

**The ASPE Online Resources  
Committee Presents:**

# Improv for SPs

Presented By Josh Blubaugh

# Josh Blubaugh

I am the Assistant Director of Operations for the Clinical Learning Center at the VCU School of Nursing. I am also Artistic Director of the Coalition Theater, an improv theater in Richmond, VA.

- 5 years of SP Education Experience
- 3 Years of SP experience
- 18 years of Improv experience.



# Financial Disclosures

I have no financial interests or relationships to disclose

# Objectives

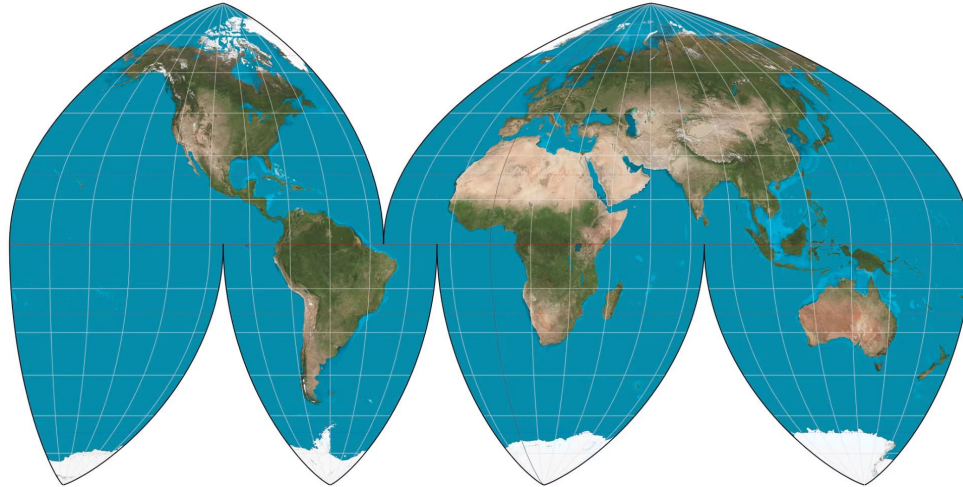
- Introduce SPs to basic concepts of Improvisation
- Connect Improv concepts to work in Simulation
- Learn exercises that reinforce core concepts of improvisational acting

# Take this webinar with a grain of salt

Your SP Educator is absolutely the person you should be listening to when it comes to case portrayal and your approach to simulation.

# Poll Questions

Where are you logging in from today?



# Poll Questions

What is your level of improv experience?

- A. New to improv
- B. Tried Improv
- C. Does improv Regularly
- D. Improv Master



# How many years of SP experience do you have?

- A. 0-1
- B. 2-4
- C. 5-7
- D. 8+





# Improv Basics

# What is Improv?

Webster's defines improvise as "to compose, recite, play, or sing extemporaneously"

Today we will focus on improvised acting.

Modern improv has a long history and in the last 50 years has been refined in comedy theaters to be a more clearly defined artform. There are improv theaters across the world that offer classes and have their own points of view.

# Improv Basics

What's the one thing everyone knows about improv?

Say “Yes, and”

# Improv Basics

## An Exercise! In a webinar?

### “Yes, And” Scenes

Two brave souls will improvise a scene by starting every sentence with the words  
**“Yes, and”**

Example:

I bought a new outfit.

**Yes, and** I think power clashing suits you.

**Yes, and** leopard print shirts with cow print pants are gonna be big.

# What did we observe?

The scene tended to build on itself through an agreement of what has already happened.

The word **Yes** confirms what has been said. “This is true”

The word **And** builds on what we’ve established. “This is also true”

# “Yes, and” and You

When Improvisers say “**Yes, and**” what are we really saying?

YES- I agree with what you just said.

- I am accepting the gift of what you’ve added to this scene
- I agree with everything that has already happened
- I agree with the reality of this scene

AND- Also this!

- Here is a gift for you
- I want to collaborate
- I will add to our shared reality something new

# “Yes, and” and Simulation

Simulations are a lot of **YES**.

The entire case an SP learns is all an established reality we are saying yes to.

The “**and**” happens when unexpected things happen

- When learners ask unanticipated questions
- When learners have strange behaviors
- When learners “scratch” at the fidelity of the simulation to see just how deep it goes.

# “Yes, and” and Simulation

It’s our job to say “Yes and” in moments of uncertainty

You need to say YES to the case you are simulating and then provide an “and” that does not deny the reality you have created in the simulation.

Often times this looks like improvising mundane details in line with the case.

If you’re playing an arthritis case and a student asks “What you do for fun?” If you answer videogames, will that potentially add a case element that leads them to a different differential diagnosis?



What are some examples of questions that caught you off guard in simulation?

# Exercise 2 Questions

A Character Interview

We will need 4 volunteers

One will portray an improvised character.

The other 3 will take turns asking questions of that character.

The first improviser will need to answer the questions as truthfully to their character as possible.

# What did we observe?

As the Person being interviewed?

As the ones doing the interviewing?

As the audience?

# Improv Basics

What's the other rule we all know about improv?

**DON'T ASK QUESTIONS**

# Don't Ask Questions!

In Improv we also teach beginners not to ask questions.

We teach beginners this because questions create **PRESSURE**. The novice improviser does not deal well under pressure.

I point this out because questions are a powerful tool for simulation.

When we ask learners questions it creates the same pressure but for **LEARNING!**

# The Power of Questions

When we ask learners questions we should have a goal.

Case Designers will include questions to:

- Challenge Students
- Improve realism
- Help students

SPs may ask questions in the moment to:

- gain clarity
- cue a student
- encourage better communication skills

# Questions???

SPs should remember that  
questions create pressure!

**Don't add too many.**

And consider the learner

# A Recommendation

When practicing cases prior to simulation.

I encourage you to ask questions not covered in the case.

This helps prepare for the pressure of students asking those questions.

It also creates an opportunity to check your interpretation of the case against another SP to see if you are truly approaching it in a standardized way.



# Question Exercises

**5 Things-** very simple, you list 5 things in a category provided by someone else  
-This can be unrelated or case related

**Character Interview-** The exercise we did earlier interviewing one person in character.

# Honest Reactions

The most powerful tool in an improviser's tool belt is reacting honestly and in the moment to what their acting partner is doing.

# An Exercise

Confession scene-start an improv scene but the two scene partners take turn making emotional confessions. The point isn't to make the most outrageous confession. The point is to react to your partner's confessions as realistically as possible.

# Honest Reactions

In simulation these honest, in the moment reactions can also be incredibly powerful. Honest reactions provide immediate, in the moment feedback to learners.

Something as simple as making a face or changing the tone of your voice can tell learners what they just did was great/not so great without saying it out loud.

# Honest Reactions

Your reactions should be grounded in your character's emotions and how they feel about the situation. Depending on the the case design you may be prone to different levels of emotion, trust, and medical knowledge. Your reactions in the moment should always pass through that lens.

I know how I feel but how does this patient feel?



# Honest Reactions- How do I do that?

## LISTENING

Listening is an improv super power and an SP super power. Much of improv training is about listening with your eyes and ears to take in as much data as possible and stay present in the moment.

## STAYING PRESENT

Improv is a practice of staying present. Let yourself take in what your scene partner is saying or doing and be affected by those choices. React how you would in those circumstances or through the lens of your character.

If someone pokes you, you say “OUCH” you don’t think about if you should say “OUCH” before you speak. The same goes for a sigh of relief.

# Honest Reactions in Simulation

In Simulation this looks like learners saying things and you responding realistically.

WITHIN REASON! If the case doesn't call for us to fly into a rage we shouldn't do it.

A more practical approach is to give learners clear signals about how you feel. If a learner misspeaks and it sounds like you're being diagnosed with something. You would be concerned.

We as SPs tend to be worried about making sure we don't "mess up" the simulation but can come off as question answering robots as a consequence.

Learners get a lot out of SPs reacting like real people. There is direct feedback in seeing themselves cause you to make an interpersonal "OUCH"

# Other Exercises You Can Do!

## Listening exercises

- Zip, Zap, Zop

- Red Ball

## Reaction Exercises

- Emotional Sound Scenes

- Face Reactions Circle



**Thank You**

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# CONTACT

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# A Survey



Or in the link in the Chat