



Frequently Asked Questions for Educators and Helping Professionals

Do educators and helping professionals need to attend each day? What if they can't make it for one of the days?

We ask that students attend each camp day for the full camp hours. Because camp builds skills progressively and emphasizes group ensemble and connection, we've found that it is challenging for individuals and the group when someone misses a chunk of camp. Because we have a limited number of spots available, we ask that folks register for camp only when they know they can attend all of the camp days/hours. If you have questions about this, or an unchangeable conflict, please contact us to discuss this issue before registering. If you can't make it work this year to attend all of the camp days, join our mailing list to be the first to find out when future camp weeks open.

Who is eligible to attend camp?

Camp is open to a wide-range of educators, helping professionals, and teaching artists. Our most common camp attendees include:

- Educators (K-12 general and special educators and higher education faculty)
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Psychotherapists, Social Workers, Psychologists, Counselors
- Occupational Therapists
- Teaching artists and community-based arts educators

If you fall outside of these categories, reach out to us! Camp may be a great fit for you.

Do educators and helping professionals need to have experience with improv?

No, there's no need to have any experience with improv. In fact, if the thought of doing improv for a week makes you a bit nervous, you won't be alone! During camp, we support self-determination and finding styles of participation that works for everyone. One of the things that we love about improv is that it really is for everyone, and it's very flexible in terms of engagement. You don't have to think you're funny, be outgoing, or view yourself as super creative. You can just show up as yourself.

Throughout camp, we invite folks to reflect on both how they'll use what they're learning, but also what they notice about the experience for themselves. Many of our students step outside of their comfort zones daily, and they are navigating environments that are not aligned with their ideals. As professionals, camp is a way to reflect on our own experience of pushing ourselves, how we manage moments when we maybe feel nervous or uncomfortable, or when things don't seem to be going the way we predicted.

Do educators and helping professionals need to have experience working with autistic students?

Again, no prior experience is required!

Are educators and helping professionals responsible for leading activities?

No, educators and helping professionals are **not** responsible for leading activities or games on their own. Each afternoon, when students join camp, Lacy and Jim lead and facilitate all activities. During this time, educators and helping professionals are able to see improv games in action, practice their own new skills, and participate along with the students.

While educators and helping professionals are invited to take initiative and be supportive during the afternoon session, they are not expected to act as camp counselors or volunteers. Camp is a professional learning experience – it's just as much a learning journey for our educators and helping professionals as it is for our students. Camp is an opportunity for you to practice the skills that are most important to you in a way that aligns with your learning style. If you benefit from watching and playing along, great! If you want to try your hand at leading a game for the whole group or a small group, great! We want camp to help you reach your professional goals.

Some testimonials from past educators and helping professionals:

- A video with interviews from past students professionals:
<https://www.facebook.com/campyesand/videos/2242060289442725>
- A video in which past professionals talk about how improv creates a strengths-based environment for neurodivergent youth:
<https://www.facebook.com/campyesand/videos/2086343018296395>
- A video of a Special Educator talking about his experience at camp: <https://www.facebook.com/campyesand/videos/2065669730363724>
- A video of a speech-language pathologist talking about how camp impacted the way she sees herself as a professional:
<https://www.facebook.com/campyesand/videos/2030108807253150>

How can I justify camp as professional development and/or for license renewal?

Great question! We offer a certificate from Indiana University verifying that professionals have completed 35 hours of professional learning focused on the use of applied improvisation to develop social-communicative competence in adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This certificate can be used to provide proof of fulfillment of continuing education and professional licensing requirements for educators and related professionals, including K-12 General and Special Educators, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists and Assistants, Social Workers (LSW), Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), Addiction Counselors (LAC) and Clinical Addiction Counselors (LCAC), Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT), and Mental Health Counselors (LMHC).

Overall, improv is a powerful and versatile tool. You may find it interesting to read [this blog](#) from Lacy Alana about why Improv works through a Polyvagal lens. The following charts summarize the benefits of improv for professionals and students:

Benefits for Professionals

CHALLENGE	WHY IT MATTERS	WHAT IMPROV CAN DO
Clients who don't respond to our go-to interventions, leaving us with low confidence.	When we feel competent, we're able to engage more effectively and problem-solve more efficiently.	Improv develops self-confidence and increases our ability to tolerate distress (and even find enjoyment) in uncertain situations.
Remaining present, regulated, and calm, even with challenging clients	When we're not deeply present, we aren't in touch with our clients or ourselves. Although many of us keep our cool when clients don't, it is common to disengage emotionally when our clients are dysregulated. Increasing our ability to <i>lean into</i> dysregulation allows us to see our clients with more complexity. It also invites and models vulnerability and problem solving.	Improv helps us internalize remaining deeply <i>present</i> . In turn, we meet our clients where they are, responding more effectively in the moment. While pre-planning certainly has its place in professional work, our clients often deviate from our carefully crafted plans, and it is essential that we are able to adapt with them, stay regulated, and adapt our plans, even when things go off course.

<p>Uncertainty around how to help a client move forward, or frustration with clients who are stuck.</p>	<p>All professionals have worked with clients who are “stuck.” This “stuckness” can be contagious, and we may end up stuck while trying to help our clients get unstuck. This can often invoke emotions from us, which can compromise our ability to effectively problem solve.</p>	<p>Improv enhances our ability to attune with others, and it provides us with new ways to view our clients and their patterns. This new perspective can help us to better understand the “root” of the stuck, and better meet the clients where they are.</p>
<p>Difficulty building rapport with challenging clients</p>	<p>Clinician-client (or teacher-student) rapport is <i>positively correlated</i> with outcome.</p>	<p>Improv emphasizes connection, cohesion, unity, and ensemble. Improv exercises provide unique and fun opportunities to connect with clients, and the Yes And Brain philosophy provides a playful perspective to cultivate and build relationships.</p>
<p>Re-directing clients effectively, and helping them develop new social patterns.</p>	<p>Getting our clients back on track is essential. Even better when we can help clients develop new behavioral and emotional patterns through the re-direction.</p>	<p>With the focus on successful improv, and not pointed behavioral criticism, the stress often associated with re-direction can be minimized or eradicated. Focusing on becoming successful improvisers is an authentic and non-threatening way to re-direct challenging behaviors and social miscues that occur in real life.</p>

Benefits for Students

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES	IMPROV INTERVENTION
Misreading Social Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv provides opportunities to practice listening & connecting with a scene partner and reading social cues in a fun, safe, setting. • Playing characters in a “make believe” setting can provide distance and stress reduction while developing new skills. • Improv provides youth with an opportunity to identify related cues in a number of settings through different games and scenes. This makes learning more generalizable as students begin to recognize offers, and develop strategies to respond to a wide range of offers. • Scaffolding improv games and exercises enables youth to improve, explore, and experiment with their understanding of different types of social cues in a safe, supportive, and positively reinforcing environment.
Difficulty with Developing Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv builds a community, and provides a platform to discover successful group collaboration and ensemble.. • Improv emphasizes “Group Mind” and “Yes Anding,” opens the door for friendships and collaboration. • Improv provides a framework for initiating interaction, co-creation, and connection with others. • Improv provides practice opportunities and a framework for youth to sustain conversation and connection with others.

<p>Narrow Aisle of Interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv creates opportunities to explore different aspects of life through scene work. • Improv encourages students to play “expert” with unfamiliar topics. • Improv provides youth with a new way to explore their current interests. • Improv provides a natural forum to explore combining current interests with new interests, ultimately leading to an expansion of interests/social repertoire.
<p>Unusual Social Initiations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes And” provides a practical framework for social initiation and engagement in both improv and off the stage. • Games and Scene work provide ample opportunities for students to initiate a variety of interactions with others, and to explore what initiations are most effective. • Games and exercises provide structured opportunities to workshop different aspects of social interactions.
<p>Difficulty with Reciprocity in Relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv provides youth with opportunities to practice collaborative skills in a safe environment. • Youth will practice listening, “yes anding,” joining with others, and adding to others’ ideas during scenes and games. • Improv invites exploration of combining seemingly disjointed ideas, and coming together with other students to co-create cohesion together. • Scene work and improv games/exercises offer unique opportunities to expand expressive and emotional frameworks, which can enhance connection and engagement with others.

<p>Difficulties with Joint Attention (both with initiation and response)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv could be considered a form of active meditation, in that it requires seeking presence with self and others in order to produce the best improv possible. • Improv games and exercises provide unique opportunities to mirror and explore body language, verbal cues, and characters. • Scene work and games emphasize joining with others to create a joint world. • To successfully co-create, improv encourages players to listen, add, co-create, and synthesize social and body cue information. • Improv supports the practice of presence, deep listening, and adapting on the fly to co-create.
<p>Flat Affect/Difficulty using Body Language & Voice to Communicate Feelings/Emotions/ Thoughts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As students explore improv, they're given ample opportunities to explore physicality, facial expressions, and a wide range of characters. • Exercises and class time is spent on developing character and emotional range in order to enhance improv skills and Scene work. • Students are taught the "Yes And" cycle to increase their awareness and attunement to the offers being made by those around them, including physical and vocal offers. • Students are encouraged to explore a wide range of ways to initiate offers. • Students are given the opportunity to practice mimicry of dynamic characters in a safe and supportive setting.

<p>Difficulty with Pragmatic Use of Language (e.g.: doesn't clarify if not understood, doesn't provide background information)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv Scenes and games emphasize specificity and communicating clear ideas to your scene partners. • Improv teaches dynamic frameworks for conveying meaning to scene partners in a variety of ways, and then confirming their understanding. • Scene work provides a fun way for students to generate spontaneous language and have repeated practice with using expressive and pragmatic language to communicate with others.
<p>Low Self-Esteem/Low Self-Confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv games provide students with opportunities to explore success and mastery. In turn, this creates enhanced self-esteem. • Students are celebrated for who they are and their creative strengths when met with teachers who “Yes And” them and teach/re-direct from their “Improv Brain.” • Opportunities to creatively express themselves helps students “find voice” through improv.
<p>DIFFICULTIES WITH FLEXIBILITY AND SPONTANEITY:</p>	<p>INTERVENTION FOR INCREASED FLEXIBILITY</p>
<p>Dependent on Routines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv teaches tools for staying present and in the moment • Improv scenes and games offer unique ways for students to explore flexibility and spontaneity. • Improv provides an opportunity to build confidence while navigating and exploring new territory. • Improv constantly provides novel opportunities for engagement within an established framework. Learning improv fundamentals (Yes And, listening, co-creation with scene partners) provides a strong foundational structure for students to lean into as they are presented with new situations and experiences.

<p>Sensitive to Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv provides students with the opportunity to practice accepting small changes in a safe environment that doesn't maintain the stakes of the real world. • Opportunities to combine interests and expand social repertoire in a safe, supportive setting. • Educators who approach students from their "improv brain" are able to meet students where they are, "yes and" them, and build and grow with them.
<p>Difficulty Responding to Unfamiliar Situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scene work and improv exercises offer unpredictable stimuli repeatedly, but in the context of a safe, stable and structured environment. This provides the opportunity to practice spontaneous responses in a safe space. • Students are equipped with improv skills and strategies to respond to unfamiliar situations, by learning how to respond to unexpected "offers" made by their scene partners. • Students are armed with the generalizable template of "Yes Anding," which provides them with skills to co-create with others, adapt to unexpected input, and to explore spontaneous output.
<p>Difficulty Sharing Control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improv provides youth with the opportunity to practice sharing control through listening and co-creation. • No matter what capacity a student has for this upon entering classes, there are creative scaffolding options to find co-creation and connection with others.
<p>SENSORY CHALLENGES</p>	<p>SENSORY INTERVENTION</p>

Speech Exploration: volume, pitch, intonation, rate, rhythm, prosody, or stress in speech

- Character work encourages youth to explore speech patterning
- Mirroring work provides youth with a template to explore and try different types of speech patterning
- Exercises provide youth with opportunities to explore a wide range of vocal presentations in the context of games.
- Students are encouraged to explore and play with a wide range of vocal patterning, which provides them with a safe space to explore personal patterning, increase self-awareness, and try new things without the judgment that could come with exploration in the real world.

Limited Body Awareness/Personal Space Awareness

- Improv offers opportunities to increase body awareness by exploring:
 - Stage picture and stage positioning
 - Character work and different physical character manifestations
 - Non-verbal communication and how to clearly utilize the body to send messages to others
 - How to best share space and focus on a stage with others

Sensory Seeking and/or Sensory Sensitive

- Improv offers opportunities to expand students' sensory diet in healthy, connected ways. Improv provides youth with the opportunity to experience and explore sensory input in new ways.
- Students explore proprioceptive and vestibular input in class as they engage in movement activities, and explore dynamic character work. For students who have sensory processing issues, or weakened proprioceptors and vestibular awareness, improv provides a unique opportunity to explore how our bodies move in space.
 - Proprioception refers to the body's ability to sense movement within joints and joint position. Essentially, this helps us know where our limbs are in space without having to look. This is an important skill to have for every day movements, and even more important with complex sequenced movement .
 - Vestibular input is the sense of movement, centered in our inner ears. Any type of movement stimulates vestibular receptors. The vestibular system contributes to our balance and sense of spatial orientation. The vestibular system provides dominant input about movement and equilibrioception, and provides information related to movement and head position.