Managing in the Moment: Improvising to Engage and Communicate
Improvisation and the Art of Communicating

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“Improvisation is the art of reacting, adapting and communicating.”
− Bob Kulhan, author of Getting to “Yes And:” The Art of Business Improv

Introduction
By using improvisational techniques, participants create, innovate, and push through their personal boundaries to actively communicate with one another. They practice suspending judgment in order to make a supportive environment where everyone’s ideas are heard. Experiential activities are intended to provide everyone with skills that they can take out of the classroom to use with their colleagues and clients. Ultimately, participants will better know how to manage volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in their organizations, successfully addressing the needs of both individuals and groups.

Description
This course offers an improvisational toolbox filled with communication strategies that access students’ kinesthetic imagination while expanding their skills both physically and vocally. Students engage in enlivening activities that offer different ways to express themselves and connect with others. They will be given the right tools to make meaningful conversations and memorable on-the-spot presentations. The improvisational activities foster and support authentic communication through concrete experiences. The course instruction gets students to access their physical, intellectual, and emotional selves through creative activities. Through stretching beyond their comfort zones, students will discover for themselves how to make wise communication choices that deliver their message effectively. This course impacts students’ lives beyond the classroom by building confidence and a personal sense of power, providing skills to deal with the unexpected. It also assists in the discovery of personal strengths, while relieving stress and promoting laughter, giving students new ways to collaborate with others.

Expected Outcomes:
By the end of this mid-semester module, participants will know how to:

➢ Push through boundaries and expand comfort zones.
➢ Increase physicality, manage energy levels, and sustain momentum.
➢ Step away from daily routine thinking and into free-form thinking.
➢ Discover ways to ignite and express passions.
➢ Develop inner resources (past experiences, emotions, and imagination).
➢ Provide opportunities for others to innovate without restrictions.
➢ Expand ways of being heard.
➢ Become a better listener.
➢ Improve communication strategies and collaborative moments.
➢ Build and deepen relationships.
➢ Relieve stress and increase an overall sense of well-being.
Ruth E. Schowalter - Creative Communication Leader

Ruth Schowalter specializes in creating and leading workshops that enhance participants’ communication and presentation skills in academic, professional, and community settings. In her interactive workshops, she integrates improvisation, body movement, and other enlivening forms of expression, providing participants with the right tools to make meaningful conversations and memorable presentations. A certified leader in InterPlay – an improvisational system that fosters authentic communication – Ruth guides workshop participants to access their physical, intellectual, and emotional selves through creative activities. With an M.S. in Applied Linguistics and English as a Second Language from Georgia State, she has taught for nearly 25 years at the Georgia Tech Language Institute (GTLI), teaching international visiting scholars and graduate students how to express themselves, explain their research, and manage communication breakdowns. Ruth’s transformation into an improvisational workshop consultant, designer, and facilitator took off after she created an Improv-ESL course at the GTLI. Since then, she has used InterPlay and other forms of improvisation in her communication instruction with business professionals, engineers, scientists, and others longing to express themselves more powerfully and creatively. In addition to her work at Georgia Tech, she has taught short courses and workshops at Emory University’s Goizueta Business School and Department of Environmental Sciences, and elsewhere in the metro-Atlanta area.

Her most recent workshops and related work include:

Business Communication


Three-part workshop series with Lesly Fredman: (1) “Saying ‘Yes’” (2) “Partnering with a Purpose” (3) “Taking the Stage: Making Your Audience Look Good,” for elite students enrolled in the Stephen A. Denning Management and Technology Program, Scheller College of Business, Georgia Tech, All three workshops conducted Fall Semester 2015, and again in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017.

Science Communication

“Introduction to Improvisation (InterPlay) for Science Communication,” Emory University, Department of Environmental Science, for the course, “Communicating Environmental Science Communication,” Spring 2018.
“Communicating the Facts – More than a Feeling,” engaging the public in improvisational activities to understand scientific methodology, with Anthony J. Martin and Dottie Stearns, Atlanta Science Festival, Little Five Points Community Center, Atlanta, March 2018.


“Transforming Nature Observation into Stories,” two one-hour workshops, Emory University, Department of Environmental Science, for the freshman course “How to Interpret Behavior You Did Not See,” Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Spring and Fall 2016, Fall 2017.

Engineering Communication

“Using Improvisation to Improve Oral Skills,” workshop for international graduate students in Material Science Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, hosted by College of Engineering Group and Language Institute at Georgia Tech, Spring 2018.

“Build Communication Confidence by Activating Your Kinesthetic Imagination,” interactive workshop for international graduate students and post-doctoral students in Material Science Engineering, Mechanical Engineering at Georgia Tech, Fall 2017.


“Using Improvisation to Increase Your Skills in Academic and Professional Speaking,” interactive workshop for graduate students; Material Science Engineering and Mechanical Engineering at Georgia Tech, Fall 2016.

Applied Improvisation for Educators

Three-part series for applied improvisation (InterPlay) for educators, developed and facilitated three five-hour workshops leading to “Level 1 Certification: Applied InterPlay for Educators,” Summer 2017 (July 9, July 16, August 6).

**Improvisation for Speakers of English as a Second Language**

“Talk More One,” improvisational course for beginning level English speakers, short courses for Panamanian and Japanese students; Georgia Tech Language Institute, May 2018.

“Beautiful Beings Thriving in America,” English class using improvisational activities for partners of international MBA students; Emory University Goizueta Business School, Fall and Spring Semesters (2016-2017, 2017-2018).

“Communicating with Confidence,” a five-workshop series for empowering resettled Turkish women; Istanbul Cultural Center Atlanta, March-April 2018.

“Talk More Two” improvisational course for Intermediate and Advanced Level English speakers, elective for international students; Georgia Tech Language Institute, Fall, 2017.

**Improvisation and Activism**

“Storytelling Workshop for Set Them Free,” workshop with Christine Gautreaux, teaching improvisational forms to Turkish refugee women seeking asylum, helping them tell their stories and represent Turkish women and children unjustly incarcerated in their country; Atlantic Institute, Alpharetta, Georgia, June 2018.

“Our Liberty is Bound Together: InterPlay Atlanta and Set Them Free,” workshop with Christine Gautreaux to facilitate improvisational activities between U.S. citizens and Turkish refugee women to support one another through storytelling, movement, and food sharing; Emory Continuing Education, Executive Park, Atlanta, Georgia, April 2018.

“InterPlay Helping to Empower Women on International Women’s Day” workshop; The Atlantic Institute, Alpharetta, Georgia March 2018.

Three-part InterPlay workshop series with Canan Arikan to empower and bring communities together: (1) “Speaking English With Confidence,” (2) “The Beauty of Being Human: Sharing Our Stories,” (3) Interfaith Exchange: Moving in the Mosaic of Faiths and Sharing Our Stories;” Istanbul Cultural Center Atlanta and Atlantic Institute, November and December 2017.

**Creative Communication**

“Move and Create,” a two-hour/12-week online improvisational and interactive workshop used to expand and enhance participants’ daily creativity; Decatur, Georgia, January-April, 2017.