



Please Say Yes!

As I mentioned in Volume 11, Issue 1 (go to www.RosanneBane.com and click on Newsletter if you didn't see that issue), improv classes at the Brave New Workshop opened unexpected new possibilities in my writing. I went because I thought it would be a good way to relax, a legitimate way to play and have fun. I did have fun, and I recognized how wonderfully the principles of improv performance apply to other forms of creative expression. I learned that “we never have nothing,” which I discussed in the earlier issue and the significance and value of saying “Yes and...”



The improv principle of “Yes, and...” means that the performers (we're using that term pretty loosely in my case) strive to agree with what the other performers invent in the course of an improv scene. It's more about attitude than vocabulary. It's not that an actor will never use the word “No” or won't ever argue with another actor; it's that if one actor invents the fact that the empty stage is the deck of a ship, the other actor won't in effect say “No, this is really a laundromat.” If a performer ‘declares’ there is an invisible table where he's diapering an invisible baby by going through those motions, another performer doesn't just walk across the stage as if the table and baby don't exist.

The principle of “Yes, and...” challenges performers to remain true to their instincts of who they are and what they're doing in a scene and still respect the other performers' ideas. It challenges them to not only acknowledge the objects and situations other performers create, but to add to them.

So if Actor G is thinking “I'm twenty years old and doing my laundry for the first time,” and Actor L says and does things that establishes that the stage is a

ship, then Actor G adjusts his thinking to “Yes, I'm twenty years old doing my laundry for the first time AND we're on a ship.” So Actor G says “Aye, aye captain! I couldn't find the dryers, I guess that's what all these lines are for.” This addition, the “and” part of “Yes and,” moves the scene forward. Denying his partner's contribution would kill the creative impulse that drives the scene. Abandoning his own perspective that he's doing laundry wouldn't help the scene either. Finding a way to combine the two perspectives opens opportunities for surprising and hopefully funny interactions.

Applying the Principle to Any Creative Activity

What the “Yes, and...” principle does for all forms of creativity is move us past the internal critic. You know, the voice that's always saying some variation of “No!” Maybe you tell yourself “That's not creative enough, that's been done before.” Or “That's stupid, that's no way to start a paragraph or a painting or a garden.” Or “There isn't enough happening here, I should give this up and start something else.”

We have a multitude of ways we say “No” to our creativity and they all come from our fear. We say “No” in a misguided attempt to keep ourselves safe.

Following the “Yes, and” principle, on the other hand, requires that we risk being foolish, doing it “wrong” or investing time and energy into a scene or project that might not take us anywhere. Ultimately, saying “Yes, and” requires that we trust ourselves and our creative process.

Saying “No” to our creativity seems easier, but it actually takes a great deal of energy because it denies reality. “When you struggle against this moment, you're actually struggling against the entire universe,”

writes Deepak Chopra in *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. Finding ways to say “Yes, and” is an application of what Chopra calls the Law of Least Effort. Acceptance, Chopra points out, is an essential component of the law of least effort.

“Instead, you can make the decision that today you will not struggle against the whole universe by struggling against this moment. This means that your *acceptance* of this moment is total and complete. You accept things as they *are*, not as you wish they were in this moment. This is important to understand. You can *wish* for things in the future to be different, but in *this* moment you have to accept things as they are.”

The Power of a Well Placed “No”

I don’t want to suggest that saying “Yes” is always good and saying “No” is always bad. In fact, we can’t say yes to our creativity without the ability and willingness to say no to distractions and boundary incursions. Sometimes it seems impossible to say no to the multitude of activities and obligations that compete for our time and attention. But as we highlighted in the Move Through Resistance workshop in April, allowing distractions to keep us from expressing our creativity is one form of resistance.

It is your right and your responsibility to say “No” when you need to say “Yes” to something more significant. The inability to know when to say no and when to say it loud and clear means that your life will become a meaningless stream of fulfilling other people’s priorities. Anyone can clean the refrigerator, but if you don’t do the creative work you were born to do, it won’t get done and the world will be the poorer. And all because you refuse to find the courage to use a word that any two-year-old can master.

Notice that what makes a “No” well placed is that creates the space and time for you to say “Yes, and” to something or someone that matters more to you.

Writing My Way Through “Yes and”

One opportunity I had to say “Yes, and” to my writing occurred when the phrase “It’s perfect cowpie weather” popped into my head. I knew it was Peregrine, one of my characters, saying that to another character, Jaxson. With my mind’s ear, I heard Jaxson, reply “Cowpies! You don’t even have cows on this planet. What do you know about cowpies?”

Avoiding the Land of No



The “Land of No” is what I call the mental place where you focus on all the reasons you can’t do something. It is essential to recognize the gap between where you are and where you want to be so you can get a mental map of the terrain and identify what steps you need to take to get where you want to go. But, and this is a significant but, focusing too much attention on the gap keeps you spinning in circles in the Land of No.

The way out? Spend just enough time attending to the gap to identify action steps and then put your attention elsewhere. Motivational Interviewing is a technique that helps you do just that. MI directs your attention to all the reasons you can take the action steps you need to take. It’s a simple technique that is amazingly effective.

You’ll learn how Motivational Interviewing works and how to apply it to yourself to keep you moving toward your creative goals in the June 11 Motivate Yourself workshop. (Please see page 4.)

Motivational Interviewing and Polarity Management (the topic of the November 19 workshop) are the two tools that I credit with giving me the attitude shift that initiated and maintained my commitment to become fit and strong. I’m 50 pounds closer to where I want to be and still committed to playing this new game. That’s why I’m so passionate about sharing these tools with you – I know they work! Using them, I resolved the ambiguity that nothing else had shifted for decades.



Have you been spending too much time in the Land of No? Have you felt stuck or ambiguous about a creative change in your life? Then clear your calendar and sign yourself up for the June and November workshops!

That grabbed my attention. I said yes to that bit of dialogue by playing with it in my imagination and then recording it during my writing time. It was a fun, light exchange that demonstrated the easing of animosity between the two characters and let them engage in verbal play instead of verbal fencing.

But a day or two later, I started to wonder if the scene was too pleasant. Did it have enough drama? Where was the scene going? Deleting the page and a half of dialogue would have been giving in to the “No” impulse. I would have kept myself safe from writing a boring scene and looking foolish. But I would have abandoned the opportunity to find a way to say “Yes and” and in so doing, salvage the scene.

Armed with months of improv play, I knew enough to say “Yes, and” to the questions without letting them shut me down. I entertained questions about where Peregrine and Jaxson were going, who they might meet along the way and where the conflict was going to come from if not from the two of them. I had no idea how to answer those questions and that made me uncomfortable. But instead of making the questions go away by giving up on the scene, I kept striving for ways to say yes. Eventually the questions showed me a wonderful scene that was filled with action, provided new information, allowed secondary characters to play on stage and foreshadowed upcoming worries for the main characters.

I never would have discovered the scene that I like so much and that does so much important work in the novel if I had said no to that first impulse. Even giving the line about cowpie weather to Jaxson, who has seen cows, would have been a subtle way of censoring the first impulse. Instead, I gave Jaxson my question “What do you know about cows?” to keep the intriguing statement viable and to say “Yes, and.” I let the other questions inform the writing, not stop it.

Where Will “Yes and” Take You?

You never know how something is going to work when you’re in the midst of creating or discovering it. Do you think there was a big demand for lightbulbs before Tom Edison figured out how to make them?

You can’t wait for guarantees if you want to be creative. You have to risk following your own impulses for a little while everyday. And not only follow them, but follow them open-heartedly. Don’t hold back. Say “Yes, and.” The “Yes” makes the

discovery possible. The “and” shows you where the first silly or weird idea can take you.

For me it went a little like this: “Yes, it’s perfect weather for cowpies, and Peregrine has never seen a cow. Yes, she’s never seen a cow, and it’s a saying her great-great-grandfather used and it’s just stayed in the family. Yes, Jaxson and Peregrine are going to go pick up cowpies and along the way, they run into one of Peregrine’s least favorite people, and...” I had no idea where that scene would end when I started. Because I was willing to keep saying “Yes, and...” I gave myself the gift of creative discovery.

Do you want that gift? Then you need to find ways to say “Yes, and.”

How You Can Say “Yes, and”

A significant way to say yes to your creativity is to show up everyday no matter what. How much time can you commit to no matter how busy your day is, no matter how busy, stressed or scared you are?

Fifteen minutes is the magic number for me. It’s small enough that I won’t give in to the negative thoughts that I’m too tired, it’s too late, there are too many other things to do, I don’t really have any good ideas today, blah, blah, blah. I can always manage to scrape out fifteen minutes. I can always manage to scrape up enough courage to face fifteen minutes of uncertainty. And once I’m there for fifteen, I get past the initial inertia and often play longer. Keeping the commitment small keeps me saying “Yes, and here’s what I want to do with my time today.”

Find your magic number and use it to play with saying yes! Let children be your role models for how to engage in creative play just for the sake of playing. Of course Natalie Goldberg’s now famous freewriting technique is all about saying “Yes and.” So is Julia Cameron’s recommendation for morning pages where you write whatever comes into your head just as long as you fill three pages every morning. The Improvisational Fiction and other classes I teach at the Loft are about saying “Yes, and.” In fact, all the Loft classes are filled with teachers and students learning various ways to say “Yes and” to each others’ and their own creativity. (Please see page 4 and visit www.Loft.org for more info on Loft summer classes.)

Do you want the gift of creative discovery? Are you willing to share your discoveries with others? Please say “Yes, and!”

Deepen Your Creativity!

You have a calling to share your creativity in meaningful ways. Your desire to express yourself is a message from the Divine, encoded in emotion. The message is: “Share these gifts I’ve given you with the rest of the world. Quit worrying about whether you’ll be good enough. Risk being a fool to show your love to yourself, your community, your world. I’m telling you to do this, so get moving!”

It’s time to take your creativity to the next level. These workshops are designed to help you do that. They are all are interactive and use a variety of techniques like guided imagery, brainstorming, partner processes, freewriting, discussion, etc. We’ll meet on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Open Book. You can take just one workshop or any combination of the remaining four workshops. The more workshops you register for in advance, the more you save! First workshop: Only \$50! Any 2 workshops: \$93, **Save \$7**. Any 3 workshops: \$136; **Save \$14**. Any 4 workshops: \$179, **Save \$21**.

June 11: Motivate Yourself

Motivational Interviewing will get you ready, willing and able to move forward. You will:

- ⊙ Recognize and reinforce what has prepared you to take the next step
- ⊙ Translate awareness into motivation and motivation into action
- ⊙ Identify rewards that excite you
- ⊙ Plan celebrations for your success



October 1: Please Don’t Feed the Saboteur

Learn how to keep the Saboteur, that nasty inner critic that constantly complains and is never satisfied, from eating you alive. You will:

- ⊙ Recognize and respect the connection between creation and destruction
- ⊙ Discover the 5 hallmarks of the Saboteur
- ⊙ Develop strategies to feed appropriate destruction and starve the Saboteur



August 6: Beyond Excuses, Illusions and Obstacles

Discern between excuses and real obstacles. Disengage from beliefs that make it impossible to move forward. You will:

- ⊙ Identify common excuses and how you use them
- ⊙ Recognize illusions that inhibit creativity
- ⊙ Muzzle excuses and illusions
- ⊙ Develop strategies to eliminate obstacles



November 19: Resolve Unsolvable Problems

Stop frustrating yourself trying to solve unsolvable problems. Learn to effectively manage polarities instead.

- ⊙ Distinguish between polarities and problems
- ⊙ Identify the polarities that inhibit creativity
- ⊙ Create your own personal Polarity Map
- ⊙ Gain insights that transform your perceptions and behaviors



Register at www.RosanneBane.com or call 612-722-4139

Loft Summer Classes

Improvational Fiction (8 weeks): Learn how fun and rewarding it is to say “Yes” to your writing!

Meditative Writing (4 weeks): Enter the quiet within to see what deep writing comes from an open mind.

Writer’s Workout (8 weeks): Creative warm-ups and engaging writing exercises will give you results.

Writing Habit (8 weeks): Everyone has talent; what really makes a writer is the habit of writing.

For more information or to register, visit www.Loft.org or call 612-379-8999.



When you or your organization need a boost to improve your performance or when you need motivation and information to find out how to say “Yes and” to creative possibilities, check out my coaching and speaking services at

*www.RosanneBane.com.
Or call 612-722-4139!*