



Empowering Neurodivergent Individuals through Improv

Navigating the Currents of Change - WISEC 2025



Today's Learning Goals:

1. Consider the needs of neurodivergent individuals.
2. Experience applied improvisation & have fun!
3. Reflect on how an Improv Mindset might support neurodivergent individuals.

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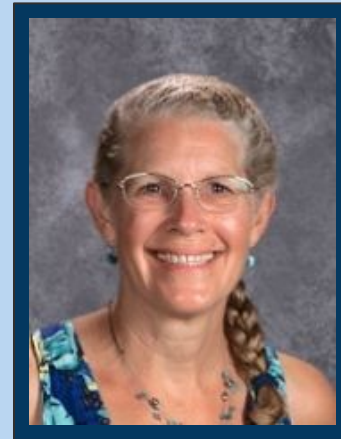


www.mnprov.org

Michael Bruckmueller



Kelly Kautz



What is Your Role?



What is Neurodiversity?



Let's Play



Shake Down

- Raise your **Right Arm**.
 - **Shake** your arm and **count to 7!**
- Do it again with your **Left Arm**.
- Do it again with your **Right Leg**.
- Do it again with your **Left Leg**.
- Do it all **again** for each number.
 - **6 - 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1**



Walk - Stop ¹

Leader Says	Players
WALK	Walk
STOP	Stop



Walk - Stop ²

Leader Says	Players
WALK	Stop
STOP	Walk

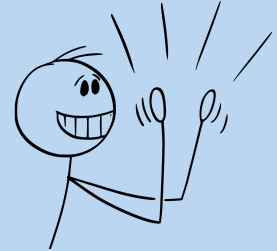


Walk - Stop ³

Leader Says	Players
WALK	Stop
STOP	Walk
NAME	Say Your Name
CLAP	Clap 1 Time



STOP



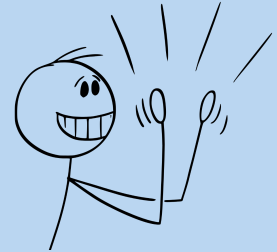
CLAP

Walk - Stop ⁴

Leader Says	Players
WALK	Stop
STOP	Walk
NAME	Clap 1 Time
CLAP	Say Your Name



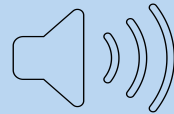
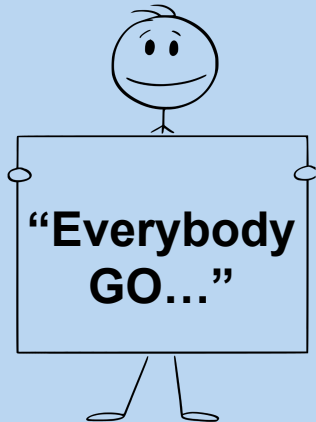
STOP



NAME

Everybody Go

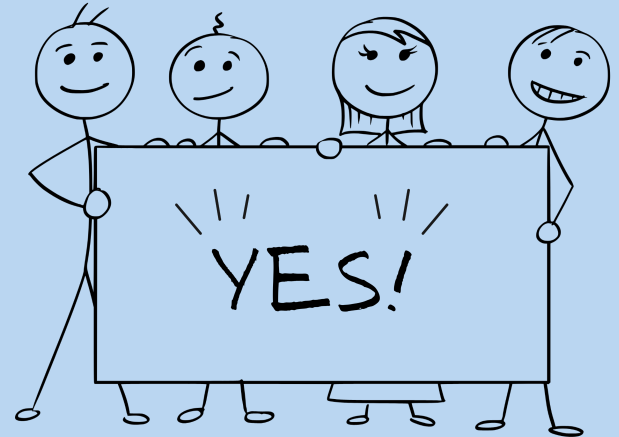
- Everyone: Form a circle.
- Player 1: Step forward. Say “Everybody go...”
 - Do a **Sound & Action**.
- Group: Say “YES!” Copy the **sound & action**.



SOUND

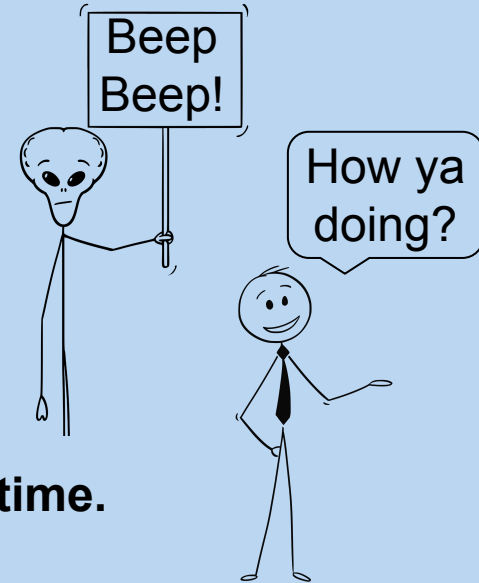
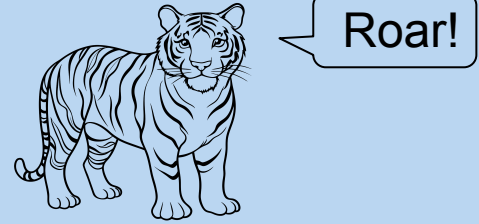


ACTION



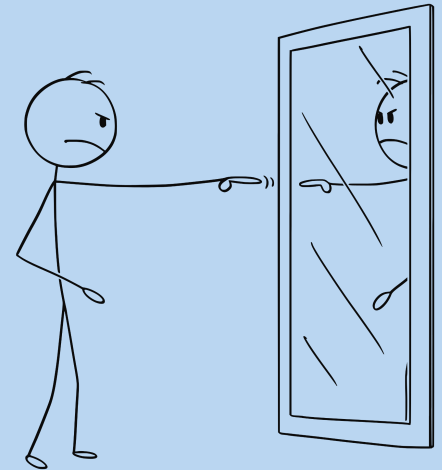
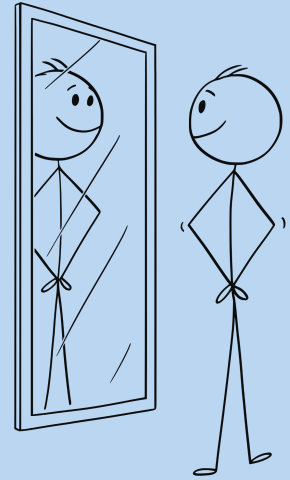
Alien, Tiger, Executive

- Players: **Form a circle.** Learn the 3 characters.
 - **Alien**: Fingers on head like antennas. “**Beep beep!**”
 - **Tiger**: Make tiger claws. “**Roar!**”
 - **Executive**: Reach to shake hands. “**How ya doing?**”
- Leader: **Count to 3.**
- Players: On 3... **Pick a character and act it out.**
- **Repeat** until everyone chooses the **same one at the same time.**



Mirror

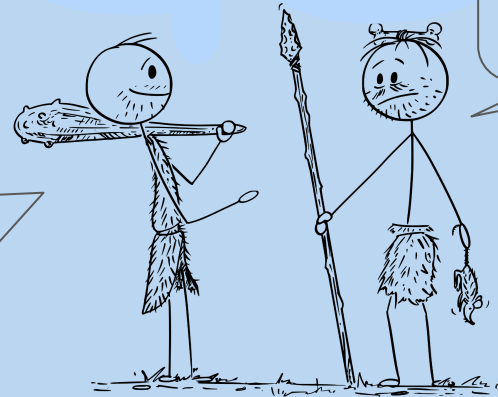
- Everyone: **Find a partner and face each other.**
- Player 1: **Start moving.** Go slow.
- Player 2: **Copy the movement**, like a mirror.
- **Switch roles.**
- Challenge: Move together **without a leader!**



Yes, And Story

- Players: **Form a circle.**
- Leader: Ask the group for a **character and an activity**.
- Player 1: **Start the story** using the character and activity.
- Players: Say “**yes, and...**” then add to the story.
 - Go around the circle. **Build on each idea.**

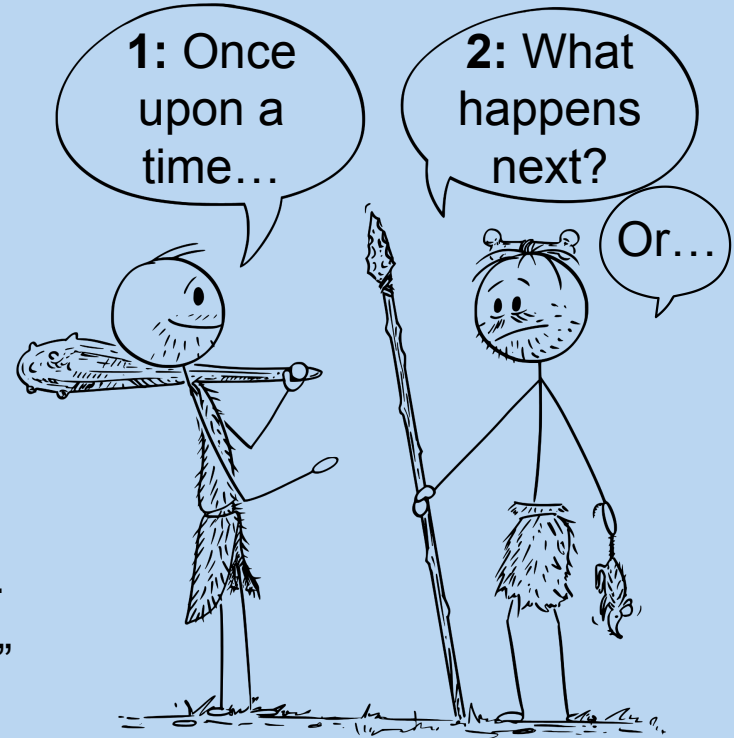
1: There were two cavemen who went rat hunting.



2: Yes, and they also invented fire by accident!

What Happens Next?

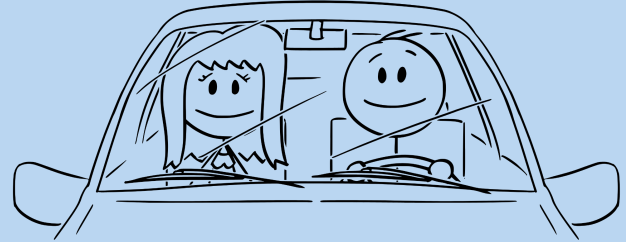
- Everyone: Find a partner.
- Player 1: Start to tell a story.
- Player 2: Say “What happens next?”
- Player 1: Continue the story.
- Player 2: Choose one.
 - “What happens next?”
 - “Or” = Last thing Player 1 said is erased.
 - Player 1: “What happens next?”
 - Player 2: Continue the story.



Taxi Cab

Start with 1 driver and 1 passenger.

- Passenger: Pretend to be a **person, animal, or thing**. *Don't tell us!*
- Driver: **Ask questions** to figure out who/what they are.
- Passenger: **Give hints**.
- Driver: **Guess!**
 - Got it right? **Move to the backseat.**
- Passenger: You become the **driver**.
- New Passenger: Be another person/animal/thing.
- Other Passengers: Ask questions and guess.
- **Keep going** until the cab is full.



Ask questions to
figure out
who/what the
passenger is.



Why Improv?



- Build relationships
- Increase confidence
- Strengthen communication
- Improve collaboration
- Gain Flexibility
- Decrease Stress



Aligns with Trauma Informed Practices

- Emphasizing strengths
- Building resiliency - celebrating repeated attempts
- Developing tolerance for uncertainty
- Building relationships and a sense of belonging
- Hands on interactions
- Ritual & routine
- Focusing on the present
- Humor & laughter

DeMichele, Mary, and Scott Kuenneke. "Short-Form, Comedy Improv Affects the Functional Connectivity in the Brain of Adolescents with Complex Developmental Trauma as Measured by Qeeg: A Single Group Pilot Study." *NeuroRegulation*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2021, pp. 2–13., <https://doi.org/10.15540/nr.8.1.2>.

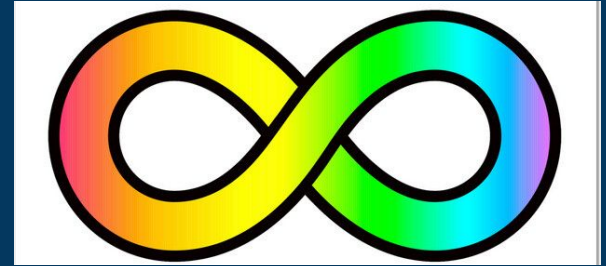
Developing an Improv Mindset



1. Acceptance
2. Being in the moment
3. Listening
4. Flexibility
5. Strengths-based
6. Growth Mindset
7. Mistakes can be gifts

Neurodiversity Affirming Principles

- Presuming Competence
- Celebrating Differences
- Respecting Autonomy
- Listening to Lived Experiences
- Acknowledging Intersectionality
- Valuing all forms of Communication
- Offering unlimited access to accommodations
- Promoting Strengths





FOX 9
MINNEAPOLIS

MAURY'S STORIES: IMPROV FOR ALL