Use a Rule of Improv To Co-Create Great Adventures with Friends

It strikes me that most of my best group adventures I've lived seem to have followed a core rule of improv acting.

In improv, when your partner suggests a scenario, you never contradict them. You can and should add to their suggestion and build from there. For example, a good improv goes like this:

> *IMPROV PARTNER 1: "There's a giraffe running at us!"*
>
> *IMPROV PARTNER 2: "Yes, and it's wearing a tutu!"*
>
> *IMPROV PARTNER 1: "Yes, and it is clearly running a sadistic secret Russian animal ballet laboratory!"*
>
> *IMPROV PARTNER 2: "Yes, and as secret double agents for MI6, we must escape and report back!"*

Just like that, you've got the bare bones of an interesting improv skit.

It's interesting. You could conceivably still do a skit if you contradicted someone, but it would most likely get stuck in a rut before going anywhere interesting. For example, negation in an (attempted) improv might look like this:

> *IMPROV PARTNER 1: "There's a giraffe running at us!"*
>
> *IMPROV PARTNER 2:"No, it's a lion!"*
>
> *IMPROV PARTNER 1: "….."*

The problem with negation in improv is that it sticks you at the first premise and keeps you from building further. It takes a string of affirmations and additions (see the good example above) before you can get somewhere really interesting with your improv.

So the key to good improv seems to be the "Yes, AND" bit.

This also seems to be the common factor to my best adventures with friends. When you're out exploring and looking for an adventure, don't get stuck at the level of contradiction*. Use dynamic agreement. Affirm and then add.

Here's (roughly, minus details) how my night went:

> ***"I'm going to a public lecture."***
>
> ***"Yes, and I forgot to register for the talk properly on the website, so I'll have to stand in this line."***
>
> ***"Yes, and I'll engage this stranger in conversation while I'm waiting." (She turned out to be pretty cool)***
>
> ***"Yes, and we'll go hang out with our friends who also went to the lecture and talk about economics + politics + religion."***
>
> ***"Yes, and we will drink wine, make late-night breakfast, and watch a cat named Lando Catrissian playing a cat board game**."***

My night went from ordinary to extraordinary due to the combination of saying yes to the randomness and building upon it. I built upon the momentum life gave me (forgetting to register, the lecture) by engaging with curiosity (talking to the stranger) and involving more friends (hanging out afterwards) in the game.

Instead of stopping at one of those levels and fretting about what went wrong (or what could have gone better), I affirmed and added to each step. I said yes. And I had a lovely night as a result.

I'll come back tomorrow night with other rules of improv that seem perfect for co-creating great adventures with friends.

*There are obviously plenty of morally or physically harmful situations where you **should** say no. That's a given.*

*** Hard to explain, but not what you think.*