would happen if they acted that way in real life?”

Let the audience weigh in, as discussed above. Hearing how their peers think a situation could have been handled will be far more effective than the adults telling them. Your job as the facilitator is to make sure things progress in a positive direction.

Group Discussion and Confidentiality: Let students know they are in a “*Safe Circle*”. It is important for students to feel safe and comfortable to share openly during the group discussion. As the facilitator you need to be aware that a group discussion can become very emotional, serious and passionate. It also has the potential for gossip. To avoid gossip tell students “This is a *Safe Circle*. Things said in this circle stay in this circle and names from outside this circle stay outside this circle.” You may want to have students repeat this phrase as a group before each session and explain in the own words what it means and why it is important. Simply memorizing a phrase does not imply comprehension.

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Session 1: Intro to Improv

Note: The object of this first activity is simply to get students to feel comfortable with improv and practice the *Empowerment Improv Guidelines* (page 12) but be sure to seize a teachable moment if one arises. Print and distribute the *Empowerment Improv Guidelines*, collect at the end of the session to use at a later date.

Topics of Discussion: Ask students:

Does anyone have any acting or public speaking experience?

What is Improv?

What makes a good story?

What are the elements of a story?

Go through the *Empowerment Improv Guidelines* handout and discuss each rule with the group. Have students explain them in their own words.

Scenarios:

- You are stuck on a desert island with a talking robot.
- You show up at a party that you thought was a costume party.
- Congratulations you have been selected to be on the reality show *Living on Mars for the rest of your life*.
- A boss has to let someone go/fire somebody.
- Meeting your girl/boyfriends parents for the first time.
- You accidentally locked something of yours in a stranger's car.
- Two construction workers find a buried treasure.
- A politician trying to convince someone to vote for them.
- A bank robbery gone wrong.
- Stuck in a car teetering on the edge of a cliff.
- Two people wake up in a locked room and have no idea how they got there.
- Telling a friend some bad news.
- Pulled over by a police officer.
- Two criminals on the run.
- A giant, a fairy, and a wizard are lost in Detroit.
- Your grandmother just served you a homemade meal but it looks and smells horrible.
- Your boss is asking you for a report that was due last week and you have not finished it yet.
- Your family has just arrived for dinner. You open the oven door to take out the turkey and see that it is completely raw. You forgot to turn on the oven!
- Three pirates are dividing up a treasure.
- Two or three people planning an escape from...
- Friends waiting in line to go into a haunted house.
- Getting your fortune told.
- You are the latest creation of a mad scientist she/he just brought you to life.
- A comedian in a standup show being confronted by a heckler in the audience.
- A nurse giving a shot to a really grouchy old patient who doesn't like taking medication.
- A movie star, approached by an obsessed fan.
- A teacher/tutor tries to teach the multiplication table to a student who only wants to talk about TV shows.
- Two friends are on a talk show. Their problem is that one keeps changing her/his interests and attire to imitate the other. The talk show host is on the initiator's side.

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Session 2: Conflict Resolution, Part 1

Note: As the facilitator, try to guide students to realize that a conflict when handled skillfully can be an opportunity and that conflict is not necessarily negative. The concepts covered in today's session may be applied to remaining sessions. Ask students if a character is behaving as **Passive, Assertive** or **Aggressive** during the skits. Helping students to understand the terms passive, assertive and aggressive is crucial to making students aware of how they handle situations. It may help to explain passive, aggressive and assertive as relative terms with passive and aggressive as extremes on opposite ends of the spectrum and assertive as the balance in the middle.

Topics of Discussion:

- Is conflict good or bad? Can it lead to good things? What would the world be like without conflict?
- What does passive mean to you?
- What does aggressive mean to you?
- What does passive/aggressive mean to you?
- What does assertive mean to you?
- What does the word diplomacy/diplomatic mean?
- What does the term civility mean?
- Address the issue **NOT** the person! What does that mean???

Tell us about a time you were in a conflict with a teacher, student, sibling, parent, teammate, friend, authority figure, co-worker, etc.? What did you do? Or what do you wish you would have done?

Scenarios:

- 3 to 4 friends trying to decide on pizza toppings.
- You find a \$20.00 bill on the ground just as you reach for it someone else reaches for it at the same time.
- Your car stalled out at a traffic signal right as the light turned green. There is an angry motorist behind you.
- A boyfriend and girlfriend are driving together the driver's phone rings and the passenger answers it and hears a sexy voice asking for the driver.
- A shopper at a department store is browsing and a store clerk suspects he/she is shoplifting.
- Four friends are at the movie theater two want to see one movie and the other two want to see another movie.
- Two students are waiting outside the principal's office because they have just been in a fight.
- You just finished washing all the dishes when your roommate (or sibling) walks in and asks what happened to the cup she/he had her jewelry soaking in next to the sink.
- You're playing chess (or another board game) with a friend and you suspect they may have cheated.
- A friend is complaining to you about everything in their life and you are getting tired of listening to it.
- The new person at work is trying to tell you how to do your job.
- Three teammates are working on a school project one is not doing their share of the work.
- Confronting a sibling or friend about...

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Session 3: Conflict Resolution, Part 2

Note: Review the notes from Session 2.

Topics of Discussion:

- Review terms Passive, Aggressive, Passive/Aggressive, Assertive and Diplomatic.
- Was anyone involved in a conflict since the last class? If so, did you think of and apply any of the things we learned? Tell us about it?
- Review last week's skits, which characters were successful in neutralizing conflicts. How could some of the situations have been handled differently? Any new thoughts?
- Review the concept of addressing the **issue** NOT the **person**!
- What does it mean to redirect a situation?
- Can you think of a character or person you consider to be assertive?
- What are some characteristics of an assertive person?
- Can the way in which you address an issue with an authority figure have an effect on the outcome?

Scenarios:

- Two friends are lost in the woods.
- Three friends are playing cards when one of them notices their brand new smartwatch is missing.
- One person accuses another of flirting with their boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Three roommates are having a disagreement about their messy apartment/dorm room.
- A rapper and a singer are having a disagreement about a recording project they are collaborating on.
- You are trying to sleep. You have to get up for work the next day but the people in the apartment next to you are playing loud music and being obnoxiously loud.
- You are a manager of a small company and one of your employees turned in a report that was done completely wrong. This is not the first time something like this happened.
- You lost your coat a couple of days ago then you see someone else wearing it.
- You are voicing your concerns at the school board meeting regarding cuts to your favorite program.
- Your teacher just assigned a project that you feel is unfair because the teacher did not prepare you for it.
- A police officer is interrogating you and suspects that you may have something illegal in your possession.
- You are meeting with the school principal regarding a school policy you feel is unfair.
- You are meeting with a teacher regarding a bad grade that you felt should have been higher.
- You have been pulled over for speeding and you're pretty sure you were going at least 15 to 20 miles over.

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Session 4: Ethical Dilemmas

Note: It may be difficult for students to relate to ethics as it applies to business and government however they can usually understand how it may relate to personal relationships. This may also be a good opportunity to address gossip and the use of social media. You can also include issues from current events.

Topics of Discussion:

- What does the word ethics mean?
- What are morals?
- Is there a difference between the two words?
- Who decides what is right and wrong? Are we born with that knowledge?
- If something is **not** against the law, does that make it ethically or morally ok?
- What is the difference between gossip and venting?
- Can gossip be harmful?
- What do you think when a person constantly talks about other people when they're not around?
- What are some good ways to stay out of gossip?

Scenarios:

- You are at the salon or barber shop. You hear a person talking about someone you know and saying things that you don't think are true.
- Two painters are painting at someone's house and find a huge diamond ring.
- A friend did not complete their homework. It is due in a few minutes and he/she wants to copy your answers.
- You are working in a retirement home and an elderly person wants to give you all their money before they die.
- You're a vice president of a large company. You just hung up the phone after speaking with the company president, who has directed you to fire one of your employees. The employee is your best friend!
- You just read something shocking about a friend on social media. But you are not sure if it is true.
- You are hanging out with two friends. One is in the bathroom and the other wants you to ditch them.
- Two friends find a wallet at the bus stop.
- A person you know, but is not necessarily a close friend, just posted, "Life sucks, I wish it would just END!" on social media.
- You see a female friend of yours at a party she is clearly intoxicated and some creepy guy is talking to her.
- A male friend of yours drops something in a female friend's drink without her knowing.
- A homeless person just tripped and fell. You're not sure, but you think they may have been hurt pretty bad.
- A stranger walks up and hands you an envelope and says "Larry told me to get this to you." You don't know anybody named Larry.
- You are preparing for a videogame championship with a \$10,000 grand prize. You're really tech savvy friend just informs you she/he has developed a mod called "Lance Codestrong" that will make you stronger and faster in the game.
- Your boss is trying to get you to:
 -sell products that don't work.
 -convince people they need to replace something on their car that is not broken.
 -get people to sign up for loans with really bad terms for the borrower.

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Session 5: Diversity

Note: The goal is to help students to embrace their similarities and differences. It is important to realize we all have preconceived notions and biases but we need to continue be aware of them and be conscious of how we interact with others. Challenge them to debunk stereotypes because everyone is an individual. It is especially important to follow The Fiction Rule during this activity.

Topics of Discussion:

- What makes us the same?
- What are some things that makes us different?
- What does the word prejudice mean to you?
- What does the word racism mean to you?
- What is the difference between the two terms?
- What is class separation?
- Do you have any personal biases?
- What are some examples of stereotypes?
- Have you ever pre-judged a person? Were your assumptions accurate?
- Have you ever encountered discrimination?

Note: Replacing cultures, race, ethnicity and skin color with fictional character types i.e. werewolves, vampires, witches, wizards, muggles, trolls, gnomes, fairies, giants, monsters, aliens etc. is a great option for following *The Fiction Rule*. Be sure to point out the parallels to real life during reflection.

- A troll gets on a plane and sits next to a fairy and a gnome. The gnome has never met a troll but heard many bad things about them.
- Three friends are hanging out. Two are muggles (non-magical people) who are not comfortable with magic. The other has recently realized that he/she is a wizard.
- A wizard who believes monsters do not deserve equal rights and giants should be separated from the rest of society is voicing his opinions.
- A green goblin is explaining to an elf that he does not trust blue goblins.
- A group of robots are protesting for equal rights next to a group of humans protesting about a lack of manufacturing and service and jobs for humans.
- A minister does not want to marry a vampire and a human.
- An elf is applying for a toll collector job. The troll interviewing him doesn't think he can cut it.
- A gnome and a witch are trying to get an elf to sing and dance. They think all elves can sing.
- You are a werewolf meeting your boy/girlfriends parents for the first time, They are a witch and wizard.
- A friend asks you to go to a concert. You are not so sure about going because there will most likely be wizards, elves, and trolls there.
- Your fellow elf friend invites you to dinner with a wizard whom you have never met. You think wizards are entitled, stuck-up, snobs.
- A new friend of yours just told you they belong to a religion that believes god is a robot and all robots are sacred.
- Your friend who is a werewolf feels he/she is a vampire stuck in a werewolf's body.

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Session 6: Peer Pressure

Note: Peer pressure is typically associated with having negative influences but it can also have a positive effect on students and adults. People are influenced by many things and sometimes it can be difficult to determine what the right choice is. The right choice for one person may not be the same for another. The goal of this activity is to encourage youth to have the confidence to consider all factors and make healthy, productive and informed decisions for themselves.

Topics of Discussion:

- What is peer pressure?
- Is there such a thing as good peer pressure?
- Who makes decisions or influences decisions for you in your life?
- How do you know if someone is a truly good friend?
- Has anyone ever felt pressured to do something they were not comfortable with?
- Does anyone want to briefly share a real life example of pure pressure? (No outside names)
- Can anyone give a real life example of someone not giving in to peer pressure?
- What are some real life examples of potential consequences of giving in to peer pressure?

Tip the scale: This is great activity you can use over and over in place of or to supplement improv scenarios: Have one student be a decision maker and two others are the influences in their mind with polar opinions (for and against the decision). The decision maker must decide what to do. The two influencers must try to pressure the decision maker in opposite ways. Ask the students for suggestions to help keep it relevant to their lives.

Suggested decisions:

- Using drugs or alcohol.
- Staying out after curfew.
- Doing homework or doing something fun.
- Going to college.
- Applying for or taking a job
- Contemplating whether not to take an unpaid internship.
- Fighting someone.

Scenarios: (for additional Peer Pressure improv)

- One student is angry with another student and is discussing what to do about it with two friends.
- You are at a party with two friends when you realize you should have been home over an hour ago.
- You are playing a video game and two friends come over, you tell them you have been playing this game for 16 hours straight now.
- You are trying to decide if you should go to a hotel with your date after prom.
- You are hanging out with friends when someone shows up with a hookah or pills or alcohol or...
- Two friends are deciding which after school programs to sign up for. One wants to take/join (cheerleading, ROTC, feminist theory, debate, glee club) the other thinks it's an awful choice.
- A friend tries to convince a friend who is shy, to come and hang out with a large group of peers.
- You want to hang out with your friends all night but you have to be at work tomorrow by 6 a.m.

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Session 7: Bullying

Note: Bullying is a specific type of conflict. Review with students some of the techniques covered during conflict resolution. Explain to students that when addressing bullies it is important to “**address the issue not the person.**” This can be very difficult for students to keep in mind even in a fictional setting. We want to encourage students to resolve the issue assertively using nonviolent methods. Students tend to think that when dealing with a bullying situation it is best to either ignore it or to use aggression. We need to encourage students to stick up for themselves and their friends without becoming the aggressor. The best way to do this is to address the **Issue** directly while remaining calm, confident, and collected.

Topics of Discussion:

- Do you feel safe and comfortable at school and or after- school?
- What is bullying???
- What is not bullying?
- What are some of the consequences of bullying?
- Can adults be bullies or get bullied? Do you think there are bullies in the workplace?
- Have you ever been bullied? What did you do? Or what do you wish you would have done?
- Have you ever picked on someone else? Did you regret it?
- Have you ever stuck up for someone else? (Or wish you would have?)
- What are good ways to stand up to bullies?
- Who remembers what the terms passive, aggressive, and assertive mean from our conversation during conflict resolution? Do these terms apply when dealing with bullying?

Note: Remind students of *The Fiction Rule*.

Scenarios:

- Someone is threatening to make your life miserable if you don't give them the answers to a homework assignment.
- Someone is picking on you for the clothes you are wearing.
- Someone is picking on you because your mom works at Valuemart.
- A student purposely knocks books out of your hand, this is not the first time.
- Another student has been spreading rumors about you through Kik, Instagram, or social media.
- Someone is picking on you because you didn't make the team.
- You see a kid, who is a little different, is being confronted by another kid.
- You notice that a kid in the locker room is being teased by a couple of other kids.
- A group of upperclassmen are initiating a freshmen they are telling them to do things that are embarrassing and unsafe.
- Two girls tell another she can't be a part of their squad or click anymore.
- A friend is always criticizing you and making you feel self-conscious.
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend is always putting you down and telling you how you're not good enough.
- A co-worker is always cracking jokes about you and your low sales in front of other colleagues.
- Your boss is making jokes about your job performance at a meeting.

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Session 8: Positive Reinforcement

Note: This activity takes a slightly different approach than the previous. We are suggesting a specific technique and philosophy to be used. Many children and teens are not familiar with the concepts of positive reinforcement. Parents and teachers may use positive reinforcement but youth are rarely taught the techniques in a formal setting then given the opportunity to practice and test them. The facilitator may find it helpful to learn about this area before conducting this session.

Warm up activity:

Ask all students to close their eyes. Ask them NOT to think of a basketball. Now do NOT think of a cheeseburger. Do NOT think of the Statue of Liberty. Open eyes.

- By show of hands; How many people thought of the objects even though you were instructed **NOT** to?

Have all students close Eyes again:

- Imagine you are a young child and an adult just told you “You can’t watch TV, Stay out of that room and Don’t play with anything on that table.” Open eyes.

- What do you think you would be thinking about most after being told that?

The facilitator can discuss the language process, “When your brain processes spoken language it leaves out negative words (don’t, can’t, no, won’t and so on). What you process is do, can, yes, will, etc. Therefore, it is important to tell children and people what you want them **TO** do.”

Topics of Discussion:

- What are some examples of negative words? (Some answer: No, Not, Can’t, Out, Won’t, Isn’t, Bad)

- Give some examples of positive words? (Some Answers: Yes, Do, Can, Will, Help, Nice, Good)

- Who has had experience watching over younger children?

- How was their behavior?

- Give some examples of how you could redirect undesirable behavior.

- Is it ok or necessary to use negative words when dealing with children?

(The facilitator should explain that occasionally using a negative word is ok while correcting misbehavior but works best if followed up by a positive explanation of expectations).

- What does it mean to redirect a child?

Scenarios:

- You are at a store with a younger cousin and they start begging you to buy them candy.

- You are watching over some little kids on a playground one of them threatens to punch another in the nose.

- Your little cousin really wants to make a magic potion out of household cleaning products.

- You’re getting ready to take your little cousins on a bike ride. They do not want to wear a helmet.

- You’re watching over three little kids one of them begins using inappropriate language.

- You’re trying to fly a kite, but the wind has died down. Your brother and his 5-year-old just arrived, and you promised them that you’d have the kite flying high by the time they arrived.

- A child tries to convince a parent to stay home from work and let her/him stay home from school.

- Parent and child are shopping for school clothes. The parent does not think the child’s attire choices are appropriate for his/her age/weight/personality.

- Parent and child are at the doctor’s office. The doctor is about to give the child a shot.

- Parent and child are on the Dr. Feel show. Dr. Feel is trying to get to the heart of the problem behind the child’s “undesirable” behavior.

- A babysitter is trying to put a child to bed. The child will not fall asleep, because he/she is afraid of a monster.

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Empowerment Improv Guidelines

Improv has general rules sometimes the rules can be broken but players must understand them. The guidelines listed here have been compiled from multiple resources you can find several variations and explanations of the rules of Improv online.

1) Say, "Yes, And..."

As a detail is established in the scene say "Yes" to acknowledge you agree then follow up with "And" then add more details to contribute to the story (see number 2). Try to always keep an open mind and go with the flow of the scene. **Don't Deny.** Denial or refusal of an offer made by your partner will almost instantly bring a scene to a grinding halt. Example: Player A) "Welcome to my wand store. I am Houdini the third" Player B) "This isn't a store, it's an airplane. And you're not Houdini, you're a chicken." Not so much fun right. Player B could have replied with "I'm so glad you're open my wand is broken and I turned my aunt Margaret into a chicken." Note: *Don't Deny* does not mean characters cannot have a disagreement within a scene, conflict is a crucial part of a story.

2) Make Statements

Each statement made especially in the beginning of a scene should help establish the details of the scene: who, what, where, when and why. Avoid open ended questions like, "Who are you and where are we?", because they put the burden of coming up with something "interesting" on your partner. The story should continuously advance and in order to do so you need to continuously add new information. An example of making a statement would be, "It sure is hot in your laboratory today, Dr. Frankenstein." This statement establishes a detail, a place, and a character. You can ask questions but make sure to give your partner something to work with. Example: "What's that you are working on Dr. Frankenstein? It looks like a cross between a llama and a banana!"

3) You Don't Have to Be Funny

The hidden riddle of improv is the harder you try not to be funny the more funny your scene is going to be. Why? Because the very best kind of improv scene you can do is an "interesting" scene, not necessarily a "funny" one. When you do an interesting scene, a very surprising thing happens, the funny comes out all by itself. The best way to go are to stick to your character, stick to the story that is being told, and to stay within the reality of the scene you are playing.

4) Communicate and Listen

When you are in a scene, the better you make your partner look, the better the scene is going to be which will make you look good too. If you enter a scene with a really great idea your partner won't know what that idea is unless you communicate with them. Use guidelines 1 and 2 to do this. Be sure to let your partner contribute too. Give them a chance to get their lines and Ideas out. Good communication implies good listening, as well as, being aware of body language and facial expressions. Listen to what your partner has to say and incorporate their statements into the story.

5) Tell a Story and Stay in Character

This sounds easy but can be one of the hardest rules to follow. Keep in mind that a story should have a beginning, middle, and end. Include details, conflict, and hopefully a resolution. Stories are interesting when the characters involved experience interesting things on their journey and perhaps experience some type of change or revelation. To every action there is a reaction, include the consequences to the choices characters make. Be conscious of the emotions your character and the other characters may be experiencing in any given moment. These are the elements that make an interesting story.

6) The Fiction Rule (Keeping It Fake)

This rule is specific to Empowerment Improv and is not necessarily used in the wider world of Improv. When addressing a fellow actor/character, keep things imaginary/fictional. Don't make fun of (or even bring up) a person's actual skin color, hair, clothes, race, personal business, etc. Instead make-up completely fictional character traits, i.e.; green skin, purple hair, polka dotted shirt. This rule is especially important in a situation where difficult topics are being explored by youth.

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Additional Resources

Warm up activities:

World's Worst -one participant must act out the world's worst _____ (fill in the blank) without saying what they are doing. The audience has to guess what the person is trying to portray the worst of. Examples could be world's worst baseball player, world's worst painter, world's worst bank robber, world's worst hairdresser, world's worst hypnotist.

Name That Prop - Pass around a random everyday object; plastic bottle, cardboard box, cardboard tube, foam noodle. Students will take turns pretending the object is something other than what it actually is without saying it, no words only sound effects. The rest of the class will have to guess what it is. It is a good idea to put a no weapons clause in this activity.

Guess My Emotion – Write several different emotions on separate pieces of paper participants must select a piece of paper and portray that emotion in a scenario. They can talk but cannot use the word or synonyms. The audience must guess what emotion the person is feeling. Examples of emotions: happy, sad, depressed, enthusiastic, regret, suspicious, paranoid, disgusted, surprised, afraid, brave, worried, humble, stubborn, jealous, calm.

Guess the Genre - participants must draw a piece of paper with a genre listed on it and act out a scene without using obvious characters or settings the audience must guess which genre they are portraying. Examples of genres: science fiction, romantic comedy, coming of age, disaster movie, comedy, tragedy, horror, psychological thriller, documentary, drama, western, crime/police drama, musical, love story, children and family.

Additional Settings:

Construction site
Dentist office waiting room
Operating room
The beach
Sail boat
Back of a truck
In the woods
The front door
A party
Nail salon or barber shop
In a small village in a developing country
Zombie rights rally
A cantina on the planet Tatooine
Mad scientist's laboratory
A funeral home
Noah's ark
Stuck on an elevator
A job interview

Empowerment Improv

Promoting Self-Confidence & Assertiveness

Additional Resources (continued)

Random lines:

There is never enough to go around.
Don't do that, it could break.
There's something I have to tell you.
Was that what I think it was?
What's that smell?
If I knew it would fit so well I would have tried it before.
I wouldn't do that if I were you.
Wait! What about my trust fund?
It's a secret.
Quick, let's hide in the basement.
We can't go on like this.
Does this make us friends now?
It's stuck.
I can't hold it any longer.
I always get nervous when this happens.
It's happening again.
I'm not really from around here.
Why am I always first?

Glossary:

Aggressive - ready or likely to attack or confront; characterized by or resulting from aggression.: "he's very uncooperative and aggressive"

Assertive - having or showing a confident and direct personality.

Civility - Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one's preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and fierce disagreements. It is political in the sense that it is a necessary prerequisite for civic action. But it is political, too, in the sense that it is about negotiating interpersonal power such that everyone's voice is heard, and nobody's is ignored. (From the Institute for Civility in Government website).

Passive - accepting or allowing what happens or what others do, without active response or resistance.

Web Resources:

<http://improvcyclopedia.org> - a great resource for games and all things improv.

http://improvcyclopedia.org/references/Rules_of_Improv.html - other versions of the rules of improv.

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~pennck/random.htm> Random sentence generator.

<https://www.theatrefolk.com/spotlights/the-two-person-scene#improv-for-two> games and scenarios.