8 Basic Rules of Improvisation

1. ***Concentrate.***
   You and your partners are making a whole new reality. Nobody is boss, so nobody knows what's next. The scene is made in the space between you. Pay attention or you'll miss it.

2. ***Trust.***
   You've got everything you need. So does your partner.

3. ***Give and take.***
   Take turns!

4. ***Make assumptions.***
   Observe out loud what you are discovering.

5. ***Say "Yes, and..."/ Do not negate.***
   First acknowledge the truth in what was just said and then add a piece of observation to it.

6. ***Work at the top of your intelligence.***
   Don't play at the locker room level. Anybody can do that in 7th grade.

7. ***Choose the action.***
   Physically doing what you are thinking conveys millions of unspoken observations. It leads you to *discover* rather than *invent*.

8. ***Remember you can have anything you want in the scene.***
   You can be anybody. You can use any object. You can be anywhere. Cool. ❑

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Becoming a Team Player
by Cathy Perme

Have you ever seen improvisational comedy or instant theater, at places like Dudley Riggs or Second City? It's a marvel to watch. Given just a few suggestions from the audience, an empty stage, and no time to think, the cast always seems to pull off an inventive and fun skit. How do they do it?

Last year, I decided to take some lessons in "improv" to learn how to be less intense. (Those of you who know me may laugh now!) I attended Dudley Riggs' Improvisation Classes from March through December, taught by Chris Kliesen, Education Director for Dudley Riggs. What I found was that to succeed in improvisation one does not need to be a quick wit or have a steady stream of jokes, thankfully. One simply needs to be a good team player.

What guides team play are eight basic rules, listed at left. As I learned how to play with a team of actors, I realized that these rules apply to every team I am on, from product development to training, from business to family. Here's what I learned:

- ***Trust*** -- I never realized how little I trusted myself or others in any given situation! When I started to affirm that I have everything I need (my 5 senses, my intelligence, my experiences, my feelings, my observations) to succeed, and that my partners did too, I found myself controlling less and enjoying more in the process.

- ***Give & Take*** -- I never realized that this depended so deeply on trust. (If I don't trust you or myself, I'm going to set up the scene or process to ensure that I get what I want.)

- ***"Yes, and..."*** -- In improvisation, "yes, but..." kills a skit in no time flat. If actors negate each others' ideas rather than build on them, the scene never gets off the ground. So too in work teams, where time is no less precious.

- ***Clarify Assumptions*** -- All of us constantly operate from assumptions we have made about people, places, or situations. Stating assumptions clearly helps avoid miscommunication down the line.

Remember, we can remake ourselves every day, in every situation. Try just one of these techniques at your next team meeting. You may be surprised at the results, and even find yourself saying, "Cool!" ❑