

Notes on drama activities

Russel's Soup (A/B)

Everyone gets a partner. Decide who "A" will be and who "B" will be.

"A" starts a physical activity (*cooking, fishing, cleaning, performing surgery*) and "B" watches.

While "B" watches, "B" must come up with the relationship that "A" and "B" will have to each other. "B" decides without telling "A." "B" also comes up with a strong intention, something important that she wants from "A" in the context of the relationship they have chosen.

When "B" has quickly figured out these two things, she enters the space.

All the pairs are going at once, and the "B" partner enters at her own pace.

Once "B" enters, the scene starts. She should not walk in and say "Hi, Mom." The idea is for the relationship to become clear from the way (behavior, dialogue, and tone) "B" interacts with "A."

"A" tries to figure out the relationship while continuing to focus on the activity and playing the scene, slightly in the dark.

The key is listening and adapting to what each person brings to the scene.

As "A" is trying to figure out the relationship, "B" is beginning to try to get her intention.

As "A" begins to realize what "B" wants, it is "A"'s responsibility to make choices that allow her, as a character, to not give in.

"A" needs to come up with details as the two create a story together, and to want something from "B" in opposition to what "B" wants.

The conflict builds, the story grows, and the relationship deepens.

The scene does not resolve – it goes on as the energy in the room rises until I shout "freeze."

Then, each pair spends a minute or two on the feedback questions.

After that, with the same partner, they go again. This time “A” and “B” switch tasks and it’s a brand-new scene.

Line Improvs

Everyone breaks into 2 even-numbered single-file lines facing each other. The lines back away from each other (about 10 paces), and each person should know who is directly across from them: their partner.

In this activity, I will provide you with the relationship, the circumstance, and the intentions.

Your responsibility will be to build the conflict and the story together; make strong, detailed choices; and allow the stakes to be high.

You should, at this point, be challenging yourselves to take on points of view that are different from your own.

You should be playing characters that are uncomfortable for you and not just another version of your own worldview.

The first relationship I will provide you with is parent/child.

One line is “Parent,” the other is “Child.”

The child has to be fourteen to nineteen years old.

The child wants to go to a rally, demonstration, or protest going on in the community tonight.

The cause behind the gathering is important to them, and they are coming to ask for permission to attend.

The parent does not want them to go at all.

Not at all.

The details, the kind of rally, the reasons for not letting them go are choices to be made by you – the players.

When I say “go,” the “Child” line crosses the space at once and walks up to their “Parent.”

The scene takes place face-to-face – no moving around, no sitting – standing there, confrontation style.

After 5-15 minutes, I will call out “freeze,” and have you respond to the 4 feedback questions in your pairs.

Then we’ll start over by having one line rotate so that everyone is looking across at a new person.

These new pairs will go ahead with a new scenario.

Remember – at this point, you should be challenging yourselves to take on points of view that are different from your own.

So, the rally should not be a cause you are personally passionate about but rather something you have to work at to be passionate about.

You should be playing characters that are uncomfortable for you and not just another version of your own worldview.

- Focus on details. The story should grow richer and deeper from the moment you start until I shout “freeze.”
- You are not looking for resolution. You are building conflict.
- Some decisions you can make in the 15 seconds I give you before I shout “go.” Others you can’t make until the scene starts.

Good friends

The one who will remain in place has been dating someone for six months and they haven’t gotten much support from anyone regarding the relationship.

Today, for the first time, the friend who is crossing the space says they want their friend to break up with the person they’re seeing because of the group the person they’re dating is part of (this could be about race, religion, socio-economic status, gender).

Siblings

Both go to the same high school.

The one crossing is approaching their sibling because they believe they have a substance abuse problem.

They want them to get help today from the school counselor or they’ll tell their parents.

The accused doesn’t think they have a problem.

Lovers

The one approaching has heard that a former partner of their current partner (here) is rumored to be HIV+.

They want the two of them to go get tested together.

The approached feels there is no way they could be positive and doesn’t want to go.

Note that each line improv has a clear relationship, circumstance, intention, and conflict.

Set these things up and create your own line improvs.

They don’t have to relate specifically to issues.