

IAMAZEBRA

Proposal for Continuing Education Course August 2025 -

TITLE:

Improv in Physical Therapist School-Based Practice:

Using Improvisational Theater Concepts and Skills to Foster Better Communication, Relationship-Building, Collaborative Decision-Making, and Resilience

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Improv was originally designed as a teaching/learning method to support the creation of relationships and social skills amongst an extremely disparate group of people who found themselves in a new space – early 20th century immigrants to Chicago, who shared no language, history, culture or experience. These methods evolved to learning activities used in teaching theater professionals and eventually became both a performance art in its own right and is routinely used to create other kinds of performance work.

The skills of the improv actor - their ability to listen so acutely, to be in the moment, to understand their own and the characters of others and to unequivocally support each other within the context in which they find themselves – has been recognized as such an important skill set that it is used widely across business and industry. It's original intent as a teaching/learning method is emerging as a tool used across educational arenas, including in medical education. Performance art itself has demonstrated relevance in supporting learners in healthcare to gain empathy and perspective in their work.

In this course, the participants will learn to apply basic skills of improv within a particular practice setting – school based physical therapy - to aid in communication, navigation across the various relationships in practice, recognize how these skills apply to collaborative decision-making and to support practitioner resilience as clinicians face the many challenges of physical therapy practice today. Performance viewing will complement this interactive, reflective and productive workshop.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

At the completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Articulate basic tenets of improv
- Describe the application of tenets of improv within their practice setting

- Provide examples and/or Demonstrate 1-3 improv principles or learning activities that might be used within their own clinical setting in relation to or in support of:
 - Communication
 - Relationship building
 - Collaboration decision-making
 - Personal resilience within professional practice
- Compare and contrast the application of principles of improv across theater and physical therapy practice, appreciating the supports and constraints of implementation
- Recognize the relevance and potential utility of the humanities – particularly performance art - within physical therapy practice

PROGRAM OUTLINE:

The workshop will iteratively use improv learning activities, reflection, information and literature presentations and brief performances linked to the themes of communication, relationship-building, clinical decision-making and resilience within a school based physical therapy context. The workshop will include participatory discussions, creation and demonstrations of practical applications of improv techniques within a clinical and personally professional context.

PROVISIONAL TIMELINE with TOPICS

INTRODUCTIONS

8:00-8:15

Presenter introductions and introductory improv learning activity

COMMUNICATION

8:15-8:25

Performance Piece: *"I'm Sorry, What Are You Saying?"*

8:25-9:30

Improv learning activities to facilitate communication w/ debrief.
Linking improv lesson to literature and physical therapy practice

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

9:30-9:35

Performance Piece: *"Who? What? Why?"*

9:35-11:00

Improv learning activities to facilitate relationship building with debrief. Linking improv lesson to literature and physical therapy practice

LUNCH

11:00-12:00– discussion challenge

COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING

12:00-12:05

Performance Piece: “*What’s on Your Mind?*”

12:05-12:45

Improv learning activities to facilitate collaborative decision-making with debrief. Linking improv lesson to literature and physical therapy practice

RESILIENCE

12:45-12:50

Performance Piece: “*It’s Fine, I’m Fine, Everything’s Fine*”

12:50-1:45

Improv learning activities to facilitate resilience with debrief. Linking improv lesson to literature and physical therapy practice

INTEGRATION, CREATION and PRODUCTION

1:45- 3:30

Application of participant learning

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

- Participants, in groups of 2-4 will create a plan for application of improv concepts and tools within their practice context which will be written and/or filmed as a demonstration
- Participants will complete a 10-question quiz reflecting the course objectives with 70% correct.

REFERENCES and LITERATURE SUPPORT:

(historically seminal works, and literature from ~the last 5 years)

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BIOSKETCH:

(see attached CV)

Ingrid H Masterton

has practiced as a physical therapist (PT) in a variety of settings, predominantly in pediatrics. She has a bachelor's degree in physical therapy from Northwestern University and an academic master's degree in PT and completed the coursework in the PhD program in Disability Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her fundamental research interest was epistemology within the context of the relationships amongst clinicians, academics and political actors across medicine and healthcare. As curriculum director, she oversaw the creation of the Master in Prosthetics-Orthotics program at Northwestern University where she also created and taught courses for the MPO program and the medical school's health and society curricular track; she has also created and taught related coursework for physical therapy programs at other universities.

Health challenges limited her PT practice and ended her graduate career. Reinventing herself, she began collaborating with artists from The Second City Training Center. Ingrid integrated her own lived experiences of illness and disability with her experiences as a PT, to create a one-person show entitled, "I AM A ZEBRA: A Curiously Entertaining Story of Illness", which she has performed in various venues. With what she now calls her I AM A ZEBRA project, Ingrid is developing a variety of mechanisms to use

performance art and improv for learning and collaborative decision-making across all the stakeholders in the worlds of medicine and healthcare. Learn more about Ingrid at www.iamazebra.com

DURATION:

- 6-6.5 (not including one hour lunch break)

PARTICIPANTS:

- Description – physical therapists employed within SDUSD (and related staff)
- Number – 20-25

LOGISTICS REQUIREMENTS:

- Space
 - Room large enough to have chairs for 25 participants, but moveable furniture to allow all participants to be standing and safely moving about simultaneously for activities
- Audio-visual
 - projection device from laptop or cloud
 - microphone as advised per venue

COST/COMPENSATION:

- Instructor compensation:
 - To be determined
- Additional costs:
 - Continuing Education Credits Approval from state accrediting body
 - Provided via sponsoring organization
 - Travel:
 - To be determined
 - Lodging:
 - Provided by course organizer

COURSE EVALUATION

- Per course CEU agency sponsor