



More Confident, Agile, Engaging, and Effective: The Improvisation Edge for Coach Educators and Trainers

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The Thirtysomething Coach

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Improviser

Human

Educator

Coach

Speaker / Facilitator / Trainer

Nomad

Artist

What Edge Do Educators Gain from an Improvisation Mindset and Skill Set?



- Adapt to each group of learners and circumstances while maintaining focus on key learning outcomes.
- Turn interruptions, surprises, and snafus into authentic opportunities.
- Deliver your carefully planned program more effectively, engagingly, and confidently.
- Improve your ability to recognize and mitigate biases, limiting beliefs, and assumptions and balance your own preferences so that you can teach for all of your learners.
- Foster and embody collaboration and creativity.

Prepared or not, improvisation is required in education! So let's get better at it.

Key Questions

How can we adapt to the needs and opportunities of each group and keep content fresh, while maintaining focus on key learning outcomes?

How can we bring a more engaging, energizing, conscious, confident, and fully embodied presence to each session?

How can we step out of our default patterns and comfort zones in order to be more effective facilitators of learning?

How can we adapt to the needs and opportunities of each group and keep content fresh, while maintaining focus on key learning outcomes?

Recipe for Consistency + Improvisation in the Learning Environment

Structure & Design (Planning)

+ Context (Awareness & Perspective)

+ Spontaneous Responsiveness (Mindset &
Skills)

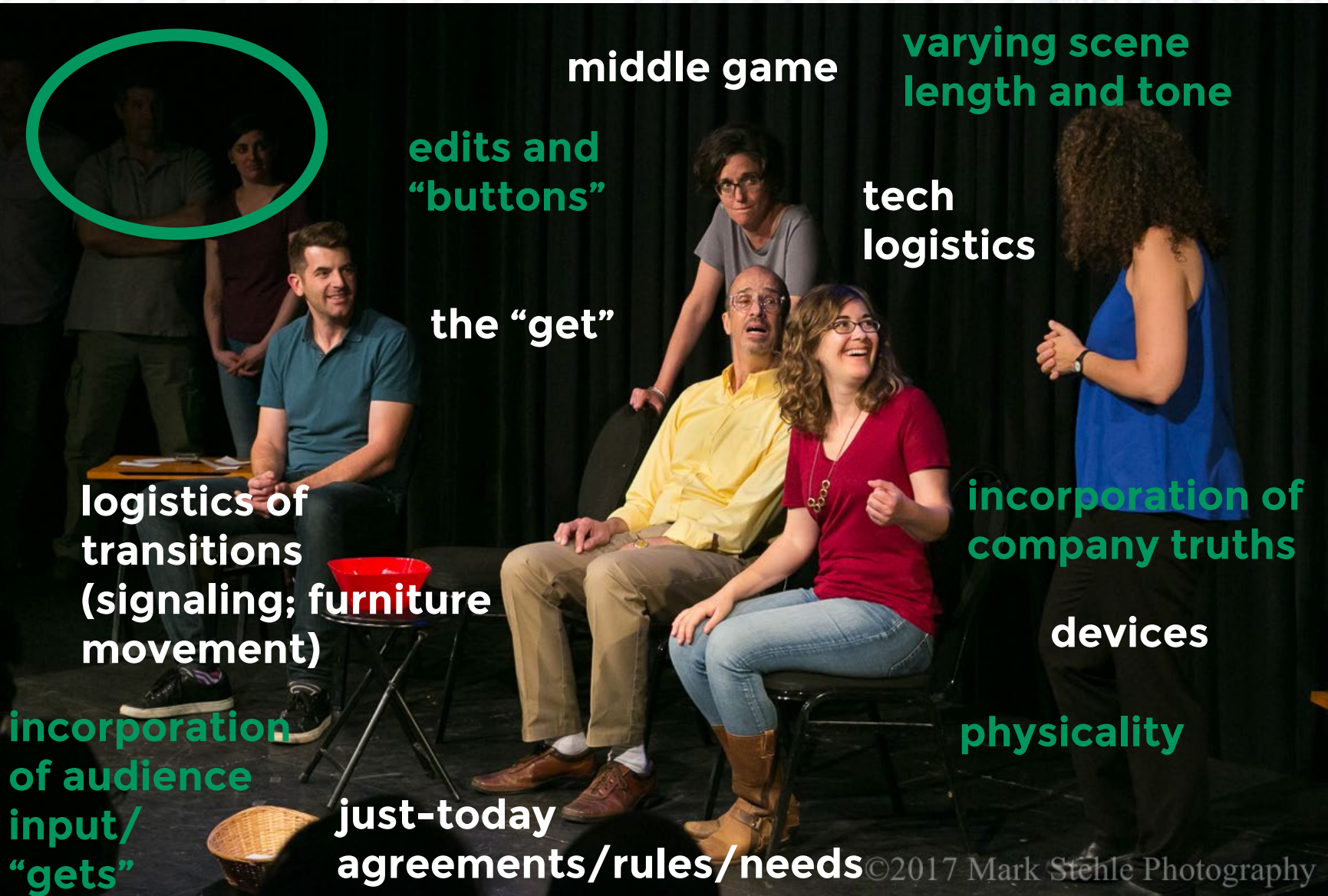
elevate

**thematic
callbacks**

opening

**basic
stage-time
equity**

**unchanging
agreements
/rules**



middle game

**edits and
“buttons”**

the “get”

**logistics of
transitions
(signaling; furniture
movement)**

**incorporation
of audience
input/
“gets”**

**just-today
agreements/rules/needs**

**varying scene
length and tone**

**tech
logistics**

**incorporation of
company truths**

devices

physicality

**support
opportunities**

time

**varying
relationship
types and
characters**

closing

**“callback”
scenes**

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the physical playing space and boundaries

elevate

thematic
callbacks

opening

basic
stage-
equity

unchanging
agreements
/rules

middle game

edits and
"buttons"

varying scene
length and tone

tech
logistics

support
opportunities

time

varying
relationship
types and
characters

LISTENING & LOOKING!

logistics of
transitions

(signaling: future
volume)

incorporation of
company truths

incorporation
of a
input/
"gets"

just-today
agreements/rules/needs

incorporation of
"back"
scenes

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the physical playing space and boundaries

Structure: Designing for Predictable Outcomes; Creating a Container



- Planned content (curriculum)
- Components or “beats”
- Time segmenting
- Breaks
- Technology and other logistics
- Materials
- Physical space arrangement
- Norms, rules, and agreements



Your job in planning structure is to create an environment where the desired learning can happen.

Structure: Think Like an Improviser



- **Non-negotiables:** What are the basic components that need to be there?
- **What “beats” do you need to hit?**
- **What’s the basic point/purpose of each component, segment, or activity?**
- **What rules/agreements are observed, that will support learning and innovation and keep everyone safe?**

Context: Parts of the Whole



- **Perspective-Taking:**
 - Context of this part within this session
 - Context of this session within the whole training program or learning experience
 - Context of the training program or learning experience within the whole of the student's life
- **Key Habits of Awareness**
 - Engage in curiosity and learning about your learners.
 - Consciously connect the present to existing schemata and to prior and upcoming learning.
 - Practice attunement to the whole and the parts throughout.



Your job in context awareness and perspective is to consider your learners both outside and inside the classroom and to understand your program in the whole and in its parts.

Context: Think Like an Improviser



- Where are people coming from/going?
- Who have we heard from? Who have we not?
- What do we as an entity need more or less of?
- What might individuals need?
- What resources are here?
- Schemata: How can we connect back to existing knowledge and experience--what came before (in and out of the training environment)?
- Planting seeds: How can we connect to what is ahead (in and out of the training environment)?

Spontaneous Responsiveness: Dancing in the Moment



Key Improvisation Principles

- 1 & 2: Say Yes, And.
- 3: Stay in the present.
- 4: Let go of your inner critic.
- 5: Make the other players look good.
- 6: Be obvious.

Offers

TYPES

- Verbal
- Physical
- Energetic



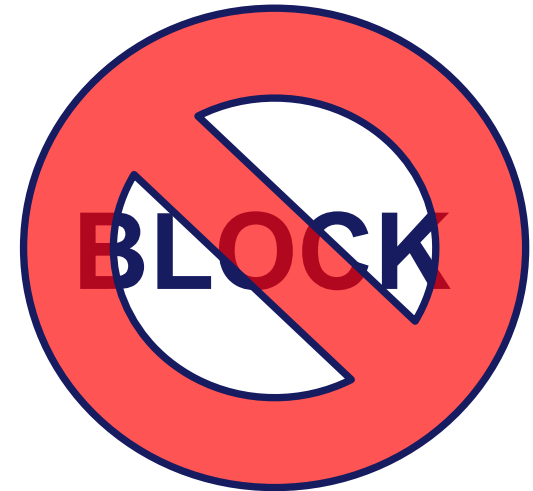
SOURCES

- Self
- Others
- Environment

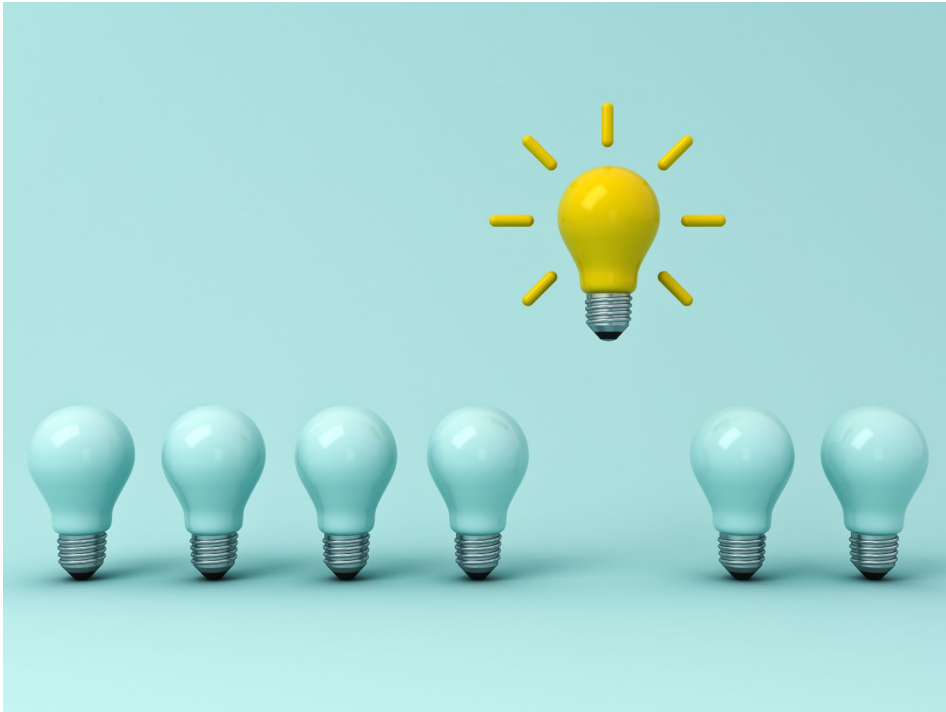
Offers

ACCEPT

“Yes, And”



Seeing and Seizing Opportunities in the Unexpected



- Treat everything as part of the learning.
- Model thinking and wondering aloud.
- Assume connection to learning goals/curriculum is available.
- Ask students to connect the dots.
- Ground yourself back in the context and structure. (*Remember key points: How are we going to get there? What can we let go of?*)

Honor the Fundamental Structure and Commitments



- Structure is as important a part of improvisation as all the stuff you make up on the fly.
- Every opportunity cannot be taken.
- Cut things off with a “Yes, And” approach.

**How can we bring a more
engaging, energizing, conscious,
confident, and fully embodied
presence to each session?**



ALWAYS WARM UP!

ALWAYS



WARM

UP!

Before the Session: Warming Up



**Virtual
Trainers:
DO NOT
SKIP!**

- Engages “Go Time” focus
- Gets all resources on board
 - Physical
 - Vocal
 - Mental
 - Attentional
 - Emotional
- Increases trainer confidence and student engagement

Physical Warm-Up



- Neck and shoulders
- Face
- Full Body (choose some!)
 - Drop and Roll
 - Biggest/Smallest
 - Tight/Loose
 - Wet Dog
 - Shakes
 - Dance Party
 - Silent Scream
 - Stretch
 - Massage
- Breath
 - All In, All Out
 - Whole-Body Directed Air Visualization

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Vocal Warm-Up



- High-Low Vocal Range “Swoops”
- Tongue Twisters
- Consonants
- Laugh/Sob
- Goofy Impressions
- Singing

Mental Warm-Up



- Review content outline
- Review logistics and structure outline
- Identify key points/bottom lines
- Review Personalized Growth Cheat Sheet (PGCS)

Attentional / Environmental Warm-Up



- “Silent” minute (sound focus)
- “Silent” minute (sight focus)
- Body scan
- 5 Things
- Ego shift: it’s not about you!
- Visualizing students
- Ceiling-off perspective
- Ground in purpose (personal and institutional)– *Why am I here?*

Emotional Warm-Up



- **Mirror check-in**
 - Humility, empathy, connection, authenticity, equality, positive regard
- **Anchor rituals**
 - Song
 - Quote
 - Intention, Plea/Prayer, Commitment, or Vow
 - Your own quirky thang

**What do you notice after
warming up?**

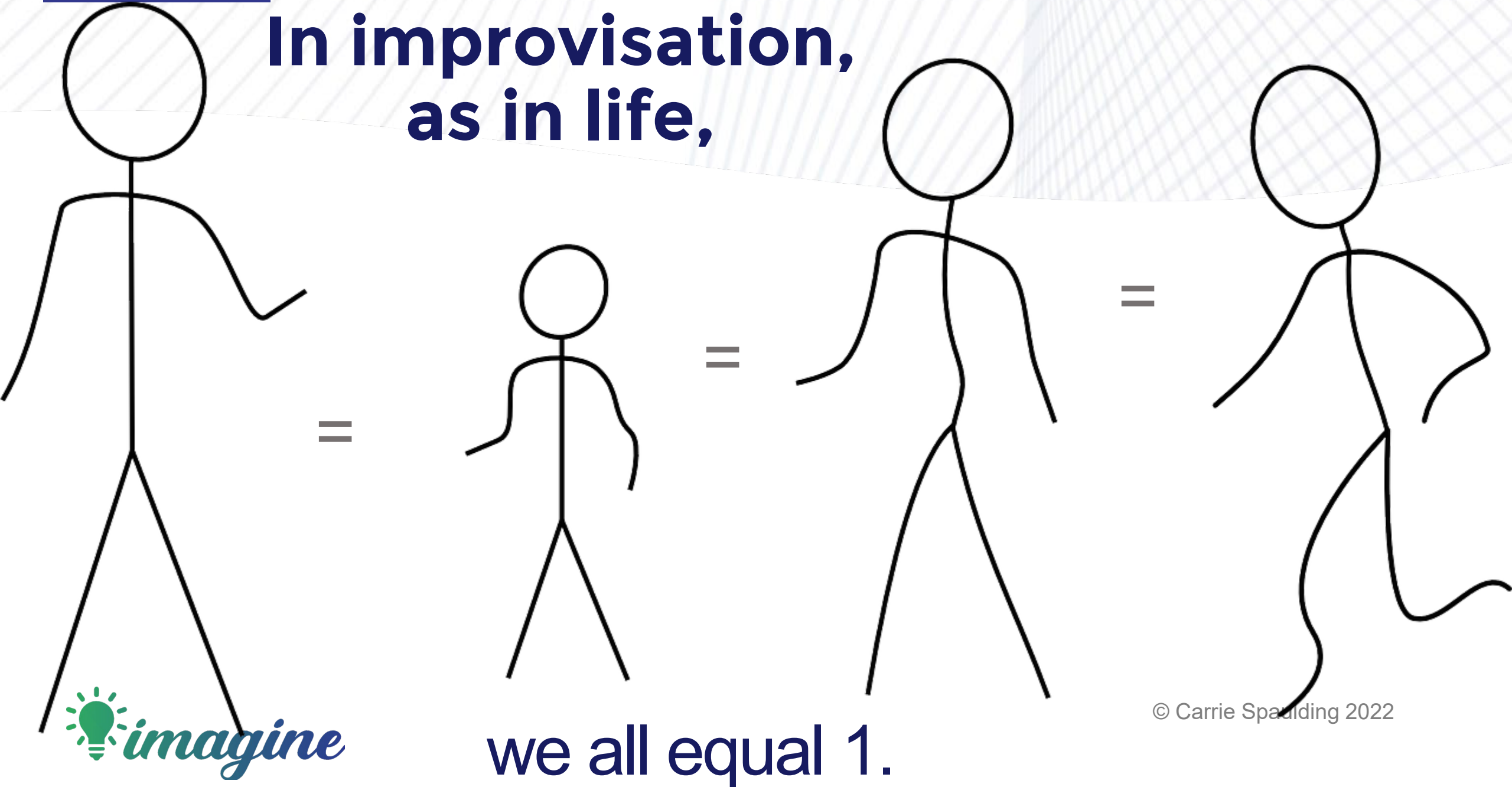
During the Session: Engagement Levers



- Posture
- Pace
- Proximity
- Movement and stillness
- Silence
- Volume
- Cadence
- Facial expression
- Tone
- Authenticity
- Humor and playfulness

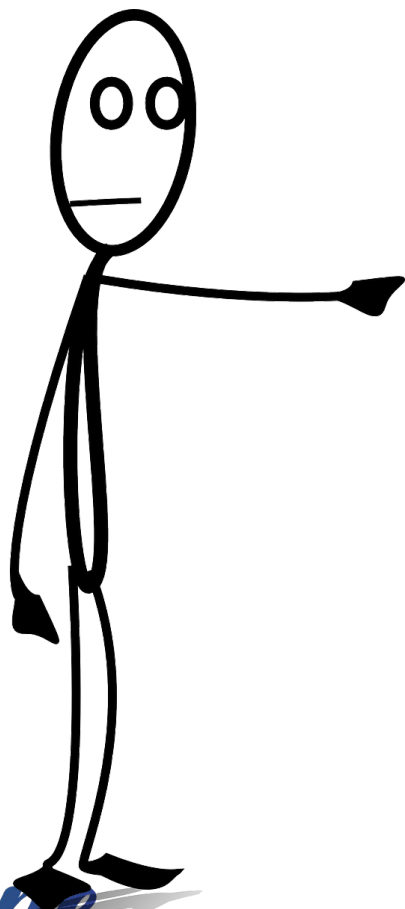
How can we step out of our default patterns and comfort zones in order to be more effective facilitators of learning?

In improvisation, as in life,

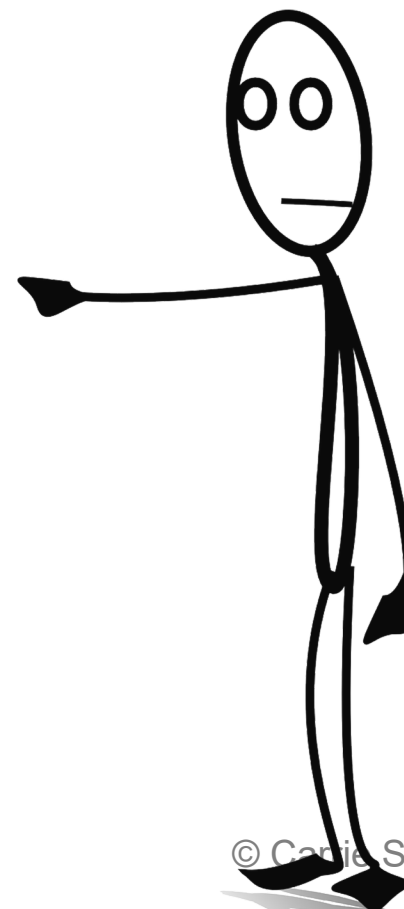


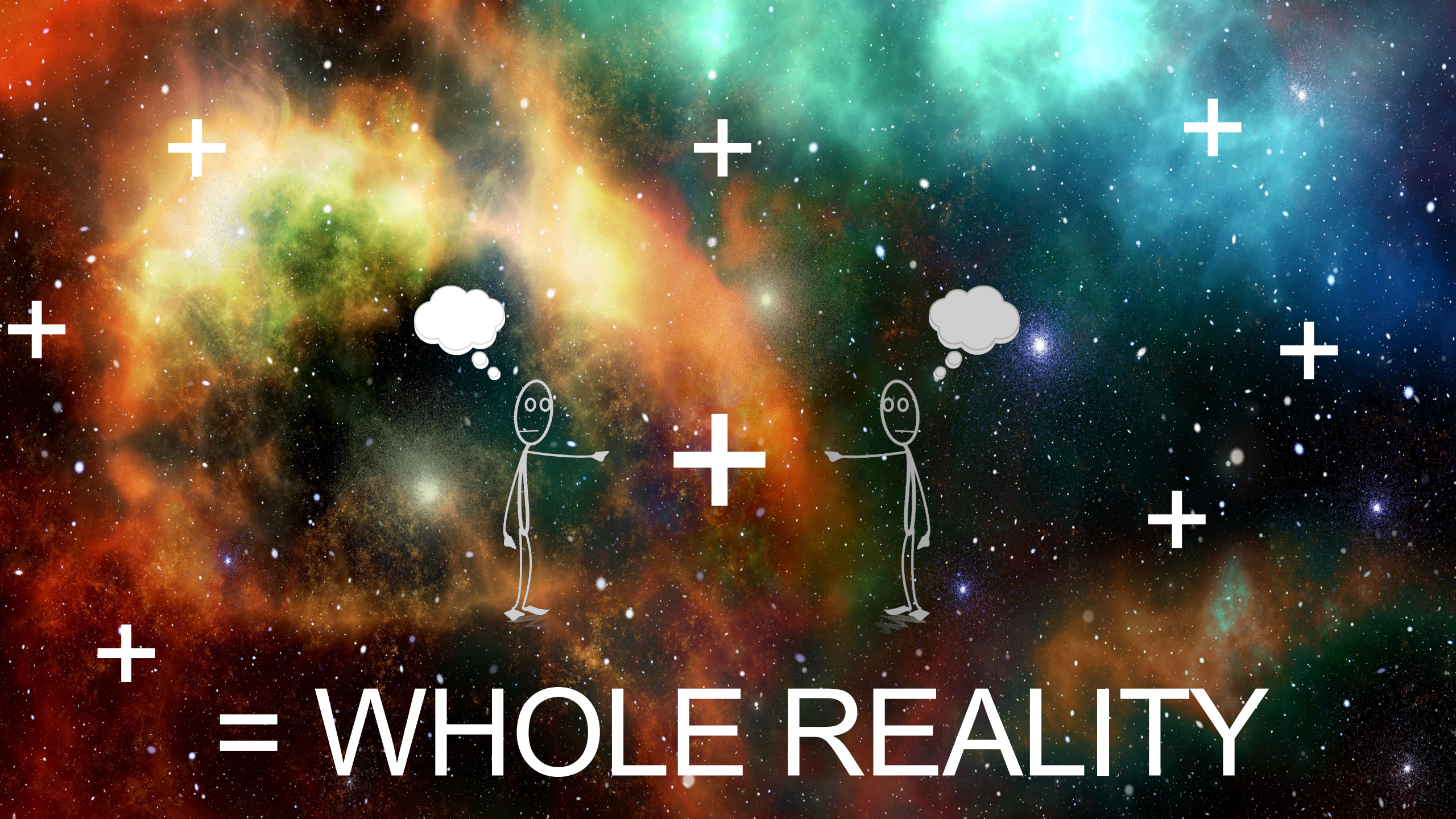
we all equal 1.

elevate



=





= WHOLE REALITY

Knowing and Balancing Your Filters, Biases, and Preferences



- Educate yourself to increase your awareness and deepen your understanding of:
 - Learning styles
 - Introversion and extroversion
 - Neurodiversity
 - Diversity in identities and lived experiences (racial, cultural, gender, socioeconomic, sexual orientation, disability)
 - Accessibility
- Integrate what you learn into your teaching.
- Invite, give examples of, and model self-accommodations.

Setting Personal Goals and Charting Growth



- **Balanced notes**
 - What went well?
 - What would you do differently?
 - What do you have questions about?
- **SIT! (Specific, Immediate, & Tiny)**
- **Create a Personalized Growth Cheat Sheet (PGCS).**



Noticing Yourself, Others, the Environment, and Offers in the Moment



- AWU! Warmed up senses notice more.
- Face Clock/Spotlight
- The Mirror Game—good practice for non-verbal cues
- Remember: everything is an offer!



Personal Reflection

What has been your biggest discovery today?

How can you use these concepts, insights, and tools to work more effectively as an educator or as a training institution?

What is one idea or strategy you want to commit to implementing?

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Whole Group Reflection

Share in the chat:

What insight are you most excited to take away and put into action?

Keep in Touch!



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Thank You!

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