



Chicago Improv Course Overview

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About Humor Association:

The Humor Association is a one-of-a-kind non-profit organization with the simple purpose of enhancing the quality of life of our students through humor and laughter. Our unique courses will teach these students a variety of skills such as discipline, overcoming adversity, awareness, networking and more. Over the course of our classes we will encourage our students to think independently in order to increase their extraversion and to internalize their locus of control. We will foster an affiliative humor style environment that we believe will encourage optimism and will lead to positive, intrapersonal rewards.

Our Leaders:

Regina Chiappazzi is the President and face of Humor Association. She began her career in the humor profession in 2012 when she founded the nationally recognized Lima's Funniest Lady all female comedy festival in Lima, Ohio in celebration of the legendary Phyllis Diller.

Joe Deez is a professional comedian who has earned global attention throughout his career for his philanthropic performances. He has devoted the past three years to hosting fundraising events for various organizations and charitable causes. His personal vision is to have a Humor Association branch in every major city in the country.

Our Goal:

We plan on using our special skills to increase the self-esteem of students who complete our course. We incorporate an affiliative humor style in our teachings. We do this because studies have shown that people who have a self-enhancing humor style maintain a positive psychological well-being and distance themselves from adversity. This course will use humor to teach the following skills:

- Building confidence and supporting others.
- Incorporating listening and responding skills.
- Using emotion and displaying empathy.
- Building relationships and displaying remembering skills.
- Having fun and working together.

Scoring Our Progress:

Self-esteem is the "feeling of self-appreciation" and is an indispensable emotion for people to adapt to society and live their lives. For children, in particular, the environment in which they are raised contributes profoundly to the development of their self-esteem, which in turn helps them to adapt better to society. The development of children's self-esteem is heavily influenced by their environment, that is, their homes, neighborhoods, and schools. Children with damaged self-esteem are at risk of developing psychological and social problems, which hinders recovery from low self-esteem. Thus, to recover low self-esteem, it is important for children to accumulate a series of successful experiences to create a positive concept of self. Evaluating children's self-esteem can be an effective method for understanding their past and present circumstances, and useful to treat for children with psychosomatic disorders.

Because of its reliability over the decades, we provide the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale below to students twice during our courses. First, before we begin our first class. Then at the end of the course. We then compare the initial scores with the final scores and evaluate our results.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Course Calendar:

Thursday, Feb. 14th: Building Confidence & Supporting Others.

- Take survey. Distribute media release. [Distribute pens.](#)
- Introduce the course. Recite the Comedian's Creed. Guest speaker: "Yes, and".
- **Practice Games:** Ball Toss. One Word at a Time Story. Imitation. Count to 20.

Thursday, Feb. 21st: Incorporating Listening & Responding Skills.

- [Troupe \(teams\) selection.](#) Get shirt sizes. Homework: Think of troupe names.
- **Group Warm-Up:** Last Word Response.
- **Official Games:** Returned Item game. Press Conference. Questions Only.

Thursday, Feb. 28th: Using Emotion & Displaying Empathy.

- [Hand out t-shirts.](#) Homework: Troupe names due next week.
- **Group Warm-Up:** Mirror.
- **Official Games:** Hitchhiker Game/Character Bus. Movie Scene. Gibberish/Translator.

Thursday, Mar. 7th: Building Relationships & Displaying Remembering Skills.

- ["Whose Line" practice game video recording.](#) Troupe names due.
- **Group Warm-Up:** Relationship Blitz.
- **Official Games:** Party Quirks. Emotional Family. Counting Game.

Thursday, Mar. 14th: Having Fun & Working Together.

- [Troupe logos presented.](#) Recap games. Homework: Think of game your troupe wants.
- **Group Warm-Up:** Night at the Museum.
- **Official Games:** Freeze Tag. Why Are You Late? Switch.

Thursday, Mar. 21st: Rehearsal.

- [Distribute invitations and official flyer.](#)
- Game selections submitted.
- Practice and rehearse each troupe's game of choice.

Thursday, Mar. 28th or Friday, Mar. 29th: Show Time TBD.

- The Show. All school students & family members are invited and encouraged to interact.
- [Pizza party and awards ceremony afterwards.](#) Every team wins an award.
- Final Survey.

Our Objective:

As discussed earlier, it is our goal to improve overall self-esteem and to enhance the quality of life for these students. We cannot do this without the help of their teachers. We believe that teachers are every child's real hero. We strongly encourage to learn from educators. Our ideal scenario would have teachers incorporate our course into their regular curriculum. We also hope that we can receive your feedback on ways to improve our course going forward. No one knows these students more than you. In order for us to be successful we believe that our course should easily align with your class structure as well as state and national requirements.

If you have any suggestions to improve our class and increase self-esteem please reach out to us before, during, and especially after the course has been completed. We have very specific goals: to give kids a chance to love who they are and to have the best chance at life. Every little bit of help from every possible source is how we get there.

Thank you so very much for this opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

Humor Association Team.
humorassociation@gmail.com

Appendix: Game Descriptions.

Week One: Building Confidence & Supporting Others.

- **One Word At A Time (practice):** This is an exercise in teamwork. All players sit in a circle. We all tell a story one word at a time. Each player provides one word of a sentence.
- **Imitation (practice):** One player starts by making a little gesture, perhaps with a little sound. His or her neighbor then tries and does exactly the same. And so on. Although we expect the gesture/sound not to change, it will.
- **Count to Twenty (practice):** The group can sit in a circle and in their own time, someone, anyone, from the group should start the game by saying the number “one”. Someone at random should then say “two”, someone else “three” and so on. However, if two (or more) people in the group say a number at the same time, the counter is reset and starts again from “one”. The aim of the game is to count to 20.
- **Tomato Toss (practice):** All players in a circle. One player starts by tossing a “word” to another player. The receiver associates on this word and throws the association to yet another player.

Week Two: Incorporating Listening & Responding Skills.

- **Last Word Response (practice):** The point of this exercise is just to improve your listening ability. You have to work with the last word said, so you have to listen to what is said all the way to the end before you can think of a response.
It’s common in our daily conversations to be thinking of a response in our heads before we fully listen to what someone says. This exercise helps prevent that process by forcing you to wait until the person is finished.
For example:
A: I have to go to the gym more often.
B: Often I think about the same thing.
A: Thing is I’m really lazy.
B: Lazy is just an excuse.
A: Excuse me? That’s a bit rude.
- **Questions Only:** A scene is improvised, in which any sentence used by the players must be a question. Players that use statements instead of questions are replaced by other players. New players need to take over the character of the players they replace.
- **Press Conference:** This is a verbal improv game, played with 3 to 8 players. One player leaves the room, while the audience provides the name of a famous or historical person. The ‘absent’ player will give a press conference, but he does not know who he is. The other players are journalists, whose questions should provide indications to who the mystery guest might be. The game ends when our player guesses who he is.
- **Returned Item Game:** One actor serves as a customer service rep working the returns counter at a department store. The other actor is a customer wishing to return an object, only he doesn't know what it is. Giving clues through his dialogue, the rep must get the customer to guess what he is returning, what's wrong with it, and the celebrity who previously owned it. Scenes usually end with "This was owned by (insert celebrity)?! I'm keeping it!" Clues start subtle and become increasingly overt until the customer gets it, i.e., if a customer is returning a lawnmower made of bubble gum that is leaking wrappers and was once owned by Michael Jackson, clues might take the form of, "Sir, we don't have a good return policy for upside-down helicopters," for the object, and once the object is guessed, the rep might say, "Double your lawnmowing capabilities, well that's a big red lie!" Once the material is guessed, the rep might say, "Well, look, it's bad, it's bad, you know it, but if you beat it, you might get it working again."

Week Three: Using Emotion & Displaying Empathy Skills.

- **Mirror (practice):** Players per 2, facing each other. They can move (arms, legs, eyebrows) slowly, and the other player will mirror them. This is a game of give and take - no-one should be (continuously) leading. Keep movements slow. A variation is to do this with the whole group: everyone in a big circle, and everybody mirrors everybody else. Also known as Group Mirror.
- **Character Bus/Hitchhiker Game:** Place four chairs on stage to represent four seats in a car. Four students start in the car and they are going somewhere. A “hitchhiker” stands up and puts their thumb out. The hitchhiker has a very strong characteristic, such as enormous sneezes, extremely old age, annoyed business person, etc. One of the passengers will say “look, hitchhiker” and they will pull over to pick the hitchhiker up. The hitchhiker enters the front passenger seat and the other students rotate around clockwise. The driver gets out of the car. As soon as the hitchhiker enters the car, all the passengers and driver take on the hitchhiker’s characteristics immediately and to the extreme. They continue dialogue until new hitchhiker comes on.
- **Gibberish/Translator:** The Coach/Director takes a suggestion to start the scene: an object, news item, or geographic location, for instance. The first player speaks a line of gibberish, then his “translator” turns to the audience and explains what was said. The second player then speaks some gibberish, followed by her sidekick’s translation.
- **Movie Scene:** Genre replay is one of the most popular games at improv theater. First an arbitrary suggestion (e. g. an everyday action) is taken from the audience and two to three players play a neutral scene. This scene shouldn’t be too long and not too complicated. After the end of this scene, the audience is asked to name any (film, television or theatre) genre. (see also Genre list). Now the opening scene is repeated in the desired genre (therefore "Replay"). One or two more replay scenes in other genres will follow. Example genres: Western, science fiction, sitcom, commercial, etc.

Week Four: Building Relationships & Displaying Remembering Skills.

- **Relationship Blitz (practice):** Have the class stand in a circle. Ask one player to stand in the center. Tell everyone in the circle they have 15 seconds to think of a specific relationship and situation they have with the person standing in the center (i.e. a robber breaking into a house, a young sibling asking for help with homework, a parent reading his terrible report card, a stranger asking for directions, etc.). One by one, each player steps into the center and interacts with the center player with one line of dialogue. The center player, without being told the relationship, must respond with one line as quick as he can. The game ends when everyone around the circle has had a chance to interact with the center player.
- **Counting Game:** Each of the players in this game will be assigned a number between 1 and 10. Each sentence that the player speaks must contain that given number of words. The players must keep track of every word that they speak. If a player is assigned the number 3 she must have 3 words in every sentence. “No I won’t”, “No, no, no” would be the limits of all her sentences. Players that must speak in 10 word sentences become rather talkative characters. This is a good listening game.
- **Emotional Family:** As a suggestion ask for a family activity, then start a normal scene. As soon as all characters and their relationships have been established, freeze the scene, pick a player, and ask for an emotion for that player. The scene then continues, and the player is overcome with that emotion. Repeat till all players got an emotion. The scene has to keep evolving after each emotion assignment, and of course players shall try Justifying the emotions.
- **Party Quirks:** For the “guests” to act out their character and for the “host” to guess who everyone is. This is an improvisation game that gets people to leave their comfort zone and act out roles that they are not used to. People will be acting in ways they aren’t used to. This helps to breakdown any barriers people might have such as being shy or performing in front of their peers. Game Instructions: One player plays a character that is having a party. The other players will be the guests, and each guest is provided with a character or silly characteristic. The host does not know who the guests are. His/her task is to guess who the guests might be, based on hints the guests offer. The game is over as soon as the host has guessed all guests. Modifications: Can have quirks instead of characters.

Week Five: Having Fun & Working Together.

- **Night at the Museum (practice):** Everyone is going to be a statue, and they can't let the janitor catch them moving. The janitor will move slowly around the room, pointing his/her flashlight at the statues. If s/he shines the flashlight on a student and that student moves/laughs/etc., s/he will have to go to the designated area and do 5 jumping jacks (or consequence of your choice) to get back into the game. If playing this indoors/in a classroom, encourage students to be sneaky when they're moving around. You do not want the janitor to hear you moving!
- **Why Are You Late?:** One of the Improv-players must leave the room for a short time. In the meantime, the audience decides on a reason why the player was late for work. (i.e. the tram could no longer run because the conductor became unconscious). Everybody, the boss, the audience, knows the reason why- only the one who arrived late does not. Now it is the late-comer's task to guess why he arrived late. He has to explain this to his boss who is dropping subtle hints to steer him into the right direction. An example: The late-comer takes a fall in the dark: "You know, my wife slipped today in the morning because of the honey, that my son had dropped, so she broke her arm." Then the boss steers him in the right direction by getting him to understand that he is completely wrong: "But your wife broke her leg only last week, so now I don't believe you're being honest.". If the guessing player looks helpless, other players can intervene and help by entering the store or the office as a colleague or secretary or by calling the boss and giving small hidden hints.
- **Switch:** A scene is started, played by 2 to 4 players. Mid-scene the MC interrupts, and all characters are replaced by new players. The new players should take over the original characters and stick to the story that was being developed.
- **Freeze Tag:** Everyone is involved, each scene is usually a two person scene. Two players start and play a short scene. When a beat is reached, one of the non-participating players claps his/her hands and/or calls "Freeze!" The performers immediately stop and freeze in the pose they just have. The player who has clapped taps one of the two players and takes exactly his/her position. Then a completely new scene starts. The two players take their attitudes as a basis for their actions in the new scene. Usually the game idea for the new scene comes from the new player. The excitement of the game is to copy the exact posture down to the last detail and justify it in a new context. A close observation of the scene and postures before the takeover is very important. So that this is possible, the scenes are to be played with a lot of physicality and posture changes. You should end the scene when a beat has just been reached, e. g. after a gag. If the players have also taken an exciting posture during this time, it's even better.

Appendix: Media Release Form.

Student Media Consent and Release Form

Throughout the Humor Association Course, students may be highlighted in efforts to promote Humor Association activities and achievements. For example, students may be featured in materials to train volunteers and/or increase public awareness of our program through newspapers, radio, TV, the web, DVDs, displays, brochures, and other types of media.

I, as the parent or guardian of _____, hereby give Humor Association and its employees, representatives, and authorized media organizations permission to print, photograph, and record my child for use in audio, video, film, or any other electronic, digital and printed media.

a. This is with the understanding that neither Humor Association nor its representatives will reproduce said photograph, interview, or likeness for any commercial value or receive monetary gain for use of any reproduction/broadcast of said photograph or likeness. I am also fully aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for my child's participation.

b. I further release and relieve Humor Association, its Board of Trustees, employees, and other representatives from any liabilities, known or unknown, arising out of the use of this material.

I certify that I have read the Media Consent and Release Liability statement and fully understand its terms and conditions.

Please understand that failure to return this release form within ten (10) school days from the date of distribution will constitute approval of the above requests.

Please Print:

Name of child _____ Grade _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Signature of parent or guardian _____
Date _____ Phone Number _____