# An improviser and standup comedian walk into an education summit: How to use comedy to engage your audience

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### Our Backgrounds

### **Jennifer**

- Former professor in recreation and sport management
- Instructional designer for about 10 years
- Stand up comedian for about a year
- Performed at Standup Jam, Battle Royale, The People's Show, Chica Mic, Harvard Medical School, Mindy Mazur's Laughs and Company,
- The office comedian and prankster since 2002



### **Jake**

- Liaison to all MIT PhD students from all departments
- Worked in career services since 2005
- Instructor at 5 colleges and universities
- PhD in Educational Leadership, Masters in Social Work
- Improv Asylum Training Center graduate, ImprovBoston courses, 80+ improv workshops

### Objectives

- Become familiar with standup comedy principles and apply those to develop a plan for how to write, revise, and deliver a presentation that connects with your audience.
- Create a plan for how to cope with failing in front of an audience
- Utilize universal experiences and your personal stories to make your content more relatable and engaging
- Become familiar with improv concepts and apply those to unexpected situations while presenting

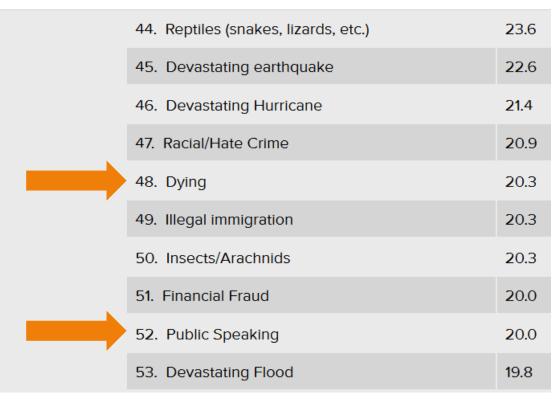




All ∨ Search

On average, those in U.S. fear public speaking similar to dying.

(Chapman University Fear List 2014 – 2017)





# Additional reasons to care about public speaking

- We can't prepare for everything!
- We do weird things when we're nervous



"Laughter relieves stress and boredom, boosts engagement and well-being, and spurs not only creativity and collaboration but also analytic precision and productivity."

- Alison Beard, <u>Harvard Business Review</u>



# Stand up Comedy

- Prepare to fail
- Find the point quickly
- Get out of your head and relate to the audience
  - Be endearing and relatable
  - Universal experiences
- Write, rewrite, practice, write, rewrite
  - Keep a journal
  - Use prompts
  - Practice making fun of the news
- Physical comedy
- Do not apologize for being you you bring your unique view of the world -- Emily Ruskowski



# Improv qualities for successful communication

- Unscripted
- "yes, and" mindset
- Listening
- Connecting with others
- Being present in the moment
- Overcoming doubts "Fake it 'til you make it."
- Energy awareness



I have a confession to make ...





I'm an introvert...

And many of you may wonder...



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# Improv concepts and warm-up activities

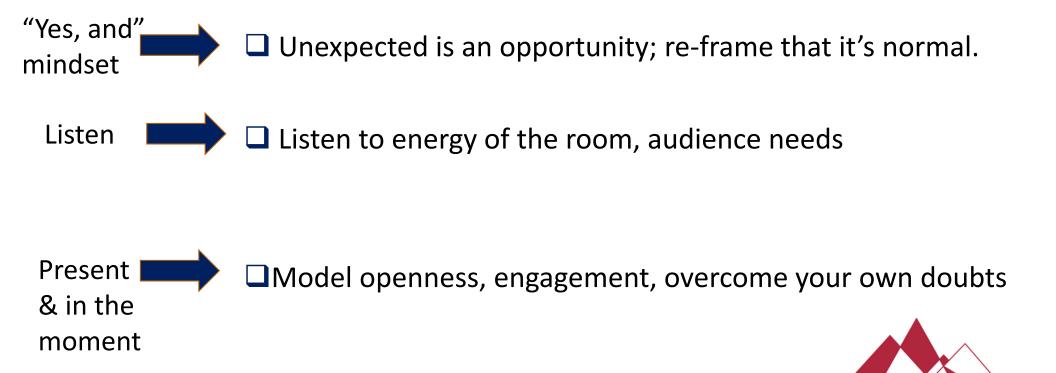
### Related improv concepts:

- Yes, and
- Listening
- Connecting with others
  - 7-count shakeout
  - Greeting, dance move, high five
  - Intro Superpower
  - Word toss

- Being present in the moment
- Overcoming doubts "Fake it 'til you make it."
- Energy awareness
- Word toss with confidence
- Mirror, mirror
- Wah



# Connect with your audience



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