

## Setting Objectives, Explaining Exercises, Side Coaching, and Giving Notes In-The-Moment

### Best Practices

#### Preparing -

- Plan for more than you'll need / Plan alternative exercises
  - Class attendance might not allow for certain exercises
  - Based on class progress, you may need to slow down or skip ahead
  - Students may not "get it" and may need a different approach
- Practice actually articulating your lessons and instructions
  - Speak out loud to yourself, to a partner, to your TA
- EDIT what you plan to say; it needs to be as clear as possible in as few words as possible
- Play and Practice > Lecture
- Was last week intense? Work another approach (ex: Short Form Fun! The Reverse Harold!)
- Be conscientious of time

#### Setting Objectives -

- Keep it high level and constrained to one or two behaviors that you'll be addressing
- Cut the fluff
  - Save the story, skip to the moral
  - Present a value of what you're proposing, not a defense or a history
- "Today we're going to focus on... The reason is..."
- *If a student...*
  - Pushes back at your plan ("I don't see how this will help." "I'm not into this." "But UCB..."): Assert that "in this class, you have to try" and confidently move on.

#### Explaining Exercises -

- Have them learn through their experience rather than your lecture
  - Have improvisers Do the exercise and then articulate the lessons in the context of their performance
    - It'll make lessons easier to grasp
    - And avoid situations where the lesson you had in mind has to be tweaked to match what actually occurred
  - Rather than overexplain a complicated/nuanced exercise, preload with improvisers who "get it" to demonstrate how to do it
- Provide instruction through iterations of the exercise, rather than giving a ton of instructions before starting
  - 1st time without much instruction, 2nd time with pointed instructions, 3rd time...etc
- Certain curriculum mechanics not seem clear - to articulate and/or teach? Teach improv as it makes sense to YOU
  - Teacher needs to be able to really clearly articulate their vision and be convinced in their believe in it

- *If a student...*
  - Keeps pushing for additional clarity: Know they're just a student who "really wants to get it right" and overexplaining at that point will just create more anxiety and confusion to probe. Get them up on stage to just do it.

### Side Coaching -

- Quick, Concise so as to allow scene to keep going
  - Side coaching that requires scene to pause and/or restart can be okay, too, if the intention is to work through an optimal path together as a learning tool
  - Still, instructors should thrive to minimize language in side-coaching to keep players in-the-moment if they have to return to that moment to continue forward
- Make it clear what you want players to do
  - "Do this" instead of "Don't Do..."
  - Directives instead of questions: "Define your relationship" vs "Who are you?"
- Encourage the good stuff; Reward what's working (laughing helps!)
- Finding the moment to Side Coach can be challenging
  - A lull where you can see improvisers thinking/struggling
  - In reaction to a less-than-optimal move to get players back on optimal path
  - To regroup players in the exercise
    - EX: In One Person Scene, saying "Emotional noise" to get everyone back into shared emotional perspective

### Giving Notes on Exercises -

- Your notes aren't for the last scene, they're for the scene they're going to do next
- Your notes are about the improv, not the improviser
  - Speak to the actions and results
  - Assume everyone is just trying to learn how to do a thing they enjoy better
- There are no "mistakes"
  - There are choices and different paths and a lot of subjective perspectives
  - It's all instruction and observation, not compliments and critiques
  - Focus on what they should next time over how things went sub optimally last time
- Focus on Progress to train good behaviors
  - We want improvisers to *want* to work on improvements; keep people encouraged and engaged
  - While the improviser can tell when we're being nice for nice sake, keeping the Compliment Sandwich in mind can help us remember to point out what we liked
- Initiating feedback talking about what we liked is a great place to start
  - "What was challenging about that? "What felt easy; what felt hard?" are better questions for being more pointed (versus "How did that feel?"
- *If a student...*
  - Tries to bail off stage before receiving notes: They're probably not feeling very confident. Just confidently tell them to "stay up there" without making a deal of it.

- If students are talking when you want to. Confidently shut it down to hold their attention. "Hey, guys."
- Disagrees and/or Defends themselves. Don't dismiss them, but remember what's important is what they'll be thinking in the *next* scene. Curb them from lengthy digressions. They don't have to agree, but for the sake of the class they should try to align behind your instructions.
- Seeks exhausting clarity on your notes. Allow for more practice to clarify. If it's more about one person than the whole group, the discussion can wait until after class.

### **Notes after Class -**

- Allow opportunity for students to engage in open dialogue
  - You want them to be able to ask their "dumb" questions to clarify their thinking
- Acknowledge/understand different learning styles - visual, experiential, written
- Follow-up emails post-class is a best practice
  - Addressing different styles - graphics, video and written
  - Sharing video examples - commercials, clips, comic strips
  - Improv vocabulary can be better digested in written form post-class
  - An email chain facilitates further one-on-one dialogue with students who might be unwilling to ask questions in front of the group or who needed time to articulate their questions
- Check in with the class halfway through the session - get feedback on you and explore what they think they need
  - Can be emails, survey, class discussion