

**“Too much  
formaldehyde spoils  
the body”**

Play and the  
Improvisational Creation  
of Zones of Proximal  
Development



# Play and Human Development

- Development is the activist, relational, qualitative transformation of the given circumstances, the existing environment, the totality” Newman and Holzman (1997)
- Play: Creating environments to be who we are and who we are becoming—to “be a head taller” Vygotsky (1978)
- Rules and Imaginary Situations



# Improvisation

- We are all improvisers
- Living scripted lives
- Improv Comedy—a tool for (re) learning how to play
- Collectively creating through the giving and receiving of offers
- “Yes and...”



# Yes and...

Cathy: It was 6am on Wednesday morning and Sally got up out of bed.

Louise: Yes and she put on her pajamas.

Jessica: Yes and she also put on a pair of snow boots.

Evelyn: Yes and she tripped over her laces.

Carrie: Yes and fell flat on her face.

Sonia: Yes and she got up and went into the kitchen.

Jenny: Yes and took the frozen peas out of the freezer.

Hillary: Yes and she put them in the sink to thaw.


Matthew: Yes and took out the butter for melting them.



## Too Much Formaldehyde Spoils the Body

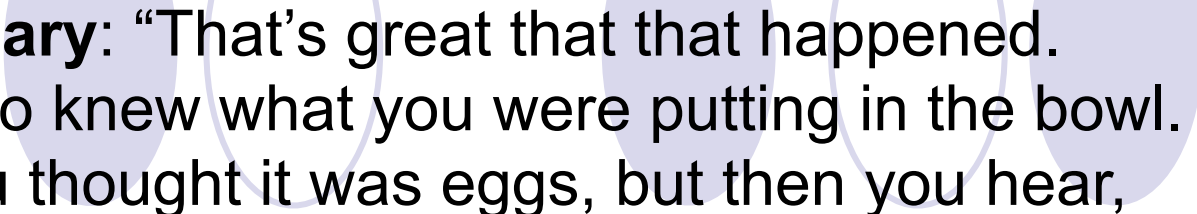
Sonia begins the scene by pantomiming putting something over her head and then begins moving her hands around in a circle in front of her (from my vantage point it looks like she has put on an apron and is now mixing something in a bowl). Jessica comes onto the stage and starts to ask her a question, “What are you doing ...Woops?” She steps back.

Hillary: “Great catch, good for you Jessica. You tell her what she is doing. She made the first offer, the physical movement is the first offer, and you build with that offer. You say, “yes and.”



Sonia keeps moving her arms around in a circle. Jessica starts to step back onto the stage; she stops and says to Hillary, “Now she went too far into her thing...” Hillary says, “You saw what she did and we saw what she did, we’re with you.” Jessica, “But I was on a different thing...” Cathy, “Not anymore.”

Jessica nods her head and then steps back onto the stage again, “You know you can’t mix up formaldehyde that much if you are going to prepare a body. Too much formaldehyde spoils the body.”



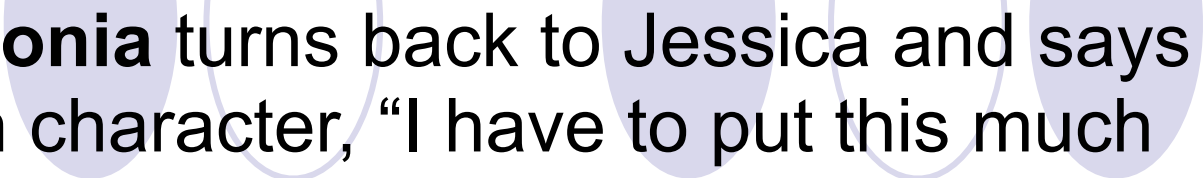
**Hillary:** “That’s great that that happened. Who knew what you were putting in the bowl. You thought it was eggs, but then you hear, ‘you can’t mix the formaldehyde that much if you are preparing a body.’ So now you know that it is formaldehyde and you have to build with that.”

**Sonia,** “So I have to go with what she’s saying, not what I’m thinking?”

**Hillary,** “Yes, yes.”

**Cathy:** “Exactly, just like your physical activity was an offer, her words are another offer. You build with that offer. It is formaldehyde!”

**Hillary:** “But what is so great about this is that you as a team are going to make this work, no matter what. It’s a great opportunity to now justify what Jessica has said.

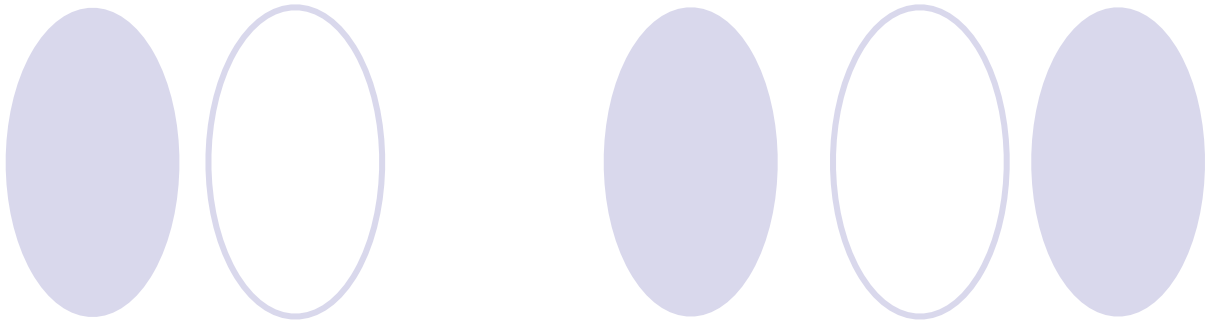


**Sonia** turns back to Jessica and says in character, “I have to put this much formaldehyde in to prepare the dead body of your father.”

**Jessica**, “Mother, I know he would have been pleased that you are carrying on his work here at the funeral home.”

**Cathy** says, “Great” and the ‘audience’ claps.





There *is* a duck in the scene and when I deal with the fact that there is a duck in the scene, even though I didn't want the duck to be in the scene, then we can make something happen and then the scene has a shot.