



Stand Up Comedy Breakout Session

Mona Aburmishan & Marshall Chin

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How does stand-up comedy really honor CYFAR's vision and overall mission of the best quality of care?

“CYFAR sustainable community programs can foster a protective environment which allows marginalized youth to feel safe to dream and trace their path by incorporating strategies that promote hope.”

Defining HOPE:

/hōp/

noun

a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

"he looked through her belongings in the hope of coming across some information"

ARCHAIC

a feeling of trust.

"our private friendship, upon hope and affiance whereof, I presume to be your petitioner"

verb

want something to happen or be the case.

"he's **hoping for** an offer of compensation"

Defining COMEDY:

/'kāmədē/

noun

professional entertainment consisting of jokes and satirical sketches, **intended** to make an audience laugh.

the humorous or amusing aspects of something. ["advertising people see the comedy in their work"]

a play characterized by its humorous or satirical tone and its depiction of amusing people or incidents, in which the characters ultimately triumph over adversity. ["Shakespeare's comedies"]

the dramatic genre represented by comedies.

"satiric comedy"

ARCHAIC

a feeling of trust.

"our private friendship, upon hope and affiance whereof, I presume to be your petitioner"

IT SEEMS, at the root: *comedy* and *hope* are very much related – especially when generated in a safe environment! When a comedian tells a story, the intention is to generate a feeling, a sense of excitement and expectation that something amazing is going to happen. In order to do this, the comedian has to make the audience feel safe, feel seen and feel understood as part of a close community with common beliefs and social agreements. Comedy is a collective conversation between three groups: the comedians, the audience and the venue (comedy club). All three parties are invested in having a good time and witnessing laughter in a safe way.



The following comedy workshop is part of a new program called, *Class Clowns* which are coordinated workshops, exercises and experiences for discovery using the “Comedy Club” environment as a safe place for intense and transformative discussions that might inspire teachers, healthcare professionals, care takers or anyone interested in unique and effective tools for well-rounded human relatability, accountability and transformation.

FUN FACT: 99% of professional comedians have day jobs and are often hiding in plain sight as professionals in a field distinctly different than comedy; and pull from their real life for content. I have worked with comedians who are also teachers, lawyers, politicians, neuroscientists, heads of major universities, doctors and pharmacists.

RIGHT NOW, many of us can see and feel that today, within this amazing CYFAR event we’ve had plenty of opportunities for fun light, relatable, kind conversation, using humor, in all sorts of interactions. Typically, in social settings or gatherings like these we use humor in language to relate to one another in the hopes of a deeper connection. The same is true for all Stand up Comedians. Stand up comedy is an art form and professional service that is rooted in an environment where *highly pressurized* people pleasing between strangers is happening! Sounds like everyone in here!

In some ways, the stand up comedy club can feel like a town hall meeting where only a hand full of representatives get to talk about whatever random thing that comes-to-mind; while the audience agrees or disagrees through, loud noises, laughter and clapping. Oddly enough, this intense relationship is a prime environment to explore challenging belief systems within a community, a city or a country.

The following workshop was initially created to help all types of students explore their comedy voice in a safe way, allowing students the experience of performing live for an audience while mitigating the possible fear of public speaking. What showed up after years of performing and teaching stand-up comedy professionally is an opportunity to share access to breakthroughs and deep self-reflective transformations that are never shown on the comedy stage but experienced in by the comedian in a comedy class. The exercises below are designed to safely play with perspectives, and allow you to truly experience the audience, the comedian and the heckler’s perspective and what is possible for discovery around:

- Human connection and diverse populations
- Addressing multi-level drivers to inequality (especially structural)
- Ability to recognize complex intersectional relationships (ie power dynamics between the club, the comedian, the audience is akin to what?)
- ALL WITH THE KNOWING of safety in storytelling and roleplaying.

These semi-leadership training courses are built to empower others to identify their true voice, leadership style, and learn mind-set techniques to **remove obstacles** easily. Ideally, to have participants engage in fun exercises that give a unique way to **relate to their peers**; all through the guise of stand-up comedy and improv. Students suddenly feel more empowered to take on anything of challenge, by *finding the funny through acknowledgment techniques* as well as new tools to shift a perspective of a situation into something that works. Participants will further explore new ways of:

- Public-speaking | Leadership | Listening skills | Organization & Goal Setting | Focus | Face-to-face Interaction
- Decision making | Community Team Building | Increased Engagement | Discretionary Effort | Conflict Resolution

Using a mixture of improvisation games, physical movement, small group discussion, and performance training, students learn skills by doing.

Expectations and Goals

The measurement of the success of is based on the participants’ themselves and the goals they establish at the beginning of the experience. Most importantly, an effective class is one where participants’ have enjoyed learning from a new perspective and feel comfortable relating powerfully with their colleagues and/or “clients” as well as have the initial tools to recreate any stressful environment or situation to one of empowerment and growth.

At the end of this experience participants should be able to SENSE SUCCESS:

Feel: more connected to their colleagues; and see the importance of their role in the community;



See: challenges as opportunities for discovery by accessing questions that may lead to a better understanding of any situation – challenging or not;

Create: and ReCreate someone’s perspective – to clearly see how THEY see the world and be able to communicate that to anyone effectively;

Listen: Methods for attuned focus as a necessary component to a harmonious environment; opportunities for more clarity into one-another’s perspectives.

Speak: Have access to skills and ideas used to shift frustration into funny and a more workable personal state and environment.

Instinct! Have insight and tools necessary to create empowering conversations through acknowledgment.

Required Materials

Comedy is born in observation, therefore the most important materials needed for this course are:

- **YOUR PARTICIPATION – I _____ AGREE TO PLAY FULLY IN THE CLASS. THROUGH CONTRIBUTION OR OPEN AND WILLING OBSERVATION.**
- The ability to observe the world around you and document what you notice, using:
 - *pen & paper or other any digital method*
- Openness to sharing insight gained in discussions with one another in a kind way.

NOTE PAPER [IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY] [LET US KNOW IF YOU NEED A PEN!]

Today's Workshop Layout & Schedule

- I. Opening – Mona Aburmishan HOSTING [5 minutes]
- II. Co-Host and Comedian – Marshall Chin [5 minutes]

III. Intro Session 1

IV. *Exercise 1: SKILL SET VS MIND SET* - “Give it Up For!” [10 minutes]

Participants will learn the difference between *skill-set* and *mind-set* in all environments by a simple “Give it Up For!” introduction exercise to get related and connected in a fun new way.

- a. **Introductions:** imagine you're at a comedy club, and you are being introduced; come prepared with 2 truths and 1 lie about you, for **your partner** to introduce you with on stage, in front of a microphone.
 - i. **SKILL SET:** Each participant will be paired up and asked to introduce one another as if they are a comedian about to take the stage; then the partner's switch. The remaining participants will act as the audience and cheer on the introduction – **<Mona & Marshall will demonstrate>**
 - 1. The intention behind this exercise is to get related to one-another and create some fun by deciphering which of the information about the participant is truth from fiction.
 - ii. **MIND SET:** Participants will only need their open listening how to clearly and effectively introduce their colleague, clueing in specifically to:
 - 1. **How does your colleague pronounce or prefer the group to pronounce their name;**
 - 2. What are two truths and one lie about your partner – with special emphasis on your colleague's creativity (the lie) and what unique accolades are they proud of;
 - 3. How can we openly acknowledge our colleague; SIMILARLY – how can we openly accept acknowledgement!
- b. **Discussion** – partner discussion and then group sharing about the impact of **Session 1**
 - i. **SKILL SET** – possible discussion questions...
 - 1. What does this exercise have to do with helping you care for children and families?
 - 2. What did you learn about yourself?
 - 3. What did you learn about your fellow participants?
 - 4. What does this exercise have to do with the SENSE SUCCESS goals we mentioned earlier?
 - a. Feel, See, Create, Listen, Speak, Instinct

V. *Break – Back to Mona & Marshall: Introduce 'Heckler' concept*

- o What are common *distractions* while teaching Marshall?
- o What Measures can be put in place to block out or Allow Hecklers?
- o What needs are important to keep harmony in the environment to keep healthy boundaries around Hecklers?

VI. *Exercise 2: SKILL SET VS MIND SET* - “The Heckler!” [10 minutes]

“*The Heckler*” a common part of every comedy club experience is THE HECKLER, an audience member who loudly interrupts the comedy show to talk back to the comedian, to distract the audience and/or to gain attention for themselves; thereby interrupting the flow of the show and impact of the comedian.

- a. **SKILL SET:** Each participant will AGAIN be paired up [with new partners] and asked to introduce one another as if they are a comedian about to take the stage; when the participant takes the stage they will begin



to talk – saying one special thing they like – then the partners’ switch. **HOWEVER** – this time Mona will be the Heckler distracting the introductions <**Mona will demonstrate**>

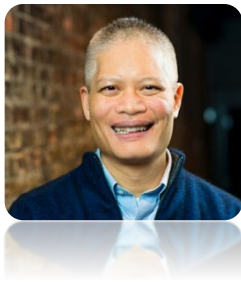
- i. The intention behind this exercise is to see the impact of how one person in the audience distracting the rest can create unnecessary tension in the room and the ability for the audience to focus on the person at the microphone.
 - ii. And how to powerfully navigate a collective NO to bullying, that leaves the comedian on stage and the “heckler” feeling good.
- b. **MIND SET:** Participants will only need their open listening how to clearly and effectively find ways to block out the annoyance or choose to ask THE HECKLER to be quiet. Important take a way:
1. **What does this exercise have to do with helping you care for children and families?**
 2. **How is a heckler helpful? Or not helpful?**
 3. **Where or what are you hecklers?**
 4. **What is the impact of The Heckler, good or bad?**
 5. **What’s the best method to acknowledge a Heckler?**
 6. **How does the environment now feel after the Heckler is quiet?**

VII. **Conclusion: Acknowledgment Discussion and Group Reflection** [10 minutes – end of session]

Homework – Note times where you noticed your heckler and how you converted frustration into funny and what is the possible impact of doing this for yourself and others!

The Team

Marshall Chin, MD, MPH



Marshall Chin, MD, MPH, Richard Parrillo Family Professor of Healthcare Ethics at the University of Chicago, is a practicing general internist and health services researcher who has dedicated his career to advancing health equity through interventions at individual, organizational, community, and policy levels. Through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Advancing Health Equity program, Dr. Chin collaborates with teams of state Medicaid agencies, Medicaid managed care organizations, and frontline healthcare organizations to implement payment reforms to support and incentivize care transformations that advance health equity. He also partners with eight urban and rural communities to integrate medical and social care to reduce diabetes disparities through the Merck Foundation Bridging the Gap program. Dr. Chin was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2017.

Dr. Chin has trained in improv and standup comedy at The Revival theater (Chicago), Cold Tofu (Los Angeles), and Science Riot. He is a member of The Excited State improv troupe which combines short-form improv games with science communication for the general public, and has performed standup at the Field Museum, Den Theatre, Comedy Bowl Tonight, and Laughter and Local Politics event. Dr. Chin and his colleagues have used improv and standup comedy, graphic medicine, and Theatre of the Oppressed to teach health professional trainees about advancing health equity, with publications in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, *BMC Medical Education*, and forthcoming in *Academic Medicine*.

Mona Aburmishan



Mona Comedy, Inc.



Mona Aburmishan is America's true international comedian born and raised in Chicago. Mona has used her experience in live comedy production throughout Chicago to cultivate an eye for audience engagement, education and media productions that leave all audiences feeling heard, understood and transformed. We might want to call her more of an Edu-tainer, than just a comedian!

Mona is the first Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian Woman to perform in some of the world's most significant institutions, such as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Centre *twice* and throughout the soon-to-be-unoccupied Holy Land - most notably in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah. "Delivering jokes in war is a Divine gift!"

She is a significant draw and tours throughout South Africa, Europe and the United Kingdom as well as the Middle East having been featured multiple times as the key headliner for significant media organizations in Dubai currently being broadcast throughout the Arab and Muslim world. Mona is clearly becoming a voice of change for women of her socio-ethnic and religious groups.

Mona has a Masters in International Development and loves learning and speaking multiple languages; while developing a unique eye for global comedy. As a published author, Mona is keen to use and teach key principles developed in years of comedy to aid kids, adults and those of special abilities to face and overcome fear and the perception of fear of others especially while speaking publicly for effective conflict resolution, self expression as well as to alleviate income disparities amongst all communities. She's currently building her own comedy club in Chicago, and the West Bank and focusing on those that need to feel safe speaking their truth in a free playful environment.

In honor of our more holistic era and mindfulness, as a healer Mona has also become a professional shaman, licensed energy healer and Emotion Code Practitioner in service to the many entertainers and youth who seek the spotlight but know little of the isolation, depression and mental wellness it can aggravate.

Mona is committed to transforming the globe; one smile at a time and is currently working on building a revolutionary comedy academy in her second hometown of Khalil, Palestine! With her luck in her endeavors ☐☐☐