


Tina Fey's Rules of Improv Comedy Will Change the Way You Play With Your Kids

Several years ago, I sat by the campfire, completely engrossed in the book [Bossypants, by Tina Fey.](#)

I've been a fan since Weekend Update with Jimmy Fallon.

But reading this book, especially as a parent, made me love her even more.

As I read her Rules of Improvisation, I couldn't help but think about how they applied to playing with my boys.



Tina Fey's 4 Rules of Improv

*Comedian Tina Fey has Four Rules of Improv that resonate with both business and funny people:

- The first rule of improvisation is to AGREE.
- The second rule of improv is to not only say YES, say YES, AND.
- The next rule is MAKE STATEMENTS. (Neeson does great in this department)
- THERE ARE NO MISTAKES only OPPORTUNITIES.

*source: http://www.openculture.com/2013/06/the_dos_and_donts_of_improv_comedy_.html

You can also read a full excerpt from [Tina Fey's Rules of Improvisation That Will Change Your Life and Reduce Belly Fat*](#) here.

Now Let's Apply the Rules to Playing With Your Kids

I can't help but think they will also resonate with parents who want to do a better job when it comes to engaging in imaginary play with their kids.

Picture this scenario:

Your child hands you a plastic banana and says, "Nana wants to talk to you."

Think about how you would typically respond.

You could take the banana from your child and say, "what do you mean Nana wants to talk to me? This isn't a phone, it's a banana. Bananas are for eating silly." Or you could assume your child meant the actual banana wanted to talk to you and shut him down by telling him bananas can't talk.

But where is the fun in that?

In an improv comedy sketch, the scene would die there, and your play session would also hit a brick wall.

Or, you could follow the rules of improv and see where this could go.

Instead of correcting your child, let them take the lead. They are your "partner" in play, just like your fellow improv comedian is your partner in the scene.

Follow the first rule and agree.

"Why thank you, Johnny." you say, as you take the banana and put it up to your ear.

But you can't stop there. You have to agree AND add to the scene.

“Hello, Nana! How are you today? Johnny says you wanted to talk to me.”

Or... perhaps you begin having a conversation with the banana as if IT was who wanted to talk to you.

Either scenario could be quite fun.

How Tina
Fey's *Rules of
Improv Comedy*
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Kids



In Tina Fey's rules, you also have to make statements instead of asking questions. You can't ask your partner a bunch of questions about what Nana wants to talk about, you have to make statements as if you're talking to Nana. And then maybe you say, "Yes, sure, Johnny is right here. Of course, you can talk to him again." Which turns the scene back over to your partner.

There are no mistakes, only opportunities!

Perhaps Johnny meant that Nana was the banana's name and that the actual fruit wanted to talk to you. But when he handed you the plastic banana, you pretended it was a banana phone. Oops!

But remember, there are no mistakes in improv.

You put the banana up to your ear and say, "Hi Nana! Johnny said you wanted to talk to me."

Chances are, your kid won't correct you because he instinctively knows the rules of improv are to agree. BUT if you messed up and were supposed to talk TO the banana, you can easily pivot if he calls you out on it. Just keep going.

Remember, there are no mistakes.

It's Ok to Look and Be Silly

I hear all of the time, that people just don't enjoy playing with their kids. They don't know how to pretend. If you struggle with this, start with some easy games, like restaurant or grocery store.

They seem to be the easiest to join in because you can order food and your child will just bring it to you. Then you hold it up to your mouth and pretend to eat it.

The opportunity to let your guard down and just be silly is

one of the greatest gifts of playing with kids. They think everything you do is amazing! You don't have to convince them. Just join them on their imaginary adventures.

You might be surprised where they take you, and just how much fun you'll have along the way.

If you try this with your kids, I'd love to hear how it goes. Leave me a comment below or come chat on [Twitter](#).