

Why use comedy for training?

An approach to interactive learning for teachers, trainers, coaches and performers

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Comedy is a powerful medium that can be used for just about any kind of teaching, training or learning activity that you care to name, covering a wide range of goals and situations. This is a dynamic and exciting new approach to training activities, based on innovative methods evolved over decades by a pioneer in the field.

What is it about comedy that makes it such a powerful tool for learning and self-development?

1) Like children, we all learn and develop fastest when we're having fun.

2) Comedy is cool. Comedy is rock-and-roll. Comedy can enable us to:

- be who we really are
- be fully in the present moment
- thrive on the unexpected
- develop courage, spontaneity, charisma and energy
- create and use our own authentic humour, naturally and organically

3) The formats and genres used in comedy offer a useful array of models for different training objectives. Stand-up comedy, for instance, is an excellent model for activities to develop solo capabilities such as self-presentation or engaging an audience; double-act is a useful format for practicing one-to-one interactions such as interview or negotiation; while sketches are an ideal vehicle for developing skills for group situations. The improvisational approach to comedy used in this book means the exercises are extremely versatile and adaptable.

4) Comedy based training is great for:

- Making training exciting and fun, and drawing in reluctant participants
- Building confidence, overcoming nerves and reducing stress
- Promoting individual expression, creativity, imagination and innovation
- Developing self-presentation and communication skills
- Fostering teamwork and co-operation
- Providing tools for leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution
- Addressing issues that would be difficult to deal with in a serious context

The ability to think on your feet and improvise creatively is a major component in comedy. The activities in this book incorporate improvisation as a key element in interactive learning.

Training with Comedy presents a unique and highly innovative take on training and learning, using comedy based methods which the author has evolved and adapted himself.

Here are some examples of people who will find this approach useful:

- Trainers, coaches and consultants working with business and organisations, looking for outcomes such as professional self-presentation, sales technique, customer care, management skills or team-building; or wishing to liven up a conference suffering 'death by Powerpoint'
- Teachers in schools, colleges and universities – not only drama, language or literacy tutors, but also those who wish to encourage confidence, creativity and self-esteem, engage reluctant learners, or address topical issues, such as behavior or bullying, in an innovative and engaging way
- Performers such as musicians, actors or spoken word artists who wish to incorporate humour and comedy into their work or expand their creativity and imagination
- People who work in specialized fields such as youth work, special needs, prison, health services, disability or mental health, where activities need to respond to very specific participants' abilities and issues
- Anyone who wants to revitalize group activities of any kind

About Gerry Thompson

Irishman Gerry Maguire Thompson is a highly experienced comedian, training consultant and author. He has led courses and seminars and spoken at conferences for over twenty years in Europe and USA. Gerry is director of Positive Comedy Training.

Gerry had a former career as an architect and is qualified by the Royal Institute of British Architects. Following this he moved into holistic health and personal development, and then into comedy.

Gerry has trained many thousands of people using comedy for personal and professional development; and he has run many programs showing other trainers how to use his methods.

Gerry has run training and consultancy programmes for staff of such diverse organisations as American Express, Allied Domecq, Otis Lifts, DAF Trucks, Legal and General, Ocean Village Cruises, Glastonbury Festival, MIND Mental Health, the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association, HIV-AIDS Alliance, plus a wide range of schools, colleges and universities, youth offending teams, and many government and public service authorities.

Gerry performs stand-up comedy and writes scripts. He is author of a number of books of humour and personal development, including titles such as *Meditation Made Easy*, *The Shiatsu Manual* and the best-selling parody of human relationship, *Cats are from Venus, Dogs are from Mars*. These have sold hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide in nine languages. Gerry holds MA and BSc honours degrees from Belfast University.