

# Fifth Biennial Rehearsals for Growth Conference, November 13-14, 2021

## “Improv in Therapy: Viewing and Doing”

In Improvisational Therapy the functions of Spectator and Performer are intertwined for therapists and clients alike, as both alternate between taking the Stage and witnessing from the Audience position.

**OUR MOST DIVERSE CONFERENCE EVER** will explore the many professional and personal issues that arise when improv is applied TO therapy or is even considered AS therapy.

**This Zoom-based all-remote conference is all-ability-accessible.**

**Up to 15 CE hrs. available for Mental Health Professionals.**

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**REGISTER AT: [RehearsalsforGrowth.com/Biennial-RfG-Conference](https://RehearsalsforGrowth.com/Biennial-RfG-Conference)**

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### PROGRAM SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

EST ( = GMT-4 )	Presenter	Sat, 11/13/21
9:30-10:15 am	---	<b>WARMUP PLAY!</b>
10:30- noon	Wiener	Workshop A (1.5 hrs)
12:15-2:15 pm	Gluck	Workshop B (2.0 hrs)
2:30-4 pm	Romanelli	<b>PLENARY</b> (1.5 hrs)
4:15-5:45 pm	Miller	Workshop C (1.5 hrs)
6-7:30 pm	Osborne	Workshop D (1.5 hrs)
7:45-8:00 pm	---	(Tally CEs)
8:15-10:00 pm	---	<b>IMPROV JAM</b>

EST ( = GMT-4 )	Presenter	Sun, 11/14/21
9:30-10:15 am	---	<b>WARMUP PLAY!</b>
10:30- noon	Escott	Workshop E
12:15 - 1:15 pm	(Faculty)	<b>PANEL</b>
1:30-3:00 pm	Howland	Workshop F
3:15-4:45 pm	Beauregard	Workshop G
5:00-6:30 pm	Padron & Wiener	Workshop H
6:15- 7:00 pm	---	(Tally CEs)
7:00-7:45 pm	---	<b>WRAP-UP/ DISCUSSION</b>

## Conference Fees

2-day Cost: **Professionals, \$300; Students, \$175**

1-day cost: **Professionals, \$175; Students \$95**

Individual Workshop/Plenary/Panel Cost: \$50 per Event

2-day Cost: **Presenters, \$150; Presenters who are also Panelists, \$125**

10% **Early registration** discount; ends October 31<sup>st</sup>

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## Continuing Education (CE) Credit

CE credit MAY be available, depending on your profession and the state you are licensed in. We do not initiate contact with professional licensing boards or Associations to obtain CE approval in advance. Our faculty includes instructors licensed in Social Work, MFT, MH Counseling, Psychology and Drama Therapy. The most reliable way to find out whether attended hours at RfG workshops and Conferences are CE-eligible is to contact your state professional organization (rather than your licensing board) with descriptions of Conference Program Workshops and Presenters.

We provide the following:

- a Certificate of Attendance for all Conference hours attended completely on each day, with the number of CEs earned (Two-Day Total = 15.0 hrs);
- RfG Certified Practitioner Program hours;
- For Drama Therapy (NADTA) RDTs, CE hours;
- For LMHCs in Massachusetts:

Please go to the MaMHCA website [www.mamhca.org](http://www.mamhca.org)

Under Continuing Education, find the LMHC CE Guidelines or download them here:

[https://www.mamhca.org/assets/1/7/June\\_2017\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_LMHCs.pdf](https://www.mamhca.org/assets/1/7/June_2017_Guidelines_for_LMHCs.pdf)

Read the instructions and complete the last 2 pages. Include supporting documents [your certificate of attendance & program description] along with form of payment to [Dbergstrom@mamhca.org](mailto:Dbergstrom@mamhca.org) or fax to 508-698-1711. MaMHCA sends the certificate.

Get the forms in ASAP for credit for 2021.

# Conference Program

**Sat. Nov. 13**

**9:30 – 10:15 am. WARMUP PLAY!** Start your conference day with playful warmups that will get your blood flowing and brighten your mood!

**Facilitator: Traci Howland**

**10:30 – Noon - Workshop A - Three Clinical Uses for Improv**

**Daniel J. Wiener, PhD, RDT-BCT**

Recently, theatre Improv is used increasingly in clinical practice, being applied within a variety of approaches. This workshop aims to clarify differences in the purposes for which improv is applied in therapy by exploring three distinct yet overlapping types of therapeutic improv objectives for clients: (1) Discovery (safely varying habitual behavior); (2) Social Skills Training (developing and practicing more effective behaviors); and (3) Enhancing Experience (opening to spontaneity, aliveness & risk-taking). Participants will get to enact improv games representative of each type and then discuss the practical benefits of the types in comparative terms.

### Learning objectives

- a. Learn to distinguish three types of therapeutic improv objectives;
- b. Experience three improv enactments differing in their therapeutic objectives;
- c. Deepen their understanding of how to use improv to achieve various clinical objectives.

**12:15 to 2:15 pm – Workshop B – “Insight Improvisation: Letting the Body Lead”**

**Joel Gluck, MEd, RDT-BCT, CIIP-CT**

Insight Improvisation is an approach to drama therapy that integrates meditation and mindfulness, primarily used with individuals, but also applicable to couples and families. Central to Insight Improv is a technique called psolodrama, which combines meditation, authentic movement, psychodrama, and self-revelatory performance. This program

offers a brief introduction to Insight Improvisation, an opportunity to experience some of its techniques, and a discussion of the approach's broader applications. If you enjoy meditation, movement, and improvisation—or would like to try them—we welcome you to join us.

#### Learning objectives

- a. Learn foundational principles of Insight Improvisation, including mindfulness, choicelessness, lovingkindness, and the distinction between Performance Mind and Being Mind.
- b. Become familiar with Insight Improvisation exercises and techniques through practice and discussion, including the four entryway practices (authentic movement, shared vipassana, role stream, and scene stream).
- c. Experience letting the body lead, discovering how a therapeutic experience can unfold spontaneously from inner listening, physical and vocal self-expression, open improvisation, and exploring new roles.

### **2:30 – 4:00 pm. – PLENARY SESSION -- “The Ninja Therapist: Improvisation Skills for the (Daring) Clinician.”**

**Assael Romanelli, Ph.D., MSW**

In this interactive talk, Dr. Romanelli presents his integrated improv-therapy approach called The Ninja Therapist. Just like the historic Japanese ninja, the ninja therapist aims to be resourceful, creative and improvisational in order to achieve the desired outcome. The Ninja therapy approach incorporates ideas from the world of theater improvisation, relational and systemic therapy, NLP, and more. In this talk we will learn a typology of improvisational tendencies as well as a simple and effective categorization of clinical bids that therapists can offer to increase the efficiency, vitality, and impact of the clinical encounter.

#### Learning objectives

- a. Become familiar with the therapeutic underpinnings of the improvisational stance in therapy.
- b. Understand the different improvisational tendencies in the clinical encounter and how different combinations of those tendencies require different interventions.
- c. Utilize the two clinical bids (vertical and horizontal) that are possible at any moment in therapy, in order to maximize clinical impact.

**4:15 – 5:45 pm. – Workshop C – “Using the Improvisational *PlaySpace* with Parents.”**

**Robert James Miller II, PhD**

This work is informed by the theoretical principles of the *Developmental Transformations* (DvT) model of improv role-playing. This workshop will provide participants with an introduction to DvT applications to address parenting problems, enhance parental skills, promoting resilience in the family, and enhance pleasure in child/parent interactions during this pandemic. Case examples will be provided as conducted in parental consultations online and will focus on families’ interactions between parents and children who have histories of trauma. Questions addressed will include: is this child in or out of a *PlaySpace*? is the parent dysregulated? what does the child *recruit the parent to do*? what does the child want the parent to experience, to feel? What narrative is emerging and how *proximal* is the play to forms of the known trauma story/disclosure? How are the caregivers responding to this process?

Learning Objectives

- a. Define the resilience response for children and parents who struggle with trauma related dysregulation during the pandemic.
- b. Identify a developmental continuum for representational/expressive modes to enhance resilience.
- c. Learn an empirically-supported rationale for the use of Creative Arts Therapies, narrative and storytelling methods, improvisational and pretend play, and performance to promote a resilience response in interactions between parents and children at home during the pandemic and beyond.

**6:00 – 7:30 pm. – Workshop D - : “Integrating Improv into Mental Health Counseling with Individuals.”**

**Jami Osborne, LMHC, RDT/BCT, RfG-CT**

Translating RfG group games and exercises for use with individual clients and justifying this in your treatment plans can be daunting. In this session we will learn how to modify RfG for 1:1 use; how to clinically document and justify this modality as a sound intervention; and brainstorm/play together with cases, to hone our skills.

Learning Objectives

- a. Participants will learn to adapt group improv scenes for use with individual clients

- b. Participants will learn to develop proxy scenes for use with individual clients
- c. Participants will learn to utilize improv games & exercises as assessment tools

**7:45 – 9:15 pm – IMPROV JAM** – End your conference day entertaining and being entertained by participating in high-energy improv performance! No prior performance experience needed.

**MC: Sean Mulvihill**

**Sun. Nov. 14**

**9:30 – 10:15 am. WARMUP PLAY!** Start your conference day with playful warmups that will get your blood flowing and brighten your mood!

**Facilitator: Traci Howland**

**10:30 – Noon – Workshop E – “Improv for People with Parkinson’s Disease, Movement Disorder and their Care Partners.”**

**Margot Escott MSW, LCSW RfG-CP**

There is growing research on the therapeutic benefits of Improvisational Theatre Games for diverse populations. Specifically, research on the benefits of teaching improv to people with PD and their caregivers has shown that improv games help to cultivate focus, improve communication, and promote well-being. In this workshop I shall teach how to run an improv group for people with PD and their care partners. We will also view clips of these classes (all my students have signed release waivers).

Learning objectives

- a. Understand primary behavioral issues in PD and other movement disorders.
- b. Describe stressors for caregivers.
- c. Identify 3 Improv games that can be used with people with movement disorders.
- d. Learn to create a class for people with movement disorders.

**12:15 – 1:15 pm. – FACULTY PANEL**

**Moderator, Daniel Wiener, PhD, RDT-BCT**

Select Conference Faculty will discuss the following topics:

- What personal and professional benefits may result when therapists receive improv training?
- What kinds of, and how much, training is needed to become effective improv therapists?
- Can we demonstrate convincingly whether psychotherapy clients benefit from improv enactment?
- In what ways can improv be integrated with other psychotherapy Approaches?

**1:30 – 3:00 pm. - Workshop F – “The use of Mindfulness and Self in RFG/Improv Therapy.”**

**Traci Howland, LMFT**

The use of improv or drama therapy allows for a unique opportunity to invite a client to visit their creative and adventure mind. Too often the daily rigor of life has conformed many of us into role playing, socially appropriate people striving to survive in this busy world. In this presentation I will teach you how to explore your own history and formation of beliefs to allow for a better understanding of how your own experiences that have created you can be a valuable tool in utilizing RFG/improv therapy in your quest to help others.

Learning objectives

- a. Getting to know your inner critic, vulnerabilities, and shame points
- b. Increased understanding of our attachment to expectations of self and others
- c. Learning to be present and comfortable in Self

**3:15 – 4:45 pm. - Workshop G - “Shifting States: Improv’s Relational Antidote for Trauma and Anxiety”**

**Mark Beauregard, RDT-BCT, LCAT**

Improvisation requires participants to regularly shift states, from stillness to action; introspection to outward expression; self-focus to outward and partner focus; safety to risk, etc. In this workshop participants will actively explore the ways in which improv’s roots in actively shifting states in the context of relationship and risk-taking can benefit clients with anxiety and trauma histories to develop increased awareness, improve their ability to regulate emotions, and tolerate discomfort.

Learning objectives

- a. Become familiar with basic polyvagal theory and how that connects to therapeutic use of improv
- b. Become familiar with the concept of Window of Tolerance
- c. Apply the concept of scaffolding in working with individuals and groups with anxiety and trauma
- d. Identify specific exercises that foster relational anchoring and grounding for use around moments of shutdown or dysregulation.

**5:00 – 6:30 pm. – Workshop H – “Expanding the RfG ‘Presents’ Exercise to explore the Giver Role”**

**Odalys Padrón, LMFT & Daniel Wiener, PhD, RDT-BCT**

The Traditional RfG ‘Presents’ enactment features an encounter between a Giver (who merely gestures the non-specific offer of a gift) and a Receiver (whose imagination supplies the gift received). Traditional ‘Presents’ explores the Receiver’s reactions to the gift in the context of various suggested conditions supplied by the therapist. In this workshop, we will explore the “Reverse Presents” Giver role in relationship therapy where the partners struggle to be honest with self and the other about their needs and wants. The therapeutic goal is to provide a safety net for the Giver to express truths to Self and Partner without repercussions. Volunteer participants will enact novel versions of the “Reverse Presents” exercise.

Learning objectives

- a. Heighten awareness of the untruths clients tell themselves and their partners.
- b. Clarify how untruths may damage the connection individuals/couples seek.
- c. Model truthful alignment using “Reverse Presents” for relationship growth.

**6:45 – 7:30 pm. - WRAP-UP/ DISCUSSION**

We’ll meet for the last time at the Conference to share and process our collective experiences!



## Faculty/Presenter Bios

**Mark Beauregard**, RDT-BCT, LCAT has a full-time private practice in New York City, seeing children, adolescents and adults for individual and group therapy for the past 18 years. He is an adjunct faculty member of New York University's Drama Therapy Program where he teaches the course Improv and Mental Health with specific interest in improvisation's relational and mindful dynamics as agents of change for anxiety and trauma. Mark received post graduate training and certification in gender and sexuality affirming psychotherapy at the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy, as well as arts and trauma treatment from the Kint Institute. Mark has published and presented extensively on incorporating the arts into psychotherapy treatment, and more specifically, its application for serving gender and sexually diverse clients and families.

**Margot Escott's** background includes over 35 years of practicing as an LCSW in Naples, Florida, and for the past ten years studying and teaching improvisational theatre techniques to benefit people of all ages with physical disabilities and emotional challenges and those who interact with them. This includes weekly specialized classes for adults with Parkinson's, MS, ALS, and their care partners, in addition to classes for children and young adults with anxiety disorders, ASD, SPD, and ADHD. She also lectures and offers workshops nationally and internationally through NASW associations to teach others to use improvisational theatre exercises to benefit their clients.

**Joel Gluck**, MEd, RDT-BCT, CIIP-CT is a drama therapist, executive coach, theater artist, long-time meditator, and creator of Insight Improvisation, a drama therapy approach integrating meditation and mindfulness with theater and psychotherapy. Joel teaches Insight Improv internationally, with frequent programs in the US and Asia. Since 1994, he has applied creative arts techniques and meditation with corporate leaders, incarcerated individuals, tsunami survivors, and others. Author of the book *Insight Improvisation: Melding Meditation, Theater, and Therapy for Self-Exploration, Healing, and Empowerment*, Joel directs the certification process for Insight Improvisation worldwide. He lives in Belmont, Massachusetts with his wife, Orapin, and their two children.

**Traci Howland**, LMFT, is in private practice in Connecticut, where she works with individuals, families, and couples. Trained in Women's Trauma Recovery (TREM), Evidence-Based Practice (MATCH) and working with Autism, Traci enjoys her work in trauma healing and changing maladaptive ways of being through an infusion of mindfulness, action therapies, and focus work surrounding family systems, core beliefs/values and boundaries. Traci has presented at conferences, professional development days, and as a guest speaker for MFT graduate classes on topics such as Mindfulness for MFT's, core beliefs/values and inner critic and trauma responses. Traci's passion, enthusiasm, and authentic nature invites vulnerability and play. She finds peace in nature, gardening and mindfulness practices and enjoys spending time with her family and dogs.

**Robert James Miller II**, PhD, is a licensed psychologist practicing in Princeton, New Jersey. Dr. Miller provides child, adolescent, adult psychotherapy, specialized trauma centered therapy,

and parenting/family consultation. Dr. Miller is a recognized expert in the field of forensic child psychology and bonding and provides expert witness testimony in court related child protection matters. He has served as the post graduate training director in San Francisco and New York for the *Institute for Developmental Transformations* and currently supervises students in Beijing, China, and Hong Kong. As a former supervisor for creative arts therapies at the *National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Yale University*, Dr. Miller provided drama therapy for combat veterans and their families and created the *Home Front Veteran's Theater* touring original works with combat veteran actors in the New Haven area, receiving a National Center Award. In addition to his clinical and forensic work, Dr. Miller serves as a board member for a child abuse prevention program in schools (Miss Kendra) and has published several articles on the use of improvisational/arts process in trauma treatment for children and adults.

**Sean A. Mulvihill** is an actor, writer, and director for theatre and film. He is currently the Artistic Director of the Exuberant Theatre Company in New York City. He produced and directed the award-winning documentary feature film, *Act Social* starring Colin Mochrie (*Whose Line is it, Anyway?*). In the film, Sean and Colin lead a group of teachers and scientists who wonder if improv can save the world. [www.actsocialfilm.com](http://www.actsocialfilm.com). Previously Sean created the documentary film *Living Luminaries: On the Serious Business of Happiness*, starring Eckhart Tolle.

**Jami Osborne**, LMHC, is a Massachusetts Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and MaMHCA Certified Clinical Supervisor, a registered Drama Therapist-Board Certified Trainer, EMDRIA Certified clinician, with a background in Trauma-informed treatments and Shamanic healing. Jami loves including expressive therapies in her counseling work. Jami has 30+ years of experience employing Integrative Holistic Health and mind/body counseling approaches. Life transitions, spiritual growth and transitions, complex medical & mental health concerns, & trauma are current areas of specialty. As a Rehearsals for Growth trainer, Jami brings the group-based games and exercises to working with individuals.

**Odalys R. Padrón**, LMFT, holds RfG-CP, EMDR-CP, and IFS-Level 1 and Level 2 certifications. Following Agency work for 8 years she established a private practice in 2017, working with middle-age/young adults in transitional life stages and specializing in loss/grief, depression, anxiety, trauma, stress, self-esteem, and relationship/ family conflict issues. RfG has provided Odalys a platform to give herself permission to be whimsical and daring.

**Assael Romanelli**, PhD, is a clinical social worker, licensed Couple & Family Therapist, as well as an international improviser and trainer based in Israel. He is the founder and director of The Potential State Institute and serves as the artistic director of the Or Chozer Playback Theatre ensemble. Over the past 15 years, Dr. Romanelli has trained a wide range of laypersons and professionals to become more spontaneous, playful and effective in their life and work. He

specializes in incorporating improvisation skills in clinical settings. Assael publishes regularly in Psychology Today, The Potential State Podcast and YouTube channel.

**Daniel J. Wiener**, PhD, RDT/BCT is licensed psychologist who taught Marriage and Family Therapy for 23 years as a Professor at Central CT State U. Founded in 1984, his approach, Rehearsals for Growth (RfG), uses improvisational theatre games in clinical work, specializing in working with relationships. Dan has presented over 270 professional workshops in 10 countries, training over 1200 therapists and is an Author/Editor of 5 books and over 50 published chapters and articles on RfG and other Action therapies. He is the recipient of Psychodrama's Zerka T. Moreno Award (ASGPP), and both Drama Therapy's Gertrude Schattner Award and a Research Award (NADTA). He serves as an editor for *Drama Therapy Review* and a board member for the 'Miss Kendra' child abuse prevention program in schools.