



## 14 Ways Improv Improves Everything

When scrolling these days, I see more and more clips from TV shows and movies with captions like, "This is even better when you realize she made it up!" or "This wasn't even in the script!" True or not, the idea of great moments being unscripted makes the audience feel like they are witnessing something authentic.

According to SCAN Club's Report [What \(Digital\) Audiences Want in 2026](#), improvisation is the number one trend. Right now, audiences crave "collaboration, human connection, and participation."

Let's take it a step further: not only can improvised moments in your communications serve as a refreshing change from the predictable, the tools of improv can help your organization build the world we want to inhabit. After a full year of reacting, responding, and retaliating against unwelcome actions, most of us need a reminder of what we are marching towards, and we need imagination and collaboration to make it real.

So, here are 14 ways improv will improve creativity, connection, and collaboration at your organization. (*Please scroll down to read more.*)

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Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center		
TELL STORIES	GIVE PRESENTATIONS	PLAN CAMPAIGNS
Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative	The Platinum Rules of Presenting	Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter
March 3, 10, 17, & 24 9am - 10am PT	March 10 & 12 11am - 12pm PT	March 31 & April 2 11am - 12pm PT

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## New Ethical Storytelling Report



Memory Fox has released their [2025 Ethical Storytelling Report](#), and it is spilling over with expert advice and practical guidance.

I love having so many tools in one place. It can be read all at once (I did and took 7 pages of notes) or go directly to a section you need help with right now, like ethical use for AI, building a process for meaningful consent, or trauma-informed interviewing.

This guide is a must-have.

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## 14 Ways Improv Improves Everything (cont.)



### 1. Yes, and

Tough times can put us into shut down mode. Our default becomes “no,” even though our sector was built on saying “yes” to ideas that make the world better.

When you are working with your team and partners, accept their ideas with curiosity and enthusiasm.

### 2. Make Your Partner Look Good

Pump up your colleague by pointing out the great things about their work. Build off what is working rather than picking apart flaws. Can you be as specific with your praise as you are with your criticism?

### 3. Flex Your Vision Muscles

Improvisors create sets and props out of thin air. They can transport the audience from a black box theatre to any place in the world and any time period. With a little practice, you can, too.

Paint a picture of what success looks like for your campaign or program. Imagine what the celebration party for that success would be: Who would be there? Can you picture a banner? What would it say? Are there pictures of what was built or who reached their goals with the resources you offered? Describe those! Make it tangible. Imagination is a muscle. Keep flexing it.

### 4. Practice Paying Attention

No person, pet or plant ever blossomed without some loving attention, but demands to produce more get in the way. In improv, if your mind wanders, the scene flops. That’s true in life, too - we just pretend it isn’t happening. When you are about to start a conversation, take a moment to breathe, close your laptop, and make eye contact. Then see what grows.

### 5. Building Things Together

It sure sounds nice to escape from savior mindsets and build things with affected communities. How do you prepare for that work? In improv, we build a story together one idea at a time – sometimes even one word at a time. Try that as an activity with your team. We have to rewire our brains for collaboration.

### 6. Make Things Matter

My improv community does an exercise called, “It’s Tuesday,” in which one person says something innocuous (i.e. “It’s Tuesday”) and the other person makes that a big deal (i.e. “You start your new job today!”).

Are we missing moments in our work where we could be surprised or delighted? When someone brings you an idea or a concern, don’t rush to move on to the next thing. Make it matter.

### 7. Adaptation and Quick Thinking

Improvisers know the world is more fun when you embrace uncertainty. Practice your presentation or pitch to a colleague and have them ask you some “out-of-left-field” questions. Next time you won’t be sweating your Q&A.

## 8. Mistakes are Gifts

Mistakes are an opportunity to connect, share humanity, and build trust. We miss that opportunity if we try to cover them up. A mistake in a presentation can suddenly bring the room to life because something authentic and human is happening. We think we should skip past it because maybe they didn't notice. (They did.)

I ❤️ mistakes

We fear that acknowledging a mistake will lose community trust. It is often the opposite. When we acknowledge a mistake and repair the harm, we have often strengthened trust in immeasurable ways.

## 9. Tell Stories like an Improviser

Feeling stuck looking at a blank page for your newsletter, report, or grant? Approach it like an improviser approaches a blank stage.

An improviser can't put up a hand to the audience and say "hold on a second, I'm gonna make a quick outline." Nope, they just have to create the scene. You have the luxury of a second draft, so just write something down. Make a mash of it. You might surprise yourself with a new idea or some unexpected metaphor. AI could write your first draft, but remember it is built on text prediction, not ingenuity. AI can't stumble on brilliance, but you might.

## 10. Be a Champion Listener

Improvisers listen because our lives depend on it. We need to know who we are playing, where we are, and what is happening. Any line we miss multiplies the likelihood that the scene will fail.

It feels so good to be truly listened to. Listening not only shows your team you value them, it creates value. You don't know where the next great idea or process will come from, so don't miss it. Added bonus: you don't need grant money to put listening to work. It costs zero dollars, so the ROI is infinite!



## 11. Love What you Have

Strategy is using what you have to get what you need. An improviser does this by honoring the ideas (we call them offers) that have been made. Abundance mindset isn't just found in imagining what is *out there* in the world, but in valuing the resources you have right now. Who are your people? What skills, influences, and

resources do they have? How can you build on those rather than grasping for something new?

## **12. The Answer is in your Partner's Eyes**

Improv is team art. The best improvisers both generate and let go of ideas with grace. Take in your coworker, your staff member, or your potential funder. What are their ideas? What are they imagining? Won't it be exciting to find out?

## **13. Take Suggestions**

Most improv shows start with a suggestion from the audience, and some get suggestions throughout the show. That is the most obvious way improv lets the audience create, but we also do it by honoring what is making them laugh, or what hushes the room. Listen to your audience: their laughter, their sighs, their body language, their questions. What they tell you is gold.

## **14. Joy is Resistance**

Improv is fun. Having fun together generates creativity, and the joy we feel fills our gas tanks. Having fun together builds trust and rapport. Also, it is fun.

We need creativity, teamwork, and imagination in our work, so harness the power of play. Practice some improv.

*The Goodman Center offers a workshop to help put these, and other improv-forward tools, to use! [Get in touch](#) to learn more about [Improv for Do-Gooders: Tools to Connect, Create, and Collaborate.](#)*

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## **About Us**

This edition of *free-range thinking* was written by Kirsten Farrell and edited by Jasmine Elist. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit [www.thegoodmancenter.com](http://www.thegoodmancenter.com).

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