

Applied Improvisation in the Classroom

Vicki Hannah Lein

Outrageous Visions: See Who You Are Meant to Be

www.outrageousvisions.com

Vicki@outrageousvisions.com

What does Applied Improvisation mean?

All of our life is an improvisation. What will we do when we get up? What will we say when the phone rings? How will we raise this baby? Yikes! We are making it up as we go all the time.

When we learn to apply the skills we learn in improvisation games, we have a better ability to think on our feet, be flexible, laugh off our mistakes, and not take ourselves so seriously. We can then tackle any challenge we are faced with: rejection, SAT essay exams, crabby coworkers, insane bureaucracies, and so on.

Make it Sticky

I want this workshop to be sticky, to remain in your consciousness without effort. To do that the message needs SUCCESS.

S: Simple and profound message

U: Unusual

C: Concrete

C: Credibility

E: Emotional content

S: Story

From: [Made To Stick | Heath Brothers](http://www.madestostick.com)

www.heathbrothers.com

Creativity Ground Rules

1. Say “Yes, and” instead of “Yes, but.”

This means giving a full hearing to an idea before adding any of our own ideas, concerns, or objections. We listen with our ears, heart, and imagination. We let our teammate know we have entered the zone of understanding. We get why they are so excited about this idea.

Bonus: If we give a full YES to our team member, then we are more likely to get a full YES in return.

Simple, Profound, Transformational

Ask yourself:

- What would your life be like if you were always listened to with Yes, and?
- What would the lives of your family, students, and coworkers be like if you knew how to give a big YES first and then add your concerns?

2. Make Everyone Around You Look Good

What if our goal was to “make their day” everywhere we went? What if every person we ran into -- grocery clerk, bank teller, dental assistant, secretary -- felt better about being alive after they talked with us? How would this ground rule change our lives?

If your goal were to “make their day:”

- How would you walk down the street?
- How would you enter a room?
- How would you talk?
- How would you listen?
- How would you laugh?

3. “I’m not sorry, I’m sexy” (or brilliant, a genius, or adorable).

So, you are sexy, brilliant, or adorable instead of incompetent. If so,

- How would you react when you had something new and challenging to learn?
- What would you be afraid of?
- Who would you be afraid of?

Put ‘em All Together

- What would you allow yourself to do that you are not allowing yourself to do now?
- What might you allow a family member, student, coworker to become?
- If you modeled these three guidelines, how would your family be different? Your classroom? Your school? Your community?
- What would happen to your health?

Activities: Get These Ground Rules in Your body

1. Yes, and

- Yes, and Game in a circle. Get group in a circle. Make eye contact, point to someone. They say, “Yes, and” as they point to someone else. When you hear a “Yes” from the person you have pointed to, you can start moving toward their spot. Everyone keeps changing spots by saying only “Yes, and.” If you make a mistake, you can only say, “I’m sexy!” Or “I’m a genius!”, or “I’m brilliant!”
- Practice in dyads. One person shares an idea, a real one, and the other person stays in YES. “Boy, the idea of having a remodeled kitchen that is black and lavender really thrills you!” You do not have to agree or even think the idea has any merit. Your goal

is to shine a full YES on the idea, let some time go by, and then share any concerns or other ideas you have. You do not even need to respond to the content of the idea. Just get in their world for a moment with a full YES. Take turns. Debrief.

- Let Me Be song.

2. Make everyone look good.

- Rock Star game. Get in groups of three or four. What quality do you want reinforced? Or what quality would you like to have? Tell your team members. Then, you are a Rock Star and they are pumping you up for the Big Game. Take turns. Debrief.
- Practice in dyads. Appreciation starts at home. One thing I appreciate about me is.... Take turns. Debrief.
- Well Done song.

3. I'm not sorry, I'm Sexy!

- Practice saying this in all improvisation activities.
- Practice in dyads. Mention a mistake you made, a real one, and then add, "And I'm sexy!" Your partner says, "Yes, you are so right about that!" Take turns. Debrief.
- I Deserve to Be Loved mistake verse.

Improvisational Games

Yes, and.. In a Circle

Stand in a circle.

One person points to someone else. That person says, "Yes!"

The person who pointed starts moving to the place in the circle of the person who said "Yes!"

The person who said, "Yes!" says "And," and points to someone else in the circle.

That person says, "Yes!" and so on.

Debriefing as You Play

1. Listen for rhythms.
2. Is there a learning curve here?
3. Is the laughter healthy or men?
4. Are we getting better?
5. Are there people who will learn this game quickly and people for whom the game will be a great challenge?
6. How are you taking responsibility for learning this game?
7. Is there any way to fail this game?

Yes, And.. Sharing Ideas

In pairs. One person is the student, one is the teacher. The student is full of enthusiasm about a school assembly he/she wants to put on. As the student talks, the

teacher gives a full yes. Only after the student has had a full hearing of her enthusiasm does the teacher add any “ands.”

Variations:

Husband/wife

Coworkers

Principal/teacher

Mirroring

Practice following and leading with a partner. Face each other. One person moves and the other follows. Try to change roles seamlessly.

We are all One

People are not standing in a circle, but instead are spaced randomly around the room. The game starts with everyone standing still. As soon as one person moves, everyone moves. As soon as one person stops, everyone stops. The goal is that it is nearly impossible to tell who is starting in who is stopping and that the group looks like one organism.

Variation

Instead of just stopping and starting, people form little statues. This is a good photo opportunity.

Paper, Rock, Scissors

This game starts with two people playing Rock, Paper, Scissors in the traditional way. An open hand symbolizes paper which covers rock and wins. A fist in the palm symbolizes rock which crushes scissors and wins. Two fingers in the palm symbolize scissors which cuts paper and wins. The best two out of three rounds produces a champion.

The Loser of the contest becomes the champion of the Winner. They find another winner, along with their loser as champion and play again. The loser's team becomes part of the winner's team and they go and find another winner. This continues until there are only two teams. People are yelling and cheering their champion on.

For the final bout the teams can lift their champions onto their shoulders. The Ultimate Winner then gets a victory lap on the shoulders or in a chair held up by all the champions in the room.

Grizzly, Ninja, Archer

A variation of Rock, Paper, Scissors, but acting out High, Medium, and Low.

- **Grizzly** who is high eats Ninja.
- **Ninja**, who is low, defeats Archer.
- **Archer**, who is Medium, who defeats Grizzly, who is high.

Create a Pattern

Get in a circle. Toss a ball around once, so that everyone has tossed and received the ball once. This is the pattern. Repeat the pattern. Speed it up. Laugh at your mistakes. Marvel at how easy it is for some people and how hard it is for others. Laugh some more.

Leader of the Dance

Create a filled-in diamond with your group. One person at each point of the diamond leads the group in movement. She passes her leadership on to the next point of the diamond, and so on. The point is seamless movement of the group no matter who is leading. Do the Mirror activity first to get the group used to following another person's movement.

Pass the Clap

This game starts in a circle. One person turns to another and looks at him/ her as she claps her hands. The person who has received the clap then turns to the next person, makes eye contact, and the clap goes around the circle.

If a person receives the clap and then claps again, the direction of the clap is then reversed.

1-2-3

Start in pairs. You say one, partner says two, you say three then start over.

- Replace one with raising arms above head.
- Replace two with clap.
- Replace three with foot stomp.

Name Game

First round: Say your name and toss the ball to someone.

Note: Remember who you receive from, and to whom you throw the ball.

Second round: Say your name and the name of the person you are throwing the ball to.

Third round: Go backwards.

Check to see if anyone knows all the names.

Storyline

- Someone starts a storyline anywhere in the story: beginning, middle, or end. The storyteller adds to the story in some way. It can be narration, dialogue, a sound effect --anything that could be in a story.
- People come up one by one and add to the story. They can place themselves anywhere in the story and do not have to connect to what has been spoken so far.
- Each time someone adds to the story, start at the beginning and everyone says their line.

- At the beginning people can be as creative and unique as they would like. At some point, CONNECTING becomes the goal. This is like life. Sometimes we get to be “out there” and wild and sometimes we need to be concerned with making other people look good and getting the project to work.
- People can pass if they want. The story is over when it is over, or when everyone, if it is a small group, has added to the story.

Variation

Try this in song and with sounds only.

Laughter Yoga

Stand up; slowly bend over as a rag doll. Breathe in and slowly come back up
Next time, laugh going down in these three ways: Always breathe coming up.

- Ha, ha, ha.
- Hee, hee, hee.
- Hoo, hoo, hoo.

Resource Note: Google “You Tube Improvisation Games” and you will get a plethora of videos teaching enough activities to fill your lesson plans for a year.

Bonus:

The following videos express my philosophy of education.

Music and Life by Alan Watts

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERbvKrH-GC4>

Benjamin Zander: Classical music with shining eyes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LCwl5iErE>

RSA Animate - Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc>