"YES, AND…" : Keeping the Conversation Moving Forward

"Saying 'yes, and…'. can open up all different kinds of conversations with people… giving yourself that permission to actually explore and be open. I'm saying yes to what people are giving me, and then I'm also contributing, adding to it." ~ Tane Danger

conversation skills you will practice:

- careful listening
- affirming
- moving conversations forward
- collaborating / partnering

1 One of the best known improv techniques is the practice of saying, "Yes, and…" on stage. This simple practice helps actors build upon what their partners are offering and in turn keeps the dialogue moving forward in an engaging way. Consider how saying "and" differs from saying "but." Not affirming what was said can put you in a position of opposition and closes the door to possibility. "Yes, and…" is inclusive — a gesture that says "let's build a solution together."

Want to practice this on your own? Challenge yourself to see how many times in a day you can respond "Yes, and…" to others. You might try it during phone calls, with store cashiers, standing in a line, etc.

2 At the end of the day, consider these questions:

- How many times were you able to respond to others this way?
- Did challenging yourself to say "Yes, and" change your interactions with people in any way?
- Did anyone you interact with in this way seem grateful, or even surprised, that you engaged in a way that kept the conversation moving forward?
- Imagine that instead of saying "Yes, and…" to a person, you say it to a situation, even a challenging or unexpected one. How might this practice help you stay engaged?

Want to do more with this activity? If so, add the next few steps.

3 Invite a partner to practice this collaborative story building activity with you.

- One of you will start a story by making an opening statement. Need an idea for an opening statement? Consider one of these: "There's a bight purple light in the sky!", "Let's go see a movie.", or "What a beautiful day to be out on the boat."
- After the first opening statement, take turns building by responding with sentences that begin with "Yes, and…" For example if the opening statement is "What a beautiful day to be out on the boat," the next person could respond, "Yes, and I keep noticing giant green bubbles on the water over there." Try to respond to each other quickly to keep the conversation moving forward.
- Tip: It can make it more fun and engaging by exaggerating parts of the story as it builds.

4 Ask each other:

- How difficult was it to keep the conversation going?
- How did it feel to have someone affirm every statement you made?
- What role did listening play in moving the conversation forward?

CONVERSATION CONSIDERATIONS

How might collaborating with someone using "Yes, and…" to keep a dialogue moving forward assist you in difficult situations or conversations? How might listening to — and affirming — what is said assist you in a hard discussion?"