



Improv Interview

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Improv Interview

MARNI KINRYS: Alright, so I have told you that recently I signed up for an improv class. And I went to my first improv class last week, and it was by far one of the most terrifying situations for me but also the most liberating and fantastic. I faced a lot of insecurities which was sometimes nice and sometimes not so nice. This time it was nice. But overall, I had an unbelievable experience, and that is mainly due to the woman that I have on the phone today, whose name is Annie. So welcome, Annie.

ANNIE: Hi!

MARNI KINRYS: So, Annie is my instructor or teacher, whatever you want to call her, but she is the awesome woman who is coaching me and 13 other people to be improv experts. And the reason that I wanted to do a call with her today is because last week, Annie talked about being open and being clear with stating your intention, which is something that I always say to you when interacting with women. So I found it interesting that an improv class and also coaching on how to understand women and how to interact with women have very similar things that you need to do in order to be successful and get what you want. So I wanted to talk to Annie about like being open and stating your intention and what that means for you in terms of improv.

ANNIE: Oh, well. I guess, okay when you're talking about being open and stating your intention inside of an Improv scene let's say, you're talking about being clear with someone about what you want to communicate inside of the moment that you have with them. But there are a ton of exercises that it's not necessarily about communicating something; I call it text or script or the words that you're saying. But being open with your intention inside of your body language is super important, and inside of... being clear with what you're trying to communicate to the other person.

Because that's the initial moment, the initial spark of creativity between two people or between a group of people is that, that moment of like, "This is what I'm gifting you," and that reception of that gift and then the decision of what to do with that gift. But if you're not present in that moment or you're not decisive in that moment or you don't have the thing you're

trying to give, then it's hard for the other person to grow from that gift, because is a wonky gift sort of thing. It's like, well, I can go with this with a bunch of ways, and maybe it's what you're thinking and maybe it's not what you're thinking, but chances are it's not what you're thinking because you haven't decided anything and so you may not get close to a desired result because you're not being clear with what you're giving up top. Does that makes sense?

MARNI KINRYS: Oh yeah, no, it makes perfect sense to me, but I would love for you to like break that down a little bit. Let's say I am doing an improv with somebody. Like, what would my intention be? Because I can't control what the other person is thinking, and they may have their own intention, so if I want to be clear on what I'm giving, what exactly is it I'm giving? Because this goes hand in hand with guys approaching women, because I know a lot of guys that I work with are like, "How do I approach her and know what she wants to talk about?" But improv explained it perfectly.

ANNIE: The thing is, you never know what the other person is going to say. You can only control yourself inside of the situation, and with an improvisational scene, the main thing that we teach is to have a clear emotional intention, an outward emotional intention. So that it is clear to your partner, because 90% of all communication is through body language. And so they can read what's happening with you through from that first emotional... or the way that your body is positioned, and get a clear sense of what direction they want to take it.

The hard thing is that, you know, even if you're like, "I'm going to give them like a confident, superior attitude, that's going to be my intention from the beginning of this improv scene. I'm of higher status and I've got it figured out." Let's say that's where I'm going. I may want them to be of lower status inside of the scene or fearful of me in some way or dominant... I want to be dominant and want them to be submissive in some way, but because I can't control what their natural response would be, which we call that a kinesthetic response, which is a body's response to stimuli. They can go in a bunch of different ways. Maybe if I want to start off confident and aggressive at the beginning, they could match my confidence and aggression or they can top it if they want. Or they could be submissive, or they could be fearful and not just submissive. And so there are a bunch of ways for someone to take the information that I'm giving, and the goal of improvisation is to be malleable in

that moment of not necessarily wanting a desired effect, but instead wanting to...just wanting to get to the first thing and then build from there. Because if you go in too strong with, "I know what I want, and I know how it's going to go and this is exactly what I want to have happen," you'll get fucked every single time.

MARNI KINRYS: Oh for sure.

ANNIE: Because you can't control how other people think and respond. And if you try to, and sometimes people will give it to you inside of a scene because they want to serve you or they get what you want and so they want to give it to you, and that's their own baggage of not being able to make their own decisive moves. And they may do that, and if they do, the scene is weaker because of it. Because then they're not bringing their own intention inside of what they're doing or their own desire inside of what they're doing, and the true essence of the beginning of an improvisational moment or an improv scene is that you and I both make a choice that is emotional and physical, and then we let the cards fall where they may and try to be honest in the reception of those two ideas. Does that make sense?

MARNI KINRYS: Oh my god, I love how you question it every single time. I love how then you spit out gold and then you're like, "Does that make sense?" That was like perfect, honestly.

ANNIE: See this is my own baggage.

MARNI KINRYS: Exactly.

ANNIE: I'm like, "What I'm saying is crazy."

MARNI KINRYS: No.

ANNIE: It's not crazy, and sometimes I feel like I just jabber...

MARNI KINRYS: No, I do the exact same thing, like "Does that make sense? Do you get what I'm saying?"

ANNIE: "Are you getting it?" I mean, am I crazy?

MARNI KINRYS: I totally get it, and that was perfectly clear. Okay, so for a lot of guys who are listening, how do I get to the place of having the intention of confidence? Like how do you create this intention before you walk into a scene? Because a lot of guys that I work with, they do get psyched out by everything you just stated. Not knowing what the other person is going to say, not having like a bag of. . . I'll call it a bag of tricks, but like a bag of conversation to pull from if needed if it doesn't go the way they want it to. So how can guys prepare so that they can pull together and muster up this intention of approaching a woman and creating attraction. How do they prepare for that?

ANNIE: Well, take an improv class?

MARNI KINRYS: Exactly!

ANNIE: My first suggestion! The like...the preparation...if I'm equating it to what's happening inside of an improv scene, is that if you over-think it when you get to the moment, then you're not being genuine. And you know this happens with improv students all the time, where they like think up ideas all the way to class. I mean, I did it when I was a student. "Oh, I know what's going to be great! If I do this awesome pirate character!" And I do it in the car and I think I'm being awesome, and the minute I get there, I do it, and it rings false because it's not truly what the moment is calling for or I'm not being present in the moment to deliver what actually is needed. And instead I'm defaulting because of my own fears about what I think is going to work and not trusting what is already happening.

So as far as preparing: if you want to portray confidence, I guess my biggest thing would be to decide who you are and what you're confident about in your own self. Not trying to convince somebody that things are great, but just understanding for yourself that you know what this is, who I am, and this is what's good about me. And in the moment, one of those things I can hopefully gift to this person, to let them know that this is who I am. And they can respond however they want. They might think the thing that makes me confident or the thing that I feel confident about I give that in the moment is gross. They may think that, and that means that they're not for me. Or in the scene that we're not going to have a great scene because, you know, that energy isn't there for us.

MARNI KINRYS: Yeah, there's no chemistry between the two of you.

ANNIE: There's no chemistry. And that could be the lady's baggage, their bullshit that they're bringing to it.

MARNI KINRYS: Exactly. And it was interesting because last week we did this exercise with clapping, and I've now done that with a couple of my clients over the past week, which I thought was really interesting of like being in sync with people and not trying to psych them out, but being really present and aware of what you're giving to another individual and what's coming your way.

So I'll explain the exercise, because this is over audio so it's hard to show, but we went in a circle and you have to turn to the left and clap at the same time as the individual to your left and then they would turn and have to do it with the next person. And as we slowly started to trust each other more and gain confidence that they could take in, you know, what we were putting out there, the circle would start to go faster and faster and faster. And this nice energy was just created, which I actually equated to an interaction.

You put something out there to see if you...okay, do you receive it and gift if as you said—I love how you say that—and then somebody gives something back, and you're like, "Okay, I like this. Let's continue going around the circle and clapping." And then that's where that chemistry and connection come from and get created from: being in yourself, I guess. By being open and present and giving to the other person and working with another person. If you don't work with another person, then you know to stop clapping.

ANNIE: The main thing about that exercise is if you try to do more than what is being asked of you in that moment, you're going to fuck it up.

MARNI KINRYS: Right.

ANNIE: If you try to psych someone else out or you want it to go faster and it's not going faster already...because that was another thing of the exercise, is as the claps...when they would progressively get faster, and we could be more in sync with each other, and our tempo could change at the drop of a hat, which was really cool. But you can't have that if you personally have a desire that isn't part of the group.

And that can happen as a group of 14, but that can also happen as a group between two people, where like I want this to go faster, or I want the clap to be louder, or I want to psych them out or whatever. And when you do that, the energy gets messed up, and often it feels off and it feels wonky, and all of a sudden you're not present and not part of the group energy. And the group has to work to get back to that flow. And that only comes from people wanting it to be a certain way when it's not that way. You know what I mean?

MARNI KINRYS: The desired outcome that you're trying to take control and make something happen that's not really happening at the time.

ANNIE: It's not happening.

MARNI KINRYS: It's not genuine. Last week you had said something as well. You said if you come to the class before... if you come to the class thinking, "I'm going to do something funny and I'm going to make them laugh," that typically it doesn't work. It works... do you want to speak a little bit to that comment? Even though you kind of touched on it before.

ANNIE: Sure, yeah. You know, I had said in class, and I'll repeat it again, but we've all been around those people that are trying to make jokes, and they're just not funny, and they're like really trying to be funny, and it makes us all want to look at our phones and get another drink and leave the conversation 'cause they're super uncomfortable. That thing is the same thing that I'm talking about.

It's a, like... You know, in improv, it's a big deal, because people equate improvisation to comedy, but it's not. Comedy is not the goal of good improvisation, it's a byproduct. Because you're responding naturally in the moment, and humor comes from the truth between two people. Just playing into the truth between two people. So anyways, if you come with the intention of, "I will be funny" in a scene or inside of this scene or inside this class or with this woman since you're talking about dating, like, "I'm going to show her how funny I am!" You've already sunk your own ship, because you're not there and present and feeling her energy and seeing what she likes and seeing what she's responding to, and creating the thing...

Okay I'm backing up... The thing with improv is you're creating inside jokes with the audience, but to do that, you are on

stage and you have to lay down a groundwork. Usually the beginning of a show is not funny, it's just groundwork. You're developing characters and relationships, you're emotionally relating to each other and to the audience and you're creating clear themes that people can understand. Then, later in the show, you can come back to those ideas and you can exploit them for in ways for comedy, which is way later than the first day of level one, but that same premise can be applied to a dating situation, I think.

You know if you show up and you like, try a zinger immediately and zing the bartender, you know, zing the flowers at the Huntington Garden, it's not going to feel good, because that's not the genuine moment. But if you create the groundwork with that person and, just like your friends, just like any friend you've ever had, you have to make an emotional connection between the two of you before you can start to fuck around with that connection that is fond or funny for both of you. And for some people that comes immediately. You can feel it immediately and they can start joking around together. Or even onstage, two characters can be funny immediately, but that comes from an honest recognition of the moment. The moment is allowing for this to happen: I didn't want it to happen, I had no need for it to happen, it just happened.

MARNI KINRYS: Wow, you are a great speaker.

ANNIE: I have something else.

MARNI KINRYS: No, please...

ANNIE: There is a book called *Zen and the Art of Archery*, and I equate... archery is much like improvisation, and I also do archery, but there is a part in the book where this novice archer is trying to understand the, like meditative principles of archery and how to do archery. And inside of it, the teacher says something like, "You have to always be at the ready. You have to have a purposeless purpose." And that relates to improv too, this idea of purposeless purpose. The idea that you are ready for whatever energy or whatever situation or whatever moment happens. But it is without a desired outcome. It is a purposeless purpose. So you're ready to see it and to pounce and to have fun or to be furious or to whatever inside of it, but you don't need it to go any way in particular. The less need that you have, the more present you can be with the energy that is available.

MARNI KINRYS: Wonderful.

ANNIE: Sorry.

MARNI KINRYS: No, no that was absolutely like perfect. You explained that wonderfully.

ANNIE: I'm a chatter!

MARNI KINRYS: No, no it's great. It's not like you're just chattering on and on, you're actually giving amazing and valuable information.

ANNIE: Yeah.

MARNI KINRYS: What I would love is obviously for everybody to sign up for an improvisation class, because I took improv when I was like 14 or 15, and I really believe that that gave me my personality. Because it taught me about being vulnerable like what you've been talking about, not to expect a desired outcome, and to play around with my personality in a safe environment. I always say that taking an improv class helps you learn how to pull conversation out of thin air because you're using a world of imagination. So you click into that source inside of you so you can look at a room that's a plain white box, and you can suddenly see numerous options for a storyline or a conversation. So, again, I would love everybody to sign up for an improvisation class. If... Oh, sorry, go on.

ANNIE: It's just about detail recognition inside of improv. You become masters of... Improvisation teaches you to become not only a master of like reading people, which is the ultimate thing that it does for you, you can really read people. But the way that it teaches you to read people is that it teaches you to read every little detail that you're picking up from them. From the way that they fold their hands to noticing that they occasionally look over their shoulder or the way that they smile, your spatial relationship to them, the distance that two people are standing from one another, if their legs are near you or away from you. And seeing all those things, seeing when they happen and then making quick assumptions about what those things actually mean to you, and then playing off of them. It's the detail work that really gets honed inside of improvisation.

MARNI KINRYS: Yeah, and that's perfect for any type of interpersonal skill.

ANNIE: Yeah.

MARNI KINRYS: Whether it's in the workspace or with women or whatever it is, because then once you can start getting out of your head. You can start looking at other individuals. You can find it entertaining, 'cause you know. You're like, "Okay, I know what you're doing, I know what you're feeling, I can see your arms are crossed. This is what's going on." So instead of living in your head space and trying to guess how the other person is going to be reacting to you, you can actually start seeing it.

ANNIE: Yes, if you're paying attention, you should be able to tell.

MARNI KINRYS: Yeah, so you can all be body language experts. I would love, if there is a way. . . Are there exercises, like maybe one or two exercises that the guys could start doing right now on their own or you know even in their workspace or with their friends that you could recommend they do in order to start being able to get out of their heads and be more vulnerable and be more open?

ANNIE: Oh, man. On the spot with exercises.

MARNI KINRYS: I know, I know! Well I knew if there was anybody who was going to be able to do it, you would be able to whip out a couple. If there was one thing you could only do with other people, but I would love for them to start doing it on their own and start seeing some changes.

ANNIE: Are we talking about fun exercises or are we talking about like really we want to learn these skills kind of exercises?

MARNI KINRYS: I think both. I think I would love people to have obviously. . . anything to get people to get out of their shell. Because a lot of guys are shy or they're, you know, lacking some confidence when it comes to women. So what are a couple of things they could possibly. . . that are improv exercises that they could bring to the table?

ANNIE: Well, here's a scenic exercise that might not be the funnest thing you've ever done in your life, but it's very challenging and it is about recognizing intention, and it's called What He Means Is... or What She Means Is... And two people walk into a space together, they make a decision emotionally or physically, there's some sort of stage picture that's happened immediately without any premeditation. Both players just decide. Then they both look at each other and take in what the other person looks like and how they might feel towards them or what their body looks like or what they're doing with their hands, all that stuff.

And someone says the first line of dialogue, which could be something like, "Well, it's a beautiful day, isn't it?" And the next person then, before they respond to, "Well, it's a beautiful day, isn't it?" they say, "What he means is or what she means is..." and then they relay what they perceive from the way they said the line of dialogue, the body positioning that they have. So if I said, "It's a beautiful day isn't it?" "What she means is that she's not like... today is not a great day for her. Like she's not happy about today. She wants me to know she's not happy about today." Then my response line might be like, "Yeah... it's really great outside, huh?" The intention behind that, what he means is or what she means is, is that you're making me uncomfortable with your statement. You're making me uncomfortable. I don't really want to know about what is going on with you.

And then you just go back and forth. You can go back and forth a couple of lines. You can try to do a longer scene. You can do it with a stranger. If you hear two people talking in front of you in Starbucks while you're waiting for your coffee, you can "what she means is," or "what he means is" depending on the situation, trying to read the intention of what's happening between two people.

MARNI KINRYS: You can do that in your own mind, so you can start getting in the space of trying to look outwards and not be stuck in your head. And what people are saying and what their body language is saying. That's a great exercise actually for couples, as well. If you ever run into a conversation with your significant other you should always say, "What I'm hearing is..." so then the other person feels heard.

ANNIE: Right. "What I'm taking from you is this." "What you mean is this." And you know, the like... what you mean is is important

or what she means is important because it's not necessarily what I think. It's more... It's more what they... Like, I can see what you think. What you're trying to communicate to me by saying it in that way with your arms crossed like that and your body turned like that, you're trying to communicate to me and this is what it is. Whether or not I think that or what to think that or whatever you are trying to tell me that.

MARNI KINRYS: Love that. Okay, so that's one great exercise. What about guys who conversation is a challenge for, a lot of people, to keep conversation going. Guys will, you know, attempt to get a girl to open up so they'll go into interview mode with a girl that they've never met before.

ANNIE: I'm sure.

MARNI KINRYS: So what... Could you maybe assist with conversation continuers so you can keep adding, so you can build towards something with the other individual who you don't know very well.

ANNIE: Well you know there's the basic principle of improv which inside a scene, which is called "Yes, and..."

MARNI KINRYS: Oh, yeah!

ANNIE: What's that?

MARNI KINRYS: I said "Oh yeah... yes and..."

ANNIE: "Yes and..." and "Yes and..." inside of a scene is that you say yes because you agree to the reality of the situation. So, you know, if someone says "I love hot dogs," you say "yes," and you then find what you love about hot dogs in that second or whatever and then say "and" and add the next piece of information. So "I love hot dogs." "Yes, and I really love Pink's over on La Brea, they have the best hot dogs I've ever had." And then hopefully the next line is, "Yeah, I've been there, they have a great hot dog." (I don't know what kind of hot dogs 'cause I've never been there). "Yeah, they've got a great relish dog!" "Yeah!" and then you can add...

MARNI KINRYS: So it's about building.

ANNIE: Yeah, you're just building off of the last thing said.

MARNI KINRYS: But you're also hearing what the other individual is saying to you. Acknowledging, "Okay, I heard you." "Yes, and I like this as well." Here's something I'm going to add on top of what you said, and then I'm going to throw it back to you, and then the other person hopefully hears it from you and then continues building.

ANNIE: Yeah, and if the conversation stalls you can always... it's like building, it's like a little ladder, "yes, and... yes, and... yes, and..." but occasionally the ladder like... remember Donkey Kong, the game Donkey Kong?

MARNI KINRYS: Yeah, of course.

ANNIE: So at the beginning, it's kind of like level, and then you ladder up, and then it levels off, and then you ladder up, and then it levels off again. And that's what I feel like "Yes, and-ing" is, is you begin with some sort of base line where you're kind of feeling it out, you find a moment where you want to "Yes" something the other person said, and then you "Yes, and..." them and it brings you to another point where you get a little bit deeper into it, and then you "Yes, and..." that next point, and then you get a little deeper into it. So it's not that you're constantly looking to find the next thing, it's that you're responding to the last thing said. And when you find that like, that little treasure chest of like commonality or excitement in a moment, you guys can dig through that and explore that room, so to speak, and so you're ready to go into the hallway and another room.

MARNI KINRYS: These are great exercises. I think they're fantastic. So you're like, "Yes! I have accomplished my goal."

ANNIE: I'm doing it!

MARNI KINRYS: Okay, so that was wonderful, and for anybody that is listening, I think those are two great exercises for exploring in your everyday life. And you don't have to tell people it's an exercise, you can just start doing it. You can start fucking around with people and just play your game from your point of view and do your improv and see what happens. It ends up being something entertaining for you, but it also helps with your conversation skills. And Annie, I want to thank you so much for taking this time 'cause I know that I interrupted your relaxing time with your husband, but I will let you get back to it.

ANNIE: That's okay.

MARNI KINRYS: But tell me a little bit more about the improv group that you work with and that I am now attending.

ANNIE: Westside, is that what you're talking about?

MARNI KINRYS: Yeah or whatever else you want to maybe associate yourself with, so if we want to find out maybe more information about you.

ANNIE: Oh sure, oh this is the moment I get to pitch myself!

MARNI KINRYS: Yeah, the light is on you.

ANNIE: The class you're attending is at M.I.'s Westside Comedy Theater. It's in Santa Monica on 3rd street right off the promenade. They offer improv classes, they also offer stand up classes. I am an improv teacher and have been for 16 years. I've done improv for 16 years, but their philosophy behind improvisation is that the ensemble or the group is stronger than the individual. The show that I have at that theatre is called "Now with Annie and Levin." It's a show that I do with my husband although we started before we were ever married or dating and fell in love, and now we're together and having a baby.

MARNI KINRYS: I love it!

ANNIE: The show is at 10 o'clock on the first and third Monday of every month, and it's free, and they have a bar, which is great, but the show is just the two of us and it's all improvised. We get one suggestion and then the goal of our show is to respond honestly in the moment and to respond inside of our impulses and to support each other's impulses. Might sound like, "Oh yeah, of course. Isn't that improv?" but it's a very difficult thing to do, and if you ever come see our show more than once, you'll recognize how different each show can be. And we also play characters from the very emotional standpoint with the goal of comedy being something that we love but not necessarily being the goal. So sometimes it's sincere and sometimes it's sweet and sometimes it's raunchy and sometimes it's funny and sometimes it's whatever. Whatever the moment calls for, we want to be present. We want to be now. That's why the show is called Now.

We also teach independent classes, both my husband and I. We have the philosophy that improv is the art of being you, only better. And so understanding who you are and how you became that person, using yourself as your own instrument is our philosophy, and we have a company called Now Improv, and if you want any more information on that you can contact me at nowimprov@gmail.com and I'll send you some stuff. We're in the process of doing a website, so that will be up soon. So we do more improv classes for everyday people. Improv classes for heartbreak or improv classes for shy people, that kind of stuff.

MARNI KINRYS: I love it. Do you do online classes for people? Because I have people signed up for my website from like all over the world.

ANNIE: We have talked about it, trying to come up with some like exercises we could do via Skype or that could be downloadable, but we're at the very beginning phases of our little company, so we're not there, yet. But hopefully one day we will have that. But I know that M.I. the Westside they do have improv exercises that you can, I think buy and download from their website.

MARNI KINRYS: Oh, that's awesome. Until Annie gets her shit together, go buy it from Westside Comedy because, as you've heard from this conversation, it will definitely assist you with interacting and attracting women. It has helped me, it helped Annie to become more open people who are clear with their intentions and comfortable with expressing those intentions. So, Annie, thank you so much for doing this. That was perfect and wonderful and I really appreciate it.

ANNIE: You're welcome. Thanks for having me. It was the greatest!