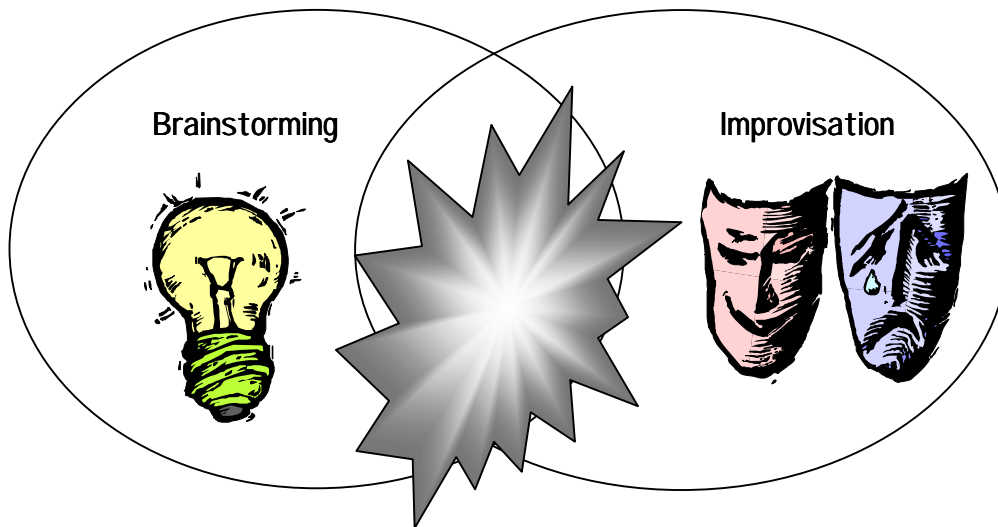


Improv !: A Different Twist to Brainstorming Sessions

Mary Fahey Hughes - Noble Fool Theater Company
Ann Marie Calistro - *Educate! Facilitate! Innovate!*

Participants can expect to:

- Understand the connection between Improvisation and Brainstorming
- Practice several improvisation techniques
- Learn do's and don't's of each technique
- Help generate appropriate applications of the technique in group setting



Alex Osborn
Applied Imagination, 1943

Viola Spolin
Improvisation Games,

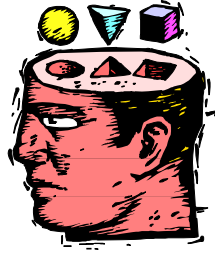
Ground rules for Brainstorming:

- ◆ No Judging or evaluation
- ◆ Hitchhiking allowed
- ◆ Quantity not quality
- ◆ Wildness is welcome

- ◆ Good improvisers let go of expectations and work in the present
- ◆ The other person's idea is more important than yours, because it can take the scene to the next level
- ◆ Not asking questions while in a scene; puts your partner on the spot

The Pattern Game

Helps participants focus on the present, let go of expectations and the distractions of the day.



Instructions:

Part I

1. Participants organize themselves into a circle, standing.
2. One person begins by pointing to another and saying "You!"
3. The first time around, raise your hand when someone calls on you so that everyone knows you've been picked.
4. Each person must remember 2 things:
 - who pointed to them
 - to whom they pointed
5. The person "receiving" the 1st "You!" points to someone else, saying "You!"
6. The pointing continues until everyone has been pointed to once, thus establishing "The Pattern."
7. Repeat the pattern a few times, keeping up the speed and following the same pattern.

Part II

Repeat the same pattern, using the names of U.S. states, keeping up the speed.

Part III.

Start both patterns ("You!" and U.S. state names) at the same time.

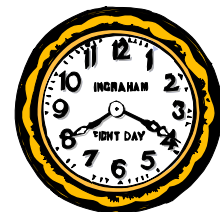
TIPS

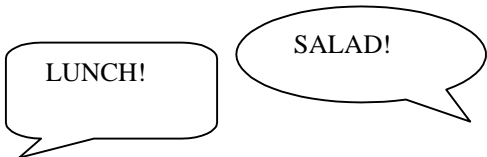


- ◆ Don't panic if both topics come at you at once. Take one at a time
- ◆ Keep the flow moving, and the speed constant
- ◆ If the person you are addressing doesn't "get it", repeat the phrase until they do!
- ◆ This is a game that requires complete focus for it to work. It is also a great way to get people to focus outside of themselves.

I could use this when:

- ◆ Participants in the meeting hit an impasse.
- ◆ When participants in the meeting need a break to clear their minds.





Free Associating

Helps work the right brain and works best when participants don't think!

Instructions:

1. Participants organize themselves in a circle.
2. One person looks at someone else in the group and begins with saying one word "e.g. lunch".
3. That person responds by looking at someone else saying the word they think of in reaction to that word "e.g. salad".
4. Repeat until the theme has escalated to a satisfying point or come full circle.

TIPS



- ◆ Allow yourself to be influenced by the LAST word you heard.
- ◆ This game can go in any direction.
- ◆ There are no wrong directions.
- ◆ Try not to censor yourself.
- ◆ You don't have to be funny.

I could use this when:

- ◆ A group has reached an impasse
- ◆ As a means of brainstorming on a theme
- ◆



One Word Story

Helps to energize; also to focus on the present,



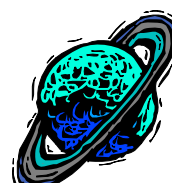
Instructions:

1. Facilitator asks for 6 volunteers and announces to a group: "We are going to write a story that has never been written before. What will the title be?"
2. Take whatever title, however non-sensible it may be
3. One person begins the story with the first word.
4. Each person in the group then takes a turn adding just ONE word to the story.
5. The game can be stopped whenever anyone believes the story to be complete.

TIPS



- ◆ Don't worry about what you are going to say.
- ◆ Don't try to be funny.
- ◆ Stay open to the story revealing itself.
- ◆ Refrain from anticipating or trying to direct what the story will be.



Expert Translation

Creative thinking for 2 volunteers, reinforces active listening

Instructions:

1. Ask for a field of study or an area of interest. e.g. mushroom farming
2. Ask for 2 volunteers, one will be the expert and the other the translator.
3. The Facilitator announces, "The first volunteer is an expert on mushroom farming, she/he came from planet Mars (and only speaks Martian) to answer any questions you may have, The second volunteer will translate."
4. Open the dialogue with any questions the participants might have, and allow the expert and translator to respond.

TIPS



- ◆ The participants should pay special attention to non-verbal signals for help in translating gibberish.
- ◆ Could use the meeting theme as the area of interest.
- ◆ "Light" way to address daunting subjects/tasks.



Switch

Practice creative thinking,

Instructions:

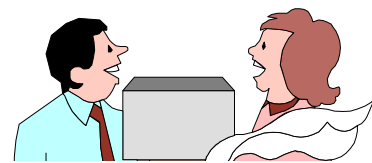
1. Participants organize themselves into two straight lines (A & B), facing each other.
2. One person from Line A begins demonstrating an activity without speaking, e.g. directing traffic
3. One person from Line B asks, "What are you doing?"
4. The person acting responds with something other than what they were doing, e.g. playing bad game of tennis
5. The person who asked, "What are you doing?" starts acting from that prompt.
6. The next person from Line A asks, "What are you doing?"
7. Continue with the interchange between Lines A and B, until one person is left standing.

TIPS



- ◆ Not everyone has to participate in this activity. It can also be energizing and thought provoking to observe.
- ◆ If the announcement of "what I am doing" is too similar to what it looks like, that person is out of the game.
- ◆ If there is a long hesitation with a response or with the beginning of a new demonstration that person is out of the game.

Yes, and . . .



Fosters support and cooperation in a creative setting, as well as, active listening.

Instructions:

1. Two people start a scene
2. One person makes a statement.
3. The other person says "Yes, and..." and adds to that statement
4. E.g., *A:* You have a blue shirt on. *B:* Yes, and you gave it to me for our anniversary.
A: Yes, and it was a wonderful thing that we got married in the first place, wasn't it...

TIPS



- ◆ Allow yourself to be *emotionally* influenced by the statement. Have a feeling about it and the other character you are in the scene with.
- ◆ Really *hear* what the other person gives you before you respond.

I could use this when:

- ◆ People are butting heads and refuse to give up their own agendas.
- ◆ People are not listening to each other.
- ◆ You need to get a sense of cooperation going.



Freeze

Helps exercise creativity

Instructions:

1. Group of 10 volunteers take the stage.
2. Two people start an improvised scene.
3. At any point during the scene someone from the back line may yell "freeze."
4. The people doing the scene freeze in whatever position they are in.
5. The person who yelled "freeze" taps one of those people on the shoulder to let them know they are out of the scene, assumes the position of the previous player and starts the scene in a whole new direction.



TIPS



People doing the scene

- ◆ Use imaginary objects and move around so that the players in the back row have something to work with concerning interesting body positions.
- ◆ Keep in mind the "improv rules" so that you can have a forward-moving scene.

People in the back line

- ◆ Try to focus on and be inspired by the body positions of the people doing the scene so that you don't "think" too much about it. This game can go very fast and if you think too much about initiating a scene, the opportunity may pass.

Below are some basic improv rules that will aid novices in their improvisational endeavors...

1. Accept what your scene partner establishes and add to it. Think "Yes, and...."
2. Don't ask questions. It puts your scene partner on the spot and doesn't forward the scene.
3. Make statements. It helps your scene partner have an idea of who you are and what the scene might be about.
4. Make the choice to know the person you are doing a scene with. It's much more interesting to watch a scene between lifelong friends or enemies than strangers who just met.
5. Start in the middle. Walking in the door and saying "Hello, nice to meet you" is not as interesting as being up to your knees in water trying to clean your flooded basement and saying "You've never looked more beautiful than right now."
6. Let your feelings come out in improv. If you are shy or confused and confounded at the thought of getting up in front of people, play a shy, confused, confounded character and allow your character to interact with the other character on stage.
7. Pay attention to what your scene partner is giving you. **THE OTHER PERSON IS ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON ON STAGE.** It is the INTERACTION with your scene partner that is interesting and entertaining.
8. Create an imaginary environment. This is improv. You can be ANYWHERE – outerspace, inside a one-celled organism, on the beach or at the top of Mount Everest.
9. Don't worry about being funny. The humor in improvisation comes out of the audience recognizing honest human reactions and responses. The audience is also part of the creative process.

