



Using Creativity and Improv to improve the lives of our residents (and our own)

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There are no mistakes only opportunities

-Tina Fey

To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong.

Joseph Chilton Pierce

We are all cups, constantly and quietly being filled.

The trick is, knowing how to tip ourselves over
and let the beautiful stuff out. - Ray Bradbury

Why be Creative?

1. Creativity can help our BRAINS.
2. Creativity has NO RIGHT OR WRONG. How wonderful for folks who are struggling with their daily conversation and actions and whether they are doing things correctly.
3. Our residents and staff are ALL INDIVIDUALS so we need to have individualized approaches. You cannot do any kind of centered or directed care without being creative.
4. We need to COMMUNICATE ideas and values in ways that reach everyone.
5. We need to be able to brainstorm and think out of the box to FIND SOLUTIONS to the many issues that arise daily in our world.

A new idea is delicate. It can be killed by a sneer or a yawn; it can be stabbed to death by a quip and worried to death by a frown on the right man's brow." — Charles Brower

Listen to anyone with an original idea, no matter how absurd it may sound at first. If you put fences around people, you get sheep. Give people the room they need." — William McKnight, 3M President



There is no use trying," said Alice. "One can't believe impossible things." "I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." — Lewis Carroll

The Guidelines

Say Yes And
Listen Fully
Accept Offers and Gifts
Commit 100%
Silence Can Be Powerful
Go With the Flow
Agree – Don't Deny
Step Into Their World
Be in the Moment
Enjoy (to get joy from)

Say Yes And

Letting go means less ego. In meetings and team scenarios, we naturally want to hoard control. We care about being right. We think that saying “No” to others gives our own opinions weight. The practice of saying “Yes, and...” inserted a bit of distance between my brain and my ego, and helped me hear other perspectives with openness.

Openness yields unintended and positive returns. This type of open, positive approach to disagreement or conflict is a catalyst. It's amazing how people respond when you listen and give their opinions credence. It's a softening mechanism. It's such an easy thing to do, with big and unintended returns.

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Building awareness forces you to reevaluate. It was remarkable and a little disheartening to note how often my first reaction to things is “No”. Am I really that negative? Saying “Yes, and...” forced me to notice and reevaluate the reflexive No's in my life.

Each moment is a tiny explosion of possibility. The practice of improvising my life is a reminder that each moment is a tiny choice. I'm responding or reacting to what comes at me every minute and every second of the day. There's possibility inherent in literally every single moment. It's intense. Those small moments add up to a lifetime.

Listen Fully

1. A good listener is attentive. They make good eye contact, don't interrupt what the other person is saying and show an interest in what is being communicated. There's always something incredible you can hear in anyone's story.
2. A good listener does not look over the shoulder of the person that's speaking, waiting for someone more interesting to come along.
3. A good listener does not check their phone or tablet in the middle of a conversation, when someone is sharing with them.
4. A good listener is not waiting for their chance to get a word in, treating the 'period of listening' as a pause in their 'monologue.' Being so focused on trying to get ones view over is insensitive and misses the real value in the conversation.
5. A good listener uses positive body language; leaning forward and showing an enthusiastic, relaxed nature. They don't fidget, cross arms, look elsewhere or express inappropriate shock or disbelief at what's shared.
6. A good listener does not hurry somebody, but asks good questions to guide the sharing. They guide and help shape what's being shared, but if the other person feels cut off or squashed they've failed.
7. A good listener does not approach a conversation with prejudice, expecting to know what's going to come out of the speaker's lips. They don't listen with a pre-formed opinion but attempt to have an open mind to what's being communicated. It's amazing how much time is wasted with the belief that people understand what someone means without taking the effort and time to listen.
8. A good listener cares. They show empathy for what the other person has to say. It's genuine, authentic and comes from a place of truthful concern.
9. A good listener remembers. They remember and follow up conversations wherever possible. They treat what is shared with respect and where appropriate ongoing interaction.
10. A good listener knows how to treat what is shared with confidentiality. They are trustworthy and sensitive with information and never look to use anything that is shared for any purpose other than good.

- Caleb Storkey

Silence Can Be Powerful

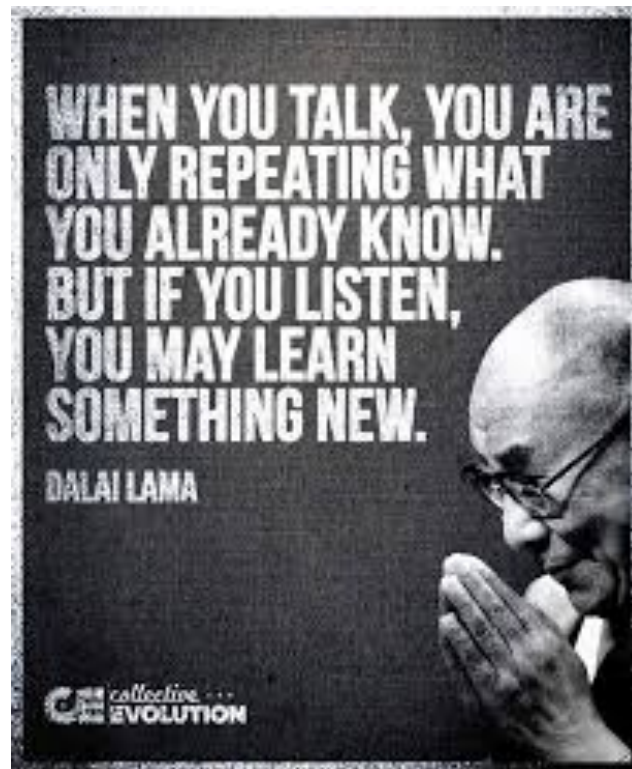
Silence can be a very powerful way to “be” with another person, especially when they are troubled. It can communicate acceptance of the other person as they are as of a given moment, and particularly when they have strong feelings like sorrow, fear or anger.

This kind of silence means being willing and able to give the other person your full attention. This includes appropriate eye contact, and gestures like nodding, leaning forward, smiling, frowning, and other facial expressions which let the other person know you really hear them.

Being quiet and not saying anything gives them the space and uninterrupted time to talk about whatever is on their mind. When another person has a decision to make, a problem to solve or simply a need to express themselves, silence can often provide the opportunity for them to have time to talk, reflect and decide without outside pressure.

It is essential that the silence be experienced as accepting; people pick up on judgments and evaluation (negative or positive) even when they’re communicated silently. If you don’t accept the other person as they are, that will most likely be quite apparent to them. And they will be less likely to share their feelings and problems with you at other times.

Sometimes we forget to just be.



Commit 100%

Ninety-nine percent is hard—100 percent is easy.

Then consider the following individuals: my sister, who is a strict vegan; my neighbor, a six-time *New York Times*-best-selling author; and a comedian who publishes a new YouTube video every week without fail. No exceptions or breaks or excuses.

Is it hard? Maybe when they first got started. But now my sister knows exactly which foods to buy, where, and how to cook them. The author writes every single day, not just when he feels inspired. The YouTuber is constantly learning new skills, researching, and developing new routines, each one better than the last.

If something is tugging at you and has been over time, you've probably been "99-percentening" it too long. Here's how to finally give it your all.

1. Identify exactly what needs 100 percent of your attention.

Your writing? Your photography? A side-hustle idea that has been percolating for a while but requires action? A habit you need to quit altogether—online shopping, drinking soda, even seeing a certain toxic person? Not everything in your life *needs* 100-percent effort. But your heart always knows what truly does. You don't have to go crazy and commit to a million projects or banish everything fun from your life. Your "100 percent" right now is probably just one thing. What is it?

2. Put in the effort.

Commit to writing for one hour per day, seven days per week. Pinpoint exactly how to make your first sale for your side hustle (you can do it)! Delete your online shopping accounts, throw out the soda, or end that relationship once and for all. And don't look back.

For me, I came to realize that my "100 percent" was finishing my book. I had been going at it 99 percent for two years, and after hearing this advice, I finally finished it—in just two months. It wasn't easy, but it was easier than thinking about my book on the subway, on vacation, when cooking, and when out with friends. Now *it's complete*.

Ninety-nine-percentening was so much harder. It weighed on me daily. It was heavier than the actual task at hand. The decision fatigue was killing me: "Should I write or go out?" "Should I write or go grocery shopping?" "Should I write or call a friend?" When I shifted gears to 100 percent, there were no decisions to make. It was write or die!

3. Repeat (again and again).

True happiness is the joy we experience when we move toward our potential. The beautiful part is when we apply the 100-percent rule to a task at hand, we complete it. A project gets wrapped. A once-hopeful intention becomes a habit. A goal is met.

It then frees up adequate mental space for the next priority to become clear, since we're not plagued by guilt about other multiple half-assed projects. And when we give 100 percent, other not-as-important stuff falls away in the meantime: It's an awesome perk to an already pretty-awesome rule.

- Susie Moore, No Regrets

Accept Offers and Gifts

Improvising means choosing to look at everything as a gift. What you accidentally say (even more than what you intentionally say) is a gift. What the other players do (no matter how small or casual) is a gift. A lighting instrument falls from the ceiling and crashes to the floor is a gift. These are gifts because they are the raw materials of the world you are creating. Accepting the above moments as gifts pushes you to incorporate those events. You not only say, 'yes' to the siren that happens outside the theater but also use it as part of the scene. "It's the cops!"

The same goes for offers; these are intentional gifts. Another player steps on the stage and declares he is the warlord of this wasteland you have wandered into. He has offered this idea to you. It's important you accept the offer even if you were setting up the scene to be in a record store. Both realities can be true: a mad max moment at the last record store.

You gain control by giving it away. This might sound too zen to be real but it's true in improv and it is true in dementia caregiving. If you act as if every new development was exactly what was suppose to happen you will find your self not out of control but surfing a wave that can take you places you could never get to by yourself.

If your are caring for a person with dementia then you will make your life and theirs so much easier if you accept everything they say as a gift. Just like any gift you are happy to get it, and happy to open it. They say, "I have to find my husband." So you accept that and go with it. "Yes! And tell me about your husband where did you meet?" You accept the gift and open it by digging in.

Step Into Their World

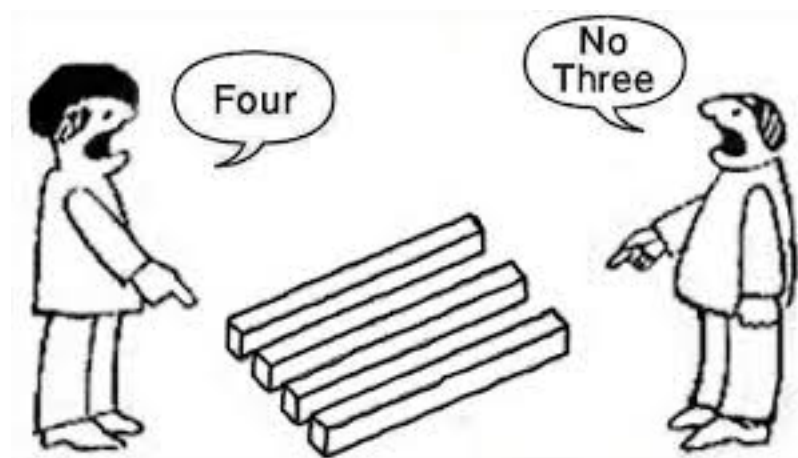
In improv, we have to create the world the audience sees. When another player shows you part of the world it's important for you to accept that gift as it is offered to you. The same is true in dementia caregiving.

If a person thinks you are their childhood priest and calls you Father. Who is that hurting? If believe that then why correct them? If you do succeed in correcting them they won't remember and you will be that priest again soon. Correcting is pointless. However, step into their world and be whoever they say you are and life is easier.

Also you can look at the guideline of Step Into Their World as another way of saying step into their shoes. Having empathy. Seeing things from their perspective

Go With the Flow

When you are improvising it is important that most of the time either with subtext or literally you say, "Yes and..." It allows you to go with the flow. "Go with the flow" can be the advice you here when you ask how to fit in while in another country or what to do when you are in any unfamiliar social circumstance, but it is vital with improv and dementia caregiving. When you go with the flow you abandon your ideas and accept whatever happens. Going with the flow allows you to "step into their world" you see how they see things and (contrary to stopping it) you go with it. This forms a connection which can not happen any other way.



Enjoy (to get joy from)

Joy doesn't just happen. You have to work for it.

Look, I really don't want to wax philosophic, but I will say that if you're alive, you've got to flap your arms and legs, you got to jump around a lot, you got to make a lot of noise, because life is the very opposite of death. And therefore, as I see it, if you're quiet, you're not living. You've got to be noisy, or at least your thoughts should be noisy, colorful and lively. - Mel Brooks

Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy
you must have somebody to divide it with. Mark Twain

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile
can be the source of your JOY. Thich Nhat Hanh

What gives you joy?
