

# The Art of Thinking on Your Feet

Embracing Spontaneity with a Sense of Purpose

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August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**EXPLORE**  
HEALTHCARE SUMMIT



## Objectives



Practice communication strategies that promote personal/professional success and well-being.



Seek acceptance even without agreement in personal and professional interactions using the tools of improvisational theater



Develop a strategy to deliberately practice these skills in your personal and professional life.



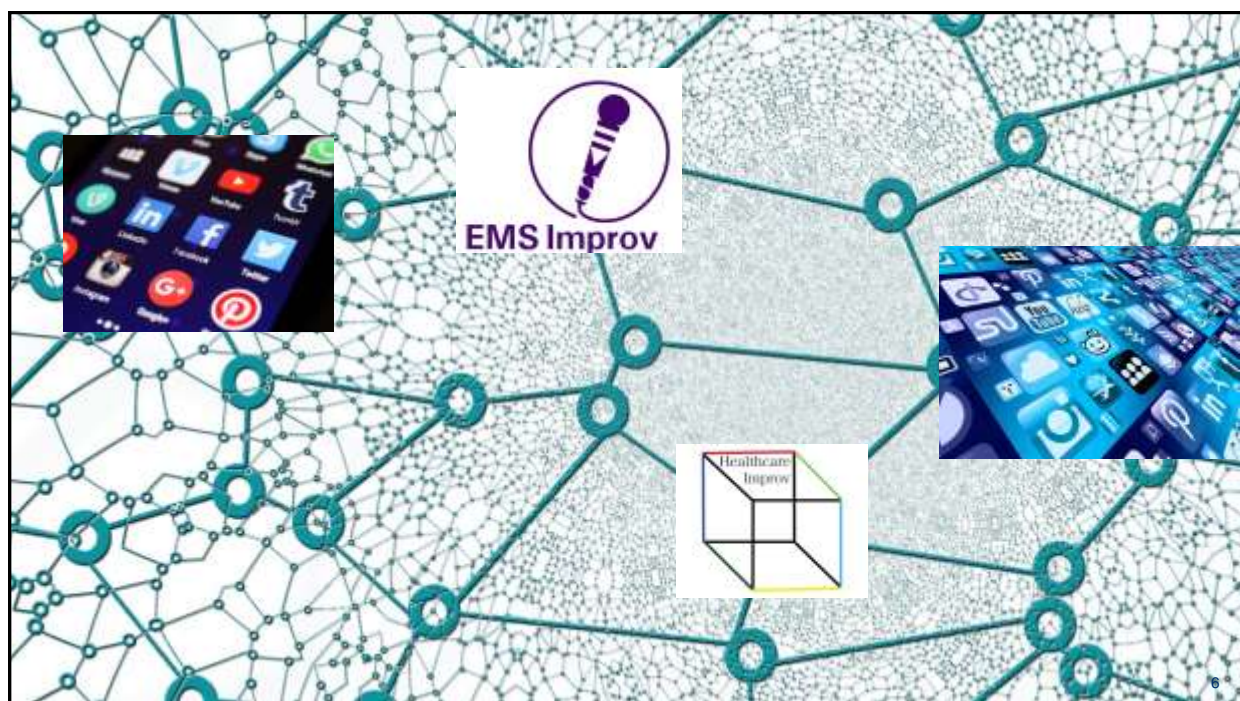


Who are these  
people?



## Mike Smith





## Eric Chase





# What is Improv?











## Exercise



Have a conversation with the person next to you about Food



After the first person makes a comment, each subsequent comment must start with...

# No, and...

## Exercise



Have a conversation with the person next to you about Sports



After the first person makes a comment, each subsequent comment must start with...

# Yes, but...

## Exercise



Have a conversation with the person next to you about Travel



After the first person makes a comment, each subsequent comment must start with...

# Yes, and...



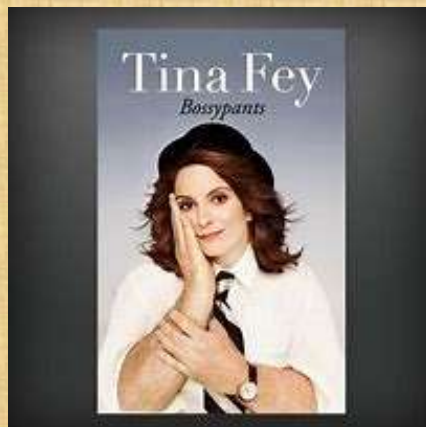
# Why Improv?



## Why Improv?

- Improv Rules

- 1. Yes, And...
- 2. Establish the location
- 3. Make statements
- 4. Focus on the here and now
- 5. Listening to your partner
- 6. There are no mistakes
- 7. **You don't have to be funny**





## Yes, And...

Improviser 1	Improviser 2	Scene
I'm flying	No people can't fly	BAD
I'm flying	Me too! Let's go to Rio De Janiero	Building together

Patient	Doctor	Visit
I need more oxycodone	I don't think you do	BAD
I need more oxycodone	OK, lets talk about your pain	Building together



## Establish the location

Improvised Line	Scene
This is a good sandwich	Uncertain
Wow, who knew the food on the international space station was so delicious	Clear

Doctor Line	Visit
I usually don't prescribe pain medication	Uncertain
We are in an urgent care whose policy doesn't allow us to prescribe opiates and I want to do everything I can to control your pain today	Clear



## Make Statements/Low Inference Language

Improvised Line	Scene
What are we eating	Dependent upon partners response
If you eat these cupcakes standing up there are no calories	Moving forward
Doctor Line	Visit
Why are you always calling for early refills?	Dependent upon patient response
I am confused, we have discussed this is a 30 day prescription and I am getting requests for early refills only halfway through the month the past two months	Moving forward



## Focus on the here and now

Improviser	Scene Quality
Remember that time Bobby was in the circus	Painful
Bobby and I just joined the circus and now we are acrobats	Moving forward

Doctor	Visit Quality
Remember that time you received a DUI	Painful
I am concerned that this DUI could be a sign of addiction and affects the safety of using oxycodone to treat your pain	Moving forward



## Listening to your partner

Doctor says	Visit quality
We need to stop your oxycodone	BAD
I hear that you are upset and worried about being in pain and we need to find a non-opioid way to treat your pain	Moving forward



## There are no mistakes

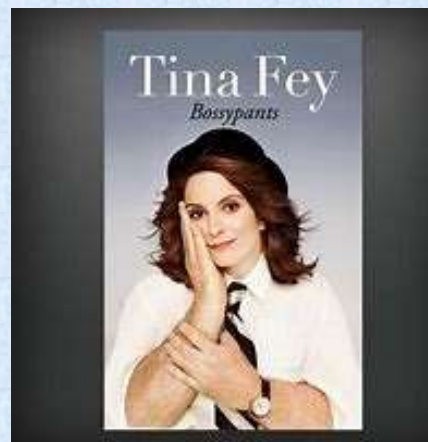
Improviser 1	Improviser 2	Mistake	Option 1 for Improviser 1	Option 2 for Improviser 1
This is a delicious apple	Wow what a big cherry!	Didn't "Yes, and.."	I said its an apple not a cherry	Oh my goodness, I love cherries. I don't know whether to eat it or call the Guinness Book of World Records!
			Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right. Going nowhere	Moving forward together



## Why Improv?

- **Improv Rules Connection to Communication Principles**

- 1. Yes, And...: Acknowledge and explore
- 2. Establish the location: Setting expectations and goals
- 3. Make statements: Naming
- 4. Focus on the here and now: Affirmation
- 5. Listening to your partner: Reflective listening
- 6. There are no mistakes: Rolling with resistance
- 7. **You don't have to be funny:** The patient does not have to leave happy



## You don't have to be funny



The comedy in most good improv scenes comes from the connections made between characters and honest responses to the conditions created by the improvisers in the scene




We will not always please our patients (colleagues/bosses/underlings) but we can relay information in a way that establishes a connection and promotes an effective working relationship moving forward





## Why it is important to mike

In 2017, I had 5 cancer diagnoses in my immediate family so I was on the other side of healthcare quite regularly



I saw many suboptimal interactions from **well intended** members of the healthcare community that may not have caused outright harm, but **caused clear suffering** of my family members



**Let's Continue on the Journey**

## Exercise: Yes, And...Circle

### In your small groups

- Group stands in a circle.
- Person A says a location.
- The person next to them (Person B) agrees about the location and provides more information about it.
- It goes around the circle in that manner until Person A agrees and adds one final detail to the scene.
- Person B then says a location and the pattern repeats until all members have suggested a location once.



## Discuss...

At a logical stopping point

- What was challenging about this exercise?
- What was easy about this exercise?
- How is this related to your job?
- What were common experiences in your group?



## Exercise: One Word Stories

In your small groups

- Arrange yourselves in a circle again
- The first person will say a location
- The person next to the first person will start by saying one word, the person next to the person will say the next word in a sentence, then the person next to them will continue, then the pattern repeats telling a story about the suggestion
- The story ends when one person says "THE" and the next person says "END"



## Discuss...

At a logical stopping point

- What was challenging about this exercise?
- What was easy about this exercise?
- How is this related to your job?



When you have discussed both exercises in your small group and have nominated someone to share with the larger group, let's return to the large group



## Empathy & Listening



### 3 Line Openers on a Mission

- Group splits into two sides of an imagined stage
- Person A walks out and says a line based on the Facilitators location suggestion. (For subsequent scenes, Person B from the scene previous will provide a new location)
- Person B is in the other line and responds to Person A.
- Person A then responds to Person B's response
- The two people get 3 lines (Person A gets 2 lines, Person B gets one line) in which they need to establish their who they are, where they are, when and why (they must be on some type of mission)
- For subsequent scenes, Person B from the scene previous will provide a new location





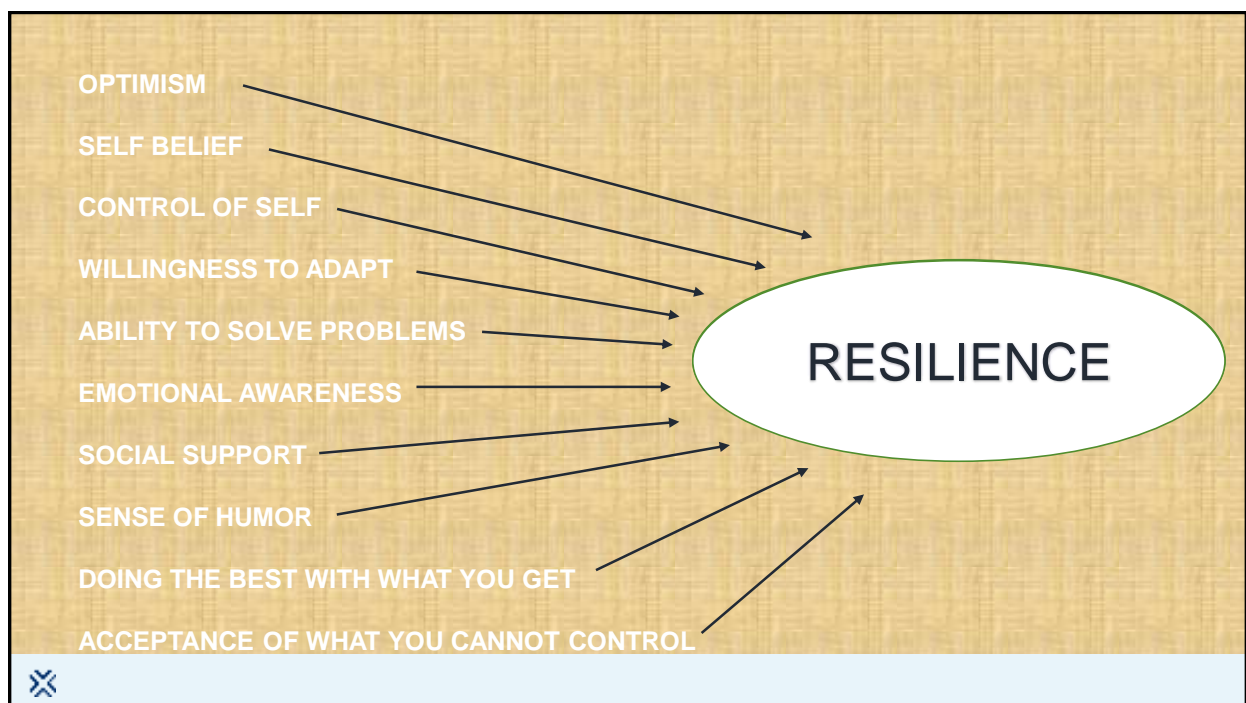
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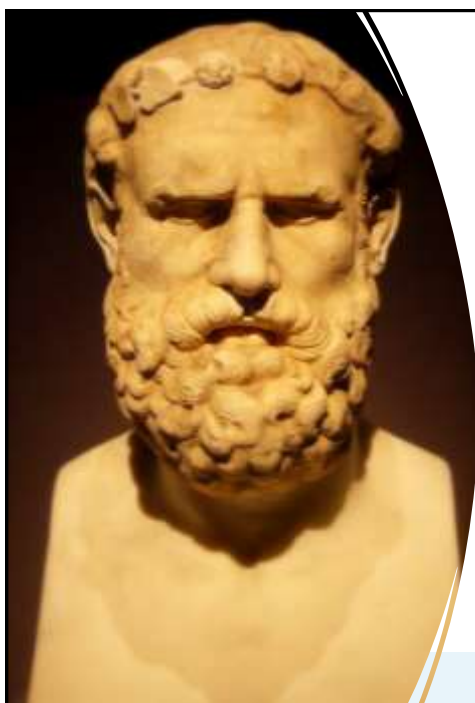


The “Yes” is the acceptance of the idea. The “and” is your contribution. You are opening yourself up to the opportunity for the experience.

The conditions created by Yes’ and, are a skill set that should be practiced in each conversation.



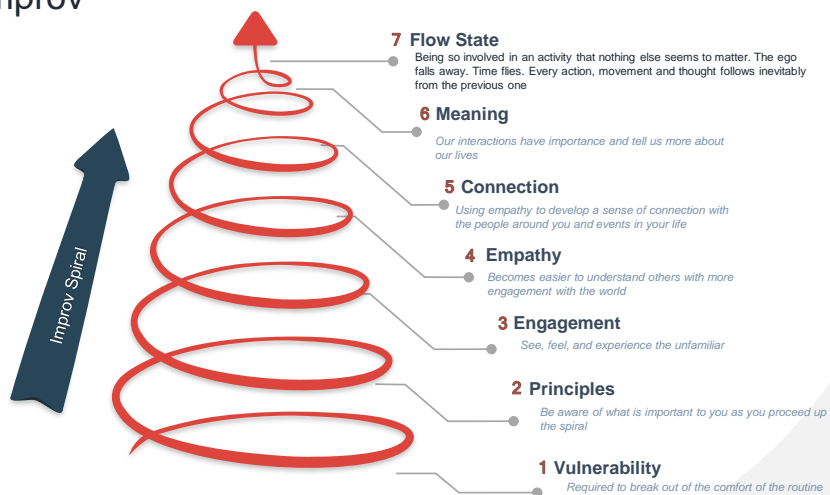
VIKTOR E. FRANKL



## Empathy as a default response

- It is easy to be empathetic to our friends and family
- Empathy is a tool that can make some of the unavoidable challenges in our life easier, yet will require deliberate practice to utilize in the times when they are needed most (difficult conversations)
- A great first step is embracing Yes, and... as your default response

## The Upward Spiral that is practiced in improv



## Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

- Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world

