

15 Reminders for Every Improviser

BY THE SECOND CITY

We all hit plateaus in improv. After you've been improvising for a while, you might not even realize you forgot some of the things that made improv magic for you to begin with. I *teach* improv-- and while I remember to tell my students these things, I stopped living them. And ... if I don't wish someone had reminded me that they *still* applied when I was taking myself so seriously.

- **Your Unibrow is Cool**

The things that you don't like about yourself are probably what made you so good in the first place, and they are *definitely* what make you memorable and interesting.

- **Agree to Agree**

You can't make other people follow this rule, but *you* can. And you know? You'll be happier. Think of your favorite people to play with. They're probably the ones that make you feel smart, funny and interesting. Make other people feel that way.

- **Let Go of Expectations**

You can only make moves; you can't know where they lead. It's more fun when you don't know how it ends... when you gleefully throw something out and let it fall where it will. In life and in improv. Let go of the end. You can't plan it.

- **Do Object Work**

This doesn't mean anything other than what it is. But good object work makes your scenes better. It'll make your characters stronger, and it'll make you look like a goddamn genius.

- **It's Not About Getting Laughs**

Well, sometimes it is. Let me put it this way; it's not *just* about getting laughs. But even if it was, you get better ones when you work together for the common good. If you can't do that, then do a solo show.

- **Fail with Confidence as Though You've Already Succeeded**

...And laugh when you "mess" up. It won't change anything, but wouldn't you rather be the person that falls down and laughs rather than the one who berates themselves and the sidewalk for ruining his day? Unless it's a scene-- then let the sidewalk have it. That shit's funny.

- **When You Get Paid to Do What You Love, You'll Love What You Do a Little Less**

Remember when you used to do midnight shows for an audience of three people? And they were the best shows you've ever done and you went out to celebrate after and still talk about them today? When you get paid, you get annoyed by an audience of 40. Try to keep perspective. You are lucky.

- **Forget the Audition; Remember the Dinner**

I had the most disappointing audition I've ever had in my life last year. It was something I wanted really bad and something that I didn't get. But after the audition, I went out with two amazing ladies who also auditioned, and together we had the most extravagant, special, silly dinner. That meant more to me than if I had gotten the job. I wish I had known that sooner.

- **Have Non-Improv Friends**
- **Go Away; Then Come Back**

If you love improv, take some time off from it. You're not going to miss your "one big shot" or a "really important show." The world won't stop; people won't forget you; you won't lose your "buzz." You'll get some perspective and come back refreshed and hungry. And you'll probably spend that time away gathering that ever-important life experience. On that note...

- **Take Classes**

In anything.

- **The End Does Not Justify the Means**

It should be process-- not product-- that we strive for. If it's not, something's wrong.

- **The Worst Thing You Can Imagine Will Happen to You**

And then, something worse that you never imagined will happen. And probably more soul-crushing things. Some of them will be fair, some of them you will deserve (if you believe in karma). And then you'll do what I tell my students to do: you will make the strongest choice you can make. Whether or not its the "right" choice is beside the point. The point will be that you made a *choice*. There's power in that alone, so be kind to yourself. Know it will seem unbearable while it's happening; let yourself have that. I promise you'll get through it. And every time The Worst Thing Ever happens to you, it gets easier to handle. Not easy, but easier. You are resilient.

- **It Doesn't Matter**

Your show? It doesn't matter. Your team? It doesn't matter. None of it matters. So don't worry about it. Enjoy it.

- **You Have Nothing to Lose.**

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