“Yes and…” An adapted improv exercise for Dream

# Goal:

To use an improvisational theatre method to help us dream an ideal future for our Culture Change Coalitions that is supportive, positive, collaborative and which references the best of what we have learned together in Discovery.

# The background:

Many of us are familiar with improv games. Participants are given simple or sometimes crazy ideas, and asked to make up a scene, on the spot, that moves from that idea without a pre-arranged script.

Good improv works when people are collaborating, open and willing to work through seeming impediments to the dialogue or reality created by finding alternative solutions, or, ramps to opportunity within a scene.

Similarly, when we consider our ideal future for our CCC, it’s important that we get in the habit of agreement, collaboration and work to refuse to be held back by small concerns, or speedbumps. We learn to trust that with enough initiative, innovation and collaboration we will find a path to our ideal future.

# “Yes, and…” The most important ‘rule’ for collaboration:

The most important rule of improv is simple. Listen to your partner without judgement, agree with their train of thought and build on the idea. When this is working well, you almost never realize that people are following this rule. When people do not follow this rule, ideas are rejected almost before they begin, a scene does not move forward, and the collaboration fails.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHnMRTnXOwk> This 1 minute video explains the ‘yes, and’ principle in improv.

# What can we learn from this for our Culture Change process?

The fundamentals of good improv, the ‘yes, and…’ principle, is one that we can use in our collaboration for dream—to remind ourselves of the benefit of positive collaboration and agreement, even when the ideas become fantastic.

# Instructions:

1. Ask Culture Change Coalition Members to break into small groups or pairs, and ask on person in those groups to choose one of the following beginning sentences and use it ot begin a conversation with their partner(s).
2. Instruct the group to take turns contributing to the initial idea. Each time someone makes a statement—agree, expand and build on it. Use your imagination. Do not worry if you want to pause to think, or if the conversation does not flow as smoothly as it does on improv games you may have seen on television. Don’t feel pressured to be funny, or to choose the ‘wackiest’ alternative. The goal is not to imagine a character or even to describe the present, but to describe an ideal future as though it is already happening.

Suggested Beginnings: (These need to be tailored to the individual site based on the strengths identified in Discovery):

1. People with dementia in **[group or organization]** enjoy meaningful communication in their home.
2. **[group or organization]** staffers like to get to know residents.
3. **[group or organization]** residents enjoy musical recreation.

**Imagine the first scenario—a conversation could proceed as follows (this pretend conversation is pulled from some of the discussions we’ve had recently at a PiDC Alliance Culture Change coalition.**

“People with dementia in **[group or organization]** enjoy meaningful communication in their home”.

“Yes, and PSW’s love to take time in their visits to chat with them”.

“Yes, and clients feel that they can ask for changes to the services provided by PSW’s depending on their needs for that day”

“Yes, and family partners are given tools and resources to maintain language skills and positive communication with one another.”

“Yes and respite care scheduling attempts to keep persons with dementia with the same peers at each respite time so that individuals can connect with one another”

“Yes, and an agency has managed privacy issues so that when a client passes or moves to a home, their friends can be informed and supported”

Yes, and younger volunteers in the home are encouraged and given acknowledgement for visiting residents….

1. Once the conversation has reached an end, ask a member of each group to present their ideas to the larger group.
2. Ask the CCC to reflect on the future that was created when every idea was accepted. Capture the discussions in your notes and reflect on the process. Ask the group what emerged that may not have because everyone was forced to expand on a positive, rather than a negative reflection.