



THE GREAT AMERICAN LIVER SHOW

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About the Play

The Great American Liver Show is a long form improv game that exposes that “agree to disagree” isn’t enough, that you can be brave in the face of the unknown in order to strengthen community and heal divisions.

It is a long form game that incorporates audience participation, improv, costumes, props and theater tech to tell a fully formed story. The sound/light board operator is in on the improv by being given the power of selecting sound cues as inspired by what is happening on the stage.

Improv games/exercises are activities designed around participants acting or role-playing a scene spontaneously and without a script. Improv has its roots in schools of acting and comedy, and has often been used to warm-up actors and to build collaborative skills.

Improv transcends the stage and is an invaluable skill in general daily life to encourage creativity, quick thinking, and communication skills. They are great at breaking down barriers to collaboration and helping students prepare for being able to navigate their lives and be emotionally healthy humans.

Themes of the play:

- Improv / Teamwork
- Being brave in the face of the unknown (the Sandra Lindsey Quote)
- Exposing the truth
- Expressing emotions without fear
- Problem solving/Healing the root of the matter

In the play, the actors facilitate with the audience to expose the truth behind what is really going on in the story that they are telling, which inevitable reveals that the root of the problems will always be a combo of: Fear/Anxiety, Generational Trauma, Trauma, Attachment style causing emotional inability to express and communicate, etc.

Each of the following activities was crafted to relate to one or more themes of the play. The facilitators can draw from themes of the play to use during the improv games as suggestions or as prompts for the games.

With that in mind, in addition to these activities/games, each age group could be engaged in a discussion about a time in their lives when they didn’t see eye to eye with someone, and how getting to the root of the problem led to a healthy solution.

Activities for Kindergarten-2nd Graders

Activity: Warm-Ups & Check-In

Length: 5 mins

Materials Needed: (Optional) Something to write on, something to write with


At the beginning of each work session, if there is time and the group dynamic allows it, the facilitator can invite the students to give a quick, individual response about how they are feeling (physically/emotionally), how they felt about the play, or what they are looking forward to regarding their work together. This strategy recognizes that our bodies, emotions, and intention shape how we participate in the learning environment, particularly when the exploration involves physical or emotional risk-taking by the players.

The facilitator will explain the activity before everyone starts. Each student in the circle will have an opportunity to share some information about themselves at the beginning of our work. The facilitator gives an open-ended prompt and clear instructions on how much time participants can take to verbally share their answer (unlimited to 30 sec. potentially shown on a visible timer). Next, give a small amount of thinktime for students to consider their responses. Begin with a student who volunteers to go first. Encourage participants to listen intently to their cohorts' words. In general there is very limited (or no) commentary offered from the facilitator or other participants after each individual Check-In. The facilitator may choose to offer a simple acknowledgement. For example: Thank you or That's good to know, I'll keep that in mind today. It is ok if a student does not feel comfortable to share and wants to pass on their turn.

Possible guiding beats:

- Before we begin, take a minute to think about what you want to share with the group. You can write down your answer if that is useful. I'll know you are ready to share when your eyes are back on me.
- Each of you will offer a thought but you choose what you want to share.
- Please remember our classroom commitments to respect and active listening during this activity. If we are having challenges, we will stop and discuss how to move forward in a more positive manner.





Activity: Popcorn

Length: 5-10 minutes

Skills Developed: Energy, Engagement, Collaboration

Materials Needed: None

This is a fun, quick warm-up game that gets the students engaged with the facilitator and moving their bodies. The facilitator guides the students through the activity by telling/showing them what is going to happen in the activity.

Once the students acknowledge that they understand, the game can begin. It begins with everyone squatting on the ground in a circle. Everyone starts as a kernel of popcorn and the floor is the pan. When the pan gets hotter, the popcorn will start to pop. Encourage the students to move together as a group by jumping up and clapping their hands when the corn “pops”, gradually increasing as the pan heats up more and more until everyone yells a final “popcorn” together signaling that the corn has popped. Feel free to add steps to the popping process to layer on different kinds of movements/sounds.

Reflection:

- What did it feel like when the popcorn was changing?
- What are other things that go through stages of growing and changing?



Activity: I Feel Like...

Length: 10 minutes

Skills Developed: Emotional Intelligence, Communication, Vulnerability

Materials Needed: None

This game begins with everyone standing in a circle. The facilitator explains that each student will go around the circle taking a turn saying to the group “I feel...” with an emotion of their choice (ex: “I feel happy”). The students in the circle then act out what that emotion would be like with their faces and bodies. The facilitator should show an example or two to make sure that they understand what the game is asking them to do.

Reflection: This can open up a discussion about feelings, and help the students to recognize both their own feelings, and the feelings of others. You could then talk about how you might help others who are feeling negative emotions. For example, if someone was sad, what might you do to help them see the light?

Activity: Prop Box

Length: 25 minutes

Skills Developed: Creativity, Making Bold Choices, Pantomime & Physicality

Materials Needed: 5-10 random objects from around the room.

In this game, one student chooses a prop and performs a short demonstration for an audience using the item for a purpose other than its intended use. The idea is for the students to begin to see things more abstractly rather than concrete.

The game begins with the students sitting and watching as an audience as the facilitator chooses each student one at a time to choose a prop. Each student is encouraged to say "This isn't a ____, it's a ____" An example would be using a scarf as a wig. The student would say "This isn't a scarf, it's a wig", then the student acts out a few seconds of what it is like to use the prop. The facilitator should show an example or two to make sure that they understand what the game is asking them to do.

Reflection: What object transformations do you most remember from our exploration? Why?

Activity: Ending Reflection/ Check-Out

Length: 5 minutes

Materials Needed: None

At the end of each workshop, if the time and dynamic of the group allows, please consider doing an Ending Reflection wherein the facilitator gathers the students in a final circle, and everyone goes around one at a time saying how they are feeling and sharing something that they will remember from their time together.

Students may also be allowed to check out using a physical gesture instead of words (e.g., thumb up, thumb side, thumb down).

To add a layer, depending on the group dynamic, the facilitator could provide a prompt that engages with a theme or addresses a specific issue.



Activities for 3rd-5th Graders

Activity: Warm-Ups & Check-In

Length: 5 mins

Materials Needed: (Optional) Something to write on, something to write with

At the beginning of each work session, if there is time and the group dynamic allows it, the facilitator can invite the students to give a quick, individual response about how they are feeling (physically/emotionally), how they felt about the play, or what they are looking forward to regarding their work together. This strategy recognizes that our bodies, emotions, and intention shape how we participate in the learning environment, particularly when the exploration involves physical or emotional risk-taking by the players.

The facilitator will explain the activity before everyone starts. Each student in the circle will have an opportunity to share some information about themselves at the beginning of our work. The facilitator gives an open-ended prompt and clear instructions on how much time participants can take to verbally share their answer (unlimited to 30 sec. potentially shown on a visible timer). Next, give a small amount of thinktime for students to consider their responses. Begin with a student who volunteers to go first. Encourage participants to listen intently to their cohorts' words. In general there is very limited (or no) commentary offered from the facilitator or other participants after each individual Check-In. The facilitator may choose to offer a simple acknowledgement. For example: Thank you or That's good to know, I'll keep that in mind today. It is ok if a student does not feel comfortable to share and wants to pass on their turn.

Possible guiding beats:

- Before we begin, take a minute to think about what you want to share with the group. You can write down your answer if that is useful. I'll know you are ready to share when your eyes are back on me.
- Each of you will offer a thought but you choose what you want to share.
- Please remember our classroom commitments to respect and active listening during this activity. If we are having challenges, we will stop and discuss how to move forward in a more positive manner.



Activity: Energy 1-10

Length: 10 minutes

Skills Developed: Focus and Engagement

Materials Needed: None

This game begins with everyone in a circle, squatting down. All participants begin to count 1 to 10 in unison, moving up slowly with increasing energy level. 1 is barely audible, 10 is as loud as possible—with everyone standing straight, hands reaching up. It's important to watch each other and make eye contact to ensure all are at the same energy level. Also, make sure that the increase in energy is very gradual and that everyone stays together with the group.

Experiment with playing again, perhaps this time going from high energy 10 all the way back down to a quiet 1.

Reflection: Describe: What was it like to participate? Analyze: How did you strategize in order to play successfully?

Activity: Accepting Circle

Length: 20 minutes

Skills Developed: Physical and Vocal Expression, Reflection on Change and Evolution, Gaining Perspective

Materials Needed: None

This game begins with everyone in a circle. The facilitator explains that one student starts by making a little gesture, perhaps with a little sound. Then, the person next to them tries to do exactly the same thing they did. This continues around the circle one by one.

Although we expect the gesture/sound not to change, it will!

It is important to note that the students should be trying to copy exactly what the person next to them did, not what the first person did.

The facilitator should encourage the students to watch for movements that suddenly change, like a left/right arm or leg. (This is not supposed to happen, but it will.) Once that happens, it should be accepted by the next player.

Also, watch/listen for little moans or sighs that players might make before or after their turn – these should also be taken over by the next player. Repeat several times with different students taking turns to begin the movement/sound, and changing up the direction that the circle is going in.

Reflection:

- How did we do as a group? Were we successful? Why or why not?
- How did the sound/movement change as it traveled?
- How does this game relate to your understanding of a rumor or gossip?
- What does this game have to do with the way people communicate everyday?

Activity: Freeze, Go and Slow Motion

Length: 30 minutes

Skills Developed: Listening, Body Awareness, Awareness of Others

Materials Needed: None

Define the playing area and invite students to walk silently around the space. Encourage students to be aware of their pathways and change walking patterns often, while remaining aware of the rest of the group. Introduce the prompt “freeze”: students freeze their bodies in place. Then, introduce “go”: students continue walking. Rehearse the prompts until they are understood. Next, introduce “slow motion”, students move their bodies slowly as if they were moving through water or in slow motion. The final prompt is “name” (or anything! It could be animals with animal noises and movements, etc. It could be different every time you play) The students state their “name” out loud once with a small movement of their body. Once all the vocabulary and responses are clear play the game by alternating through different prompts. Next explain that prompts will begin to swap beginning with swapping “freeze” and “go” with each other, so that when students hear “freeze,” they start walking and when they hear “go” they freeze. Switch the actions of “slow motion” with “name.” If desired add more sets of actions depending on the dynamic of the group.

The facilitator can encourage the students not to walk in a circle and to make sure their feet cover the entire space, and ask them to listen carefully so they can process the command quickly before responding. It is important for safety and for the spirit of the game to be aware of others in the walking space at all times. If the students seem like the dynamic allows, the facilitator can invite students to be the person who chooses the prompts for the group.

Reflection:

- What different skills did you have to use to successfully participate in the activity?
- What was challenging about this activity? What was easy? Why?
- What skills did you use in this activity that you want to use in our work today?

Activity: Ending Reflection/ Check-Out

Length: 5 minutes

Materials Needed: None

At the end of each workshop, if the time and dynamic of the group allows, please consider doing an Ending Reflection wherein the facilitator gathers the students in a final circle, and everyone goes around one at a time saying how they are feeling and sharing something that they will remember from their time together.

Students may also be allowed to check out using a physical gesture instead of words (e.g., thumb up, thumb side, thumb down).

To add a layer, depending on the group dynamic, the facilitator could provide a prompt that engages with a theme or addresses a specific issue.

Activities for 6th-8th Graders

Activity: Warm-Ups & Check-In

Length: 5 mins

Materials Needed: (Optional) Something to write on, something to write with

At the beginning of each work session, if there is time and the group dynamic allows it, the facilitator can invite the students to give a quick, individual response about how they are feeling (physically/emotionally), how they felt about the play, or what they are looking forward to regarding their work together. This strategy recognizes that our bodies, emotions, and intention shape how we participate in the learning environment, particularly when the exploration involves physical or emotional risk-taking by the players.

The facilitator will explain the activity before everyone starts. Each student in the circle will have an opportunity to share some information about themselves at the beginning of our work. The facilitator gives an open-ended prompt and clear instructions on how much time participants can take to verbally share their answer (unlimited to 30 sec. potentially shown on a visible timer). Next, give a small amount of thinktime for students to consider their responses. Begin with a student who volunteers to go first. Encourage participants to listen intently to their cohorts' words. In general there is very limited (or no) commentary offered from the facilitator or other participants after each individual Check-In. The facilitator may choose to offer a simple acknowledgement. For example: Thank you or That's good to know, I'll keep that in mind today. It is ok if a student does not feel comfortable to share and wants to pass on their turn.

Possible guiding beats:

- Before we begin, take a minute to think about what you want to share with the group. You can write down your answer if that is useful. I'll know you are ready to share when your eyes are back on me.
- Each of you will offer a thought but you choose what you want to share.
- Please remember our classroom commitments to respect and active listening during this activity. If we are having challenges, we will stop and discuss how to move forward in a more positive manner.



Activity: Yes, Let's

Playtime/length: 10 minutes

Skills developed: Teamwork, Relationship Building, Saying "Yes...and"

Materials needed: None

The game begins with the students facing the facilitator as they explain the game and show examples of how to begin. Together, they pick a group activity, such as throwing a party or organizing a picnic. One student begins onstage alone and starts by saying, "Let's _____," filling in what they want to do. Then, they pantomime the actions of the activity/action that they said they wanted to do. (ex: they say "Let's brush our teeth!" and they pantomime brushing their teeth. The facilitator can help by suggesting a single movement or an activity that everyone can do.)

A second player jumps in, saying, "Let's _____." (It's doing something else– to advance the group activity.) Both players say, "Yes, let's do that," and start doing whatever was suggested. The third player jumps in and suggests what to do, and again, all the players loudly agree to do it and actually do it. Continue till everyone has suggested something. (In another variation with this game, the students are directed to mill around, walking in space. A volunteer calls out a suggestion: "Hey, let's try on hats." The group then responds with great enthusiasm, "Yes, let's!" Everyone then pretends to try on hats until someone else calls out a new request, such as, "Let's all jump up and down." The group again responds "Yes, let's!" and jumps up and down until a new suggestion is made and accepted.)

Reflection:

- What was the easiest part of this activity for you? What was the hardest part? Why?
- After every suggestion, the group said, "Yes!" How does receiving positive feedback feel?
- What situations can you think of in which people (classmates) might appreciate positive feedback? What might be the consequences of that positive input?



Activity: Group Environment

Length: 20 minutes

Skills Developed: Environment Exploration, Being Present in the Moment, Building Ensemble

Materials Needed: None

The game begins with the students facing the facilitator as they explain the game and show examples of how to begin. One student enters a space and pantomimes an action that defines an environment (ex: a person begins pantomiming painting a house). Once another student knows what that environment is (or makes up what they think it is), they enter the space and perform a complementary action. This keeps going until the entire group is in the environment. Remind students that the key is to create a complete picture. They all have to work together in the moment and not try to add something that destroys the environment.

Once all of the students are in the environment, call on students to ask what they are doing and have them verbally explain while they are pantomiming the movement.

Reflection:

- What did we do in this activity?
- How did each person contribute to make the entire environment come to life?
- Why is it essential to collaborative work to be aware of what each component contributes to the bigger picture?

Activity: Questions From a Hat

Length: 20 minutes

Skills Developed: Quick Thinking, Time Management, Collaboration

Materials needed: Slips of paper with prompts, hat or bag to hold prompts

Prior to this activity, the facilitator will write open-ended/fill-in-the-blank prompts on slips of paper and place them into a hat/bag/etc. These prompts may be silly, serious or range between the two. (i.e. "My favorite flavor of ice cream is...." or "If I could travel anywhere in the world, I'd go to....?" or "I am afraid when...")

Gather students in a circle and explain that the hat will be passed around, and when it gets to them they must draw a question from the hat and answer it as quickly as possible. There are no wrong answers, but they will only have a certain amount of time to get the hat all the way around the circle. The game is played for three rounds. Inform them of their time at the end of each, and encourage them to go faster each time. Another option is to have participants limit their responses to three words.

Encourage the students with possible coaching: "Don't think too hard; just say the first thing that comes to mind." "Anything you say is right."

Reflection:

- How did you feel when I said any answer was right?
- What are some ways we worked together to get the hat around faster?
- How did you censor yourself?
- What is the value of saying the first thing that comes to mind?

Activity: Ending Reflection/ Check-Out

Length: 5 minutes

Materials Needed: None

At the end of each workshop, if the time and dynamic of the group allows, please consider doing an Ending Reflection wherein the facilitator gathers the students in a final circle, and everyone goes around one at a time saying how they are feeling and sharing something that they will remember from their time together.

Students may also be allowed to check out using a physical gesture instead of words (e.g., thumb up, thumb side, thumb down).

To add a layer, depending on the group dynamic, the facilitator could provide a prompt that engages with a theme or addresses a specific issue.



Activities for 9th Graders-Adults

Activity: Warm-Ups & Check-In

Length: 5 mins

Materials Needed: (Optional) Something to write on, something to write with

At the beginning of each work session, if there is time and the group dynamic allows it, the facilitator can invite the students to give a quick, individual response about how they are feeling (physically/emotionally), how they felt about the play, or what they are looking forward to regarding their work together. This strategy recognizes that our bodies, emotions, and intention shape how we participate in the learning environment, particularly when the exploration involves physical or emotional risk-taking by the players.

The facilitator will explain the activity before everyone starts. Each student in the circle will have an opportunity to share some information about themselves at the beginning of our work. The facilitator gives an open-ended prompt and clear instructions on how much time participants can take to verbally share their answer (unlimited to 30 sec. potentially shown on a visible timer). Next, give a small amount of thinktime for students to consider their responses. Begin with a student who volunteers to go first. Encourage participants to listen intently to their cohorts' words. In general there is very limited (or no) commentary offered from the facilitator or other participants after each individual Check-In. The facilitator may choose to offer a simple acknowledgement. For example: Thank you or That's good to know, I'll keep that in mind today. It is ok if a student does not feel comfortable to share and wants to pass on their turn.

Possible guiding beats:

- Before we begin, take a minute to think about what you want to share with the group. You can write down your answer if that is useful. I'll know you are ready to share when your eyes are back on me.
- Each of you will offer a thought but you choose what you want to share.
- Please remember our classroom commitments to respect and active listening during this activity. If we are having challenges, we will stop and discuss how to move forward in a more positive manner.



Activity: Sound Ball

Length: 5-20 minutes

Skills developed: Engagement, Ensemble Building, Pantomime

Materials Needed: None

The game begins with everyone in a circle. The facilitator demonstrates by pretending to hold a ball in their hand. "Show" this imaginary ball to everyone. Tell players that they will be throwing this ball around. Explain that you are going to throw the ball to one of the players. -Before you throw the ball, you will make a special sound.

-Instruct everyone to keep their eyes on the ball and get ready to catch it. Before catching the ball, the player should make the same sound that you made.

-Make a sound and "throw" the ball to someone. Make sure that this player makes the same sound and catches the ball.

-Explain that the catcher can now throw the ball to any other player, making a new sound as the ball is thrown. The receiving player repeats the sound and catches the ball. This player throws the ball to any other player, making a new sound.

-Once the ball is being thrown around at a fairly brisk pace, introduce another imaginary ball and start throwing it. When the group gets proficient at it, you can have three or four balls in play.

Feel free to stop the game when the group gets into a flow.

Since there are no such things as "good" and "bad" sounds, this is an opportunity to practice "throwing out" ideas or sounds without worrying what they look like or sound like.

Reflection:

- What did you notice about yourself as you participated in this activity? What did you notice about the group? What kind of balls did we imagine?
- What did we need to do in order to be successful at this activity? (Useful to reference aesthetic skills here, detail, imagination)
- Where else in our work might we also use these skills?



Activity: One Word Story

Length: 10-20 minutes

Skills Developed: Creativity, Storytelling, Listening, Story Structure

Materials Needed: None

In this game, the students work together to tell a story, one word at a time. The game begins in a circle. Together the group decides what they will title the story (ex: The lost frog), then the facilitator selects someone to begin the story with only one word, then each person goes around the circle saying one word only to advance the story. The facilitator can end the story at any time, then select another student to go first and begin a new story. As with most games, the group will get better at telling a story together after you play it for a few times. The facilitator should encourage the students to choose words that will naturally further along the story, rather than force a “cool” or “interesting” word.

Reflection:

- What makes a good story?
- What worked about the stories we told, what didn't? Why?
- How can we apply our knowledge about story structure to conflict resolution?

Activity: Count Together

Length: 10-20 minutes

Skills Developed: Awareness, Patience, Listening, Goal Setting/Reaching

Materials Needed: None

The game begins in a circle. The facilitator introduces the activity: Our task is to count from 1 to 10 out loud, in random order, with each group member offering one number at a time. If two people say a number at the same time, the game stops and begins again with 1.

Explain that anyone can say a number whenever they wish, although they cannot say two numbers in a row. To begin, ask everyone to close their eyes or focus on the floor in the center of the circle, then say, Go!

The facilitator might set an initial goal: “Can we get to 10?” Then, push the group to count to 15 or further! It can be productive to stop the game and discuss group strategy. Part of the learning is the groups' discovery about how to solve the difficult task.

Reflection:

- On a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being very successful and 1 being less, how did we do as a group? Why?
- When did you choose to say a number? When did you choose to stay silent?
- What skills or strategies did you use to be successful in this activity?
- How might we use these same skills/strategies in other areas of our lives?

Activity: Soundscapes

Length: 30 mins

Skills Developed: Vocal Variety, Rhythm, Repetition, Listening, Group Awareness

Materials Needed: paper, writing utensils

The facilitator invites students to name/describe sounds they might hear in a specific context. What are sounds you might hear in the rainforest? Writes students' ideas on a board or piece of paper for the group to see and reference. Once the group has brainstormed a number of ideas, the facilitator will ask for volunteers to vocally perform different sounds, ideally with similar sounds being seated together. Share and practice conducting hand signals to crescendo (get louder), decrescendo (get softer) and cut off (stop) all sound. Build a soundscape, inviting students to follow hand directions for: The Rainforest. Reflect on what students noticed about their work. Consider how different vocal and musical choices communicate a specific tone or quality to the listener; invite the group to describe the quality of the soundscape they produced. Choose another location. Repeat the same directed procedure as before, or invite the group to spontaneously create the soundscape, without pre-listing sounds or pre-determining parts. Facilitator can suggest the students draw on their past experiences and memories to imagine what this place might sound like. Listen to the group; add new sounds or shift your sound to explore all possible aspects of a place.

Other Variations:

- Have students select the location or take on the role of the conductor.
- Make a dreamscape. Explore a character's inner thoughts or fears by creating a dream montage of sound that illuminates the inner feelings or struggle of a character or group of people dealing with a difficult decision or problem.

Reflection:

- What types of sounds did we use to establish a location?
- Why were these the sounds that we picked? How did they help to evoke a sense of place?
- Where else might you hear these same kinds of sounds? Why?



Activity: Ending Reflection/ Check-Out

Length: 5 minutes

Materials Needed: None

At the end of each workshop, if the time and dynamic of the group allows, please consider doing an Ending Reflection wherein the facilitator gathers the students in a final circle, and everyone goes around one at a time saying how they are feeling and sharing something that they will remember from their time together.

Students may also be allowed to check out using a physical gesture instead of words (e.g., thumb up, thumb side, thumb down).

To add a layer, depending on the group dynamic, the facilitator could provide a prompt that engages with a theme or addresses a specific issue.

