

# Smart Ass Success Teleseminar

## Week 5 – Flowing With Obstacles

With Avish Parashar ([www.MotivationalSmartAss.com](http://www.MotivationalSmartAss.com))

Interviewer: Mike Worth ([www.PlayEternal.com](http://www.PlayEternal.com))

Avish: Welcome everyone. This is Avish Parashar and you are listening to the Smart Ass Success Teleseminar Series. This is Week #5, and today your expert is going to be none other than me.

Our topic today is going to be how do you flow and deal with obstacles and setbacks that come along the way. Now, since I find the teleseminar has worked better in an interview Q and A format because someone can ask me questions and make sure I'm being clear and not go often things over, I've invited someone to actually service the interview. I know on the rest of these calls, I'm the interviewer and I interview the expert. This call the role that is going to be reserved and so today I asked my friend, Mike to serve as the interviewer so hello, Mike.

Mike: Hey, Avish.

Avish: Well, thank you very much for doing this mike and just you know, let's do a little propaganda right at the top. Mike is not in the kind of motivation kind of self-Improving field, however Mike is – I used you actually Mike as an example in a couple of the previous teleseminars, for those who remember Scott Ginsberg's session which was week 1, on that we talked about morning pages. And Mike, I used you as an example of someone who went through the morning pages process and really basically in three weeks suddenly completely changed the direction of your life because you realized what you really wanted to do so people should be little familiar with at least your story.

Mike: Yeah, uh-huh.

Avish: And just for people who might be interested right now, Mike is – he's Mr. Videogame. He co-owns the videogame studio in Philadelphia so Mike why don't you give a quick 10 second plug for anyone, you know, this is a call about personal development just for anyone who might be just learning more about you and what you do.

Mike: Sure, sure. My 10 second plug is I started in a field of writing music for German television and videogames. Actually through several mentors, one of whom you might know is Scott Ginsberg, one of you might know Fred Gleck, and one of you might know Avish Parashar, helped me developed my business skills to the extent that I was approached by several of videogame developers to make some videogame studio called Play Eternal and we're based out of Philly. We're currently building titles for Xbox Live Arcade or the Sony Playstation Network. And if you see our titles out there, buy them because you kick people like me to bringing bacon home to my five-year-old daughter.

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Avish: Super and that's Play Eternal. Is it playeternal.com? Is that signed up yet?

Mike: It is playternal.com. Yup. It's just down for this week, because we're migrating to a new server. But as of now, we'll be back in a couple of days.

Avish: Okay, super and for my personal propaganda, obviously, you know, the listeners you know my website to go to sign up for this call of online website which is motivationalsmartass.com. Lots of information there about what I do as well as my free humorous personal development blog, some additional products and you get a free e-book which is a thesis for this teleseminar. The e-book is 7 steps to figure on getting what you really want. I took those 7 steps and that's giving the format for this teleseminar. So go check that out, go check Mike's stuff out.

Okay, here's what we're going to do today. I'm going to turn the question portion over to Mike in just a moment. Today we're going to talk about is how do you flow with obstacles? How do you deal with setbacks because up to this point we deal with the planning process of once the rubber hits the road things will happen. So we're going to talk about how to Improvise and just for everyone listening, my background is in Improvisational comedy. I studied it, performed it, directed, and taught it for about 20 years now. I run my own group and out of that group came the skills and experience built. For my current speaking business which is showing individual and organizations how they can use ideas of Improv comedy to think quickly, work together, communicate effectively and deal with change without wanting about it.

So that's kind of my background real quick to give you an idea of where's its coming from. For those who are curious, Mike, I known him for a very long time, but Mike also performed Improv comedy we made for a long time so he is familiar with this topic. Plus, as my friend Fred as Mike is going to be playing the role of Mr. Stupid which I got all excited and passionate in talking about stuff. If I go off over anything or I drop a line and explanation or maybe it's a good idea, but you're not sure how it works, Mike is going to ask me those questions to keep me on this and make sure that you, the listener get as much as out of this as possible. So Mike are you ready to get started?

Mike: I'm ready to become Mr. Stupid.

Avish: Excellent role you'd been training for for a long time. So let's get started Mike and I will turn it over to you. You are now the interviewer and I'm the interviewee so let's go ahead and just start, ask me what you want to know about Improvising with the unexpected.

Mike: Okay, awesome. Hi, Avish, now I'm going to start from being Mr. Stupid specially starting with your website, in the Motivational Smart Ass that implies a certain level of comedy and Improv, you know if you know, if we're in comedy so why is it that in Improvisation to be such as critical skill outside of a comedy and what do you feel makes Improvise such as a critical skill for life?

Avish: Well you know the whole premise here that, everything, you know, things will always go wrong. It's not, I want to like to using my feedback. The audience that everything sometimes change, the things sometimes not go as planned. So people around you sometimes, who inexplicably see the idiotic things and the answer obviously is yes. Always goes wrong even when you have the best plan in the world. There is always unpredictable events. Most of the unpredictable events, we're going to talk about and then talk about how other people, you know, you go out and you put something out to market and clients or the prospects don't respond the way you want. Or you hired a vendor to do some work for you, and they are supposed to have it to you by Monday and then three weeks later, you're still waiting on it. Things are like that.

Sometimes the unexpected could be a market condition: when the economy cracked out and giants ping, as I like to call them, based on this Improv exercise I do where every time they ring a bell every time I do it, change. That's why I call it the unexpected event things. But things can come in big and small sizes. But if you – so if you just have a plan. You've have a great plan. But if you're not able to deal with the unexpected then that plan is going to break down at some point. Maybe tomorrow and maybe in a few weeks and maybe in a year so the small plan is not very long and it's not very ambitious gold or green. You might be able to complete it from start to finish without anything changing. But the people who really succeed in life and who really take their lives to the next level are the ones who not only plan well, but when things go wrong, they either of course correct it, fix it, deal with it and they even Improv their situation when things go wrong. So I honestly believe that people that you see a the top of food chain or real living full lives aren't the ones who had the best plan. So planning is important. They're the ones who're just able to flow the best when plans went wrong, like anyone can succeed when everything goes right. What separates people, those who succeed from those that fail, is how well they roll with it when things go wrong.

Mike: That makes a lot of sense. I would ask a question, how because well when something goes wrong, why don't you just take a setback and make another plan? What do you need Improv for?

Avish: Oh, yeah and that's – a good question and actually, Improvising, it gives a bad rep, right? I'm a professional speaker so when I tell people I got to go work on my speech in Improvisation, oh why don't you just synchronize it. You know, Improvisation isn't about flying without a net or having no plans. And it's not even about not thinking. In fact, training your mind to think in a certain way. Actually you're right that if something goes wrong then coming up with the new plan, that to me is Improvisation. What's not Improvisation if something goes wrong you shake your head in the thing and ignore it or you just try to work your existing plan harder like, oh I just got to put more effort into this. That for me is not Improvise. By making a new plan when something goes wrong, to me is a part of Improvisation.

Mike: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. You're right, so take a step back so these -- which is, you know when you see the Improv comedy -- I'm sorry, I'm want to say Improvisation,

it's not fair to Improve comedy. Improvisation it's a tact of thinking about the work in a certain way. There are skills and drills that you do that are designed to kind of make you better at the state theatrics of Improvisation. So you kind of touching on that already. So in your experience when you see people applying Improvisation off stage what skills are applied for people who are asking to not perform it and what, how to surprise them and what skill do you see them kind of manifesting or abilities or mindsets?

Avish: Yeah, you know, it's funny when people see or hear Improve or Improv comedy, they think of TV shows like "Who's Line Is It Anyway?" And it just looks ridiculous. So a common question is, how can we possibly apply this to the real world because Improv comedy is really goofy, stupid, silly things. So you know, like you mentioned, what are the skills?

Well, the underlying skills are the same whether you're Improvising on the stage to make people laugh or you are Improvising at your job to fix something went wrong. Whether you're Improvising your personal life when you're having kind of issue on family vacation. The underlying skills are the same. The application is maybe a little different. On stage you apply your Improv skills in a way to make people laugh. In the business world you apply your Improv skills in a way to build profit. In personal, maybe you apply it ways to increase fun or increase your relationship things like that so the skills that lead a great Improvisation are the same. It's how you apply them that changes.

And I can go through the skills. There are a lot of them: there's what you focus on, quick thinking, the thing "if and." And I believe we are going to dig in to all those all in detail as we go through the call. I think that's – when you think about in terms of Improv comedy, you'll be confused as to seems, but you just think about thinking quickly and dealing with the expected and it should be pretty obvious how this whole applies.

Mike: Right, right so I mean, but you know, there's a thousand ways to deal with the unexpected. I mean the first thing, what are the same things that I would think about when I think of people not dealing well with unexpected is the quote panic attack, you know. "Ahhh, it's going to ruin everything!" So I mean, you said, dealing with the unexpected, that's still pretty broad. What are the specific skills, for example there's got to be some core skill that lets people react to the unexpected effectively, right?

Avish: Yeah, right, yeah. Well in fact the first – and I am going to give them an order that I think work best in case people working on them and learning them. But you know, you can do them in a different order but.

Mike: Right but this is...

Avish: The way people should focus on developing and the number one thing, the number skill that I think the world will be such an infinitely better place if everyone developed this skill, it's just emotional control. Or in a broader term, emotional impulse control. And what that means, is that I think so many people's problems are caused because their

emotions get away from them and they say something or do something without controlling themselves first. And you can see this – I mean if you think about bad customer service experiences, right when someone got irritated and says something, they snap. They're unable to control their emotions. If you're been in a relationship right, this is when your partner snaps at you. You know for something, if they're just emotional about something else that has nothing to do with you, but they just get angry. And that inability to control the emotions, I think is what really stop people from Improvising.

Because when things go wrong – again, we talk about the second which is the planning and how making a new plan is a part of Improvisation. When things go wrong, it's very like you said, it adds stress. So a person's first instinct, well you don't know what your first instinct is right? If you let emotion take over you, you're going back to your default response. And if your default response is not optimal, then when bad things happen, when the unexpected happens, you are going to have suboptimal response, does that make sense?

Let me give you an example, you probably experience someone who, when they get stressed, they snap. And then they come back to you a day later or an hour later and were like, oh I'm sorry, you know, I always get like that when I get overwhelmed. It gets really touchy. It is so common, like to me that, that's a weak statement. Because if you know this is an issue for you and you're not doing anything about it, what you're saying is my default response is to be a jerk. And so please forgive me.

I think we all have those rare buds that happen and when something happens once every couple of years your response would poorly. Our goal is not be perfect, but if something happens to you every week, you know, a couple of times a month and you just let emotion take over to the point where you snap at another people or insult clients. I mean we see managers do this, right. I have a wealth of stories from someone very close to me who has a horrible manager, a horrible boss. He gets stressed, just like snaps at people in the middle of meetings, in public as employees, think illogically for no reason, because he has never learned emotional control. Which okay, let's not respond with the first emotional response to rather control our response.

Mike: Right, well.

Avish: I know I just kind of dumped a lot of info there, so let me know if there are any questions, to clear up on that.

Mike: Its great and it makes a lot of sense. It does make a lot of sense, but the thing, it's funny. And this is the problem we would go, into I'm kind of you know, and I'm just kind of going along with this. But it's funny because the way it sounds, it sounds like, obviously the opposite of Improvisation. So I want you to clarify this, because what you describe is, okay our first impulse is to axe, which is not very healthy. So a lot of the ability to kind of check yourself and be like what's the best response? So that instead of just immediately firing from the hip. So it feels like it's not Improvisation because it

seems like you are quote stopping and planning. But I don't think you mean it that way. It's a natural response you get emotion. How do you check it but make it feel Improvisational, meaning it may not like kind of lacking a gap, but instead you look at it in a right way? Does that make sense?

Avish:

Yeah and that's a great question and when I talk quick thinking and I said, oh you got to stop a little bit so that makes no sense so it's a very good question and there's two parts of the answer to that. The first is that I said, when your emotion kicks in what happens is your default response kicks in. If you're learning a new skills such as how do you deal with the unexpected, you need to retrain that default response so a great Improviser who's on stage. And they seem to be throwing responses from a comedy standpoint, they're able to, no matter what happen, they are somehow able to kick out some kind of really funny thing that everyone likes. And build a scene and just seems to be really both artistic and hilarious at the same time. They are able to do that because, and they're able to say those things like, you know, with one tenth of a second, they are able to do that because they, over the years have trained that default response. So the first way to retrain your default response is to pause and not – it's to stop doing what you're already doing. So if your initial default response is to be mean or stressed or angry, the first step to retrain is to stop that. And that's when pause and break comes in as far as control.

The second thing is that again, Improvising is just, you know, again it's not quick thinking is part of Improvising, that's not the whole piece and so there's nothing wrong that when someone, when something doesn't go as planned. They pause and think it through for just little bit, that again, like you said before, making a new plan still Improvising just because you take a couple of seconds before you respond so you're not Improvising. Improvising doesn't mean not thinking. It doesn't mean, what do you do when things don't go as planned.

Mike:

Right, right and it does seem like, like I know what you're saying because it does seem such a natural response to get emotional and to check that. And you've already touched base on like how you not get emotional. But even when thinking about it, is it sometimes hard not to be attached, so attached, to your emotions? Even when you're thinking about it, even though you haven't said anything, still really upset to the thing that has happened. You still really – so how do you kind of deal with that emotional attachment that you have, you know, when you're at that emotion response?

Avish:

Yeah and I'm not here to tell you that you can't ever get mad. But the problem is when you response with emotion, I mean, I was using the word suboptimal, which is a very delightful sounding word. But it belies how devastating it can be. Because when you respond out of emotion, usually what happen is you can take a situation from mildly bad and make it infinitely worse. It's like, the worse argument I ever got in with someone in my life was they're mad about something and I didn't think they will justified on what they were mad at all. But they're talking on and on and raging on and on and I just sat there and keep my mouth shut, keep my mouth shut, keep my mouth shut. Then finally I had enough and exploded back and I was like, I'm going to say this one line that will

make them shut them up. And of course all I did when I responded is to make the situation 10 times worse. And that's what happens when we let our emotions respond. When we respond out of emotion first, so it's so critical that we do this which why the first thing and the simple three step process and I teach people to do and I call it PVT and those letters P, V and T stand for simple technique called pause, breath, think and I know this sounds so elementary and in fact it is.

I learned this technique myself when I was out doing programs for elementary school kids to teach them how to not bully and how to not respond in violence. And all PVT means is when something goes wrong or when you're about to open your mouth, pause, take a couple of deep breath, it could be one, it could be 10 depending on the situation and think before you open your mouth. And that's all really is to it, because what that does is to pause, to pause is to stop. To stop from the default response which is probably suboptimal. Breathing calms you down, lets the emotion dissipate and then thinking and we're going to get to this and I do want to talk about just a little bit about the picture. But thinking lets you put things in perspective before you respond. It's a simple three step process, but I mean you can tell me if the world, if everyone in the world where they simply pause, breath and think before they open their mouth make the world be such a better place for living.

Mike: Oh yes. Nice example right now, the world would be better, you know. When you touched also on that idea of, kind of keeping your idealistic picture that put things in perspective. Could you elaborate on that a little bit, I think that's kind of important part of the PVT.

Avish: Yeah, well, here's what you want to do is when the unexpected happens, and let's just say if – let's say if the customer is calling you and they are cancelling a contract that you had. And it was really a big contract and it was going to help pay for things and blah-blah-blah. So the first step is to pause, breath, think so that you don't respond in anger, you know, call them idiot or a swindler for taking for renegeing on a contract. Because that is going to do is increase the argument, increase the bad emotion that you certainly won't be able to build a business relation about it.

The thinking part is to think about your big picture goals before you respond. This is so critical because most people's time horizon is so short when it comes to their immediate day to day actions. They think about what's going to feel good in the next five minutes as opposed to what's going to make a difference in my life in five years. When the unexpected happen this is how people respond, they don't think things through. They look at this tunnel vision like, oh my god I can't believe this person calling me canceling my contract. What I would second recommend to do is step back, breath, pause, breath and you think about okay, what are my goal here, what is my long-term goal. My long-term goal is to build a successful business. Is to make a profit, make some money.

Then you think through well, okay what's the best response to this client to achieve that goal. 99 percent at the time is not going to be to yell at them and to exacerbate the conflict. It's going to be the "yes, and" idea which I know for a fact we're going to talk

about later so we'll save that place. It's going to be more about – okay how I can work with this person, right now they're in financial problem, how can we fix the situation or maybe if I'm just understanding in the short-term they'll be able to come back in a year.

You know if you're able to pause, breath and think and think for the long-term and if you have a modicum of intelligence, you realize that's it's very rare that exacerbating the conflict is going to help you out in any way shape or form in the long-term. But you have to pause, breath and think to give your mind a chance to process that. I think that for many Improvisations now is that no one thinks through long-term. They think about I'm feeling an emotional pressure, they want to relieve pressure by getting it out of my system. Let the consequences be damned as what they are going to do to me in the long run. And you know, there are people who you probably know who – that's what happened to you and that's what happened to me where you go to the situation and you look back and you're like, oh I wish, a month ago, I wish I just kept my mouth shut or I wish I hadn't said that a month ago.

Mike: (laughs).

Avish: One of the theme is some of this call has been – for activities last week; we talked about productivity, getting more than less time. If you're able to deal with the unexpected and deal with conflict and much better, you're able to really devote your attention on moving your life forward to suppose that fixing the things from the past and I think that's the really the important thing that makes huge benefit you get once you start thinking about your big picture before you respond.

Mike: Right, right, that makes a lot of sense. So you know, including that, I'm going to jump on to the question that I want to ask, but it seems there's a nice little link here, because you just said this great thing that I wish I had said better. I wish I had the other, conversely, when you make those extra decision with your PVT, you usually feels much happy about yourself so leading question, but how important is the attitude and the mentality in those moments. I mean, how important is it to have the right and have the right mentality?

Avish: It is critical, I think and I don't want to be one of these power of positive thinking people, because I'm not someone who thinks you should just push your head down and get embarrassed and you know, always see the rose petals on every aspect of life. But what I learned, what I learned first as a teacher and director of Improvisation is that there was two mentalities that if people had or if I could get them to develop, they would flourish into a great Improvisers. Here's a story, you will certainly recognize this story because you were there with me, but over the years of running my Improv group, Polywumpus, in the first few years when we hold as a teams and people come in and audition for the group. The first few years, I used to be really impressed with resumes and straight technical Improv skill. If someone come in and they would have said in Improv, they may be performed with another group or to classes and you know I was at oh, this person knows what they are doing and then they get on stage and then they do

something technically correct versus a naïve who never had any Improv experience and they will be sloppy.

Over the years however of gaining experience teaching and working with Improvisers, what I realized is that you know, there was only two things that – I only started looking for really one thing which is combination of the two mentalities. Is, did the person look like they were fun? Did they look like I would have fun working with them? And they do look like they were having fun when they're Improvising? Number one and number two is we're they willing to take chances and mess things up or react like they're expert to do thing right. What I found is that, the people who came with that attitude for those combine of those two attitudes regardless of how much or how little Improv skill they had before, where the ones who got better the fastest and become the top performers in the group.

In fact they got to a point where a lot of Improv experience when you came in to audition for my group would work against you. Because, hey if you came here with a lot of experience and I'm not like, "Hey! What's wrong with you?" Why do you have all this experience and that's what you're performing. Or what I had to do with a lot of members of the group I had to retrain them. I have to breakdown all these preconceived notions they had, all this fear of failure. There was a small number of people are able to frame this mentality. And once they did that, they again took off and get much better, but that's much harder to train than skill. So that's why I recommend to take a novice with the right attitude than an experienced person with the wrong attitude. So if you want to succeed, be willing to have fun and be willing to make mistakes then fail. We have those two attitudes we able to Improvise. And really pause, I want to say one more thing about that, I want to pause to make sure that the thing I said does make sense.

Mike: Yes, it actually does make sense. The failure thing can be tough to think about it in, I'm going to say real life scenario. So maybe you can talk a little bit about how you could see that happening. Because you know, a person could say, "Well failure means that I didn't get my contract, I didn't meet my milestone. I don't want to be embracing that kind of failure like because that's going to cost my business." So what does it mean to be embracing fun in your work life, in your romantic life, in your family life? Makes perfect sense, totally. Its low stress, but embracing failure can be a little bit scary. There was must be a way to figure what constitute the right failure, what constitute the wrong failure. Does that make sense?

Avish: Yeah and it's a good question and I got, you know, obviously we don't want – I am not saying failure is okay. Failure sucks and failure has consequences. If you go out and try to start a business and it failed. You lost a lot of money, you can lose your house, you know if you have loans, I mean you can be messed up for longer time. You're going to be contacting to sales again. They're very real consequences to failure, but here's the thing, I'm not talking about accepting failure, what I'm talking about is accepting the possibility of failure, but what I mean by that is that you're going to fail or you're going to succeed and stressing about the possibility of failure does nothing but make you

more likely to fail. We creatures of control and Improvisation is about relinquishing control and one of the ways control manifest is we feel that if we're afraid of failure, we feel like we have to do something.

Doing nothing is the hardest in the world for people but weirdly enough, we convinced ourselves that worrying about something is doing something. Had you ever had a problem that is coming off and you know maybe meeting your grading or some event it's like, oh my god, everything is going to be horrible, I'm worried about it and then you somehow distract yourself like an hour maybe workout maybe with friends and then at the end of that, all of the sudden you remember that meeting that is coming up and now you're distracted again, but you suddenly feel guilty or more stressed because you just spent two hours not worrying about it like you feel bad that you weren't worrying about it. So for some reason we convince ourselves that thinking and working about something is actually doing something and it's not. All you do when you worry about something is take energy and focus away from working on the solution which is the only thing that's going to make likely succeed. Does that make sense?

Mike: That does make sense actually and then they really especially that point about accepting the possibility of failure and then moving beyond that. And just giving yourself the freedom to not think about that anymore and to accept it.

Avish: Yeah, well, I got this actually, and I think you know the story as well. It's from this book called "The Book of Five Rings" which was written by a 17<sup>th</sup> century samurai. And in there he talks about this line, which is "The way of the warrior is the resolute acceptance of death." Which basically means that back when you were sword fighting, a warrior had to accept the possibility of dying. Because if you didn't it, he would be afraid. And that fear would make him stretch and make him tight and unable to perform at his best. The warriors who accepted, "Hey I'm going into a sword fight, I very well may die in this." But the one that said that's a very real possibility, put that aside and never think about it again and put 100 percent of your focus on not dying, on winning the sword fight. So ironically the ones who were worried about dying were the most likely to die in the same with in Improv. The ones that are most worried about finding how to make the audience laugh or what if they give me a suggestion I can't deal with, were the mostly likely not to do well.

In sales the ones who are the most worried about not making sales are the ones who won't make sales. So once we put this aside that failure and I got to tell you, I don't know if you're familiar the law of attraction. So let me tell you, law of attraction people do not like it when I explain this on demo, because they hear me say it and they think I'm putting my attention on failure. Like, oh you can't even consider the possibility of failure so you should never and they get mad at me when I talk about it. But what's ironic, is if we just step back and say, you know what I used to do because I used to get nervous before speaking.

Let's talk about speaking because a lot of people get nervous. And I do this "resolute acceptance of death" if I start to feel nervous, you know what, you might fail. This

might be the worse speech ever. So, you'll deal with it, what's going to be will, what's going to be will be. But once I accept that, I don't think about failure at all anymore. It's very freeing to say to yourself, hey if the worst happens, I'll deal with it, I'll survive because then you don't worry about it anymore and all of the sudden your energy goes up, your focus goes up and you perform much better.

Mike: Yes, that makes a lot of sense, just want to reference the Mike Show, but when I was in Los Angeles teaching my game, to five the top publishers in the world, I mean guys who have done you know the multi-dollar games. I was the pitch guy. And I got it in there and there was a moment where I was like I am about to get in front of people who are able to give me 2 million dollars. And I'm going up against every – I can make an absolute fool out of myself. I could make our entire studio of 18 people look like a bunch of idiots. And same thing, I did that. I accepted that that's a very real thing. I prepared as well as I could be, I could kick the power link out of the wall. But once that happened, it was quote "left at the door." And I just said, all I'm going to do is go in, have fun, get in the moment, fall in love with my product all over and again and you know, that's it. I didn't have any lingering mental or emotional conflicts about the possibility of failure because I'd acknowledge it before going into the room. So kind of...

Avish: That's a sales thing right. I mean the sales people are, where their mantra is "every no is one step closer yes." And they reframe even what failure is, so it just doesn't bother them. And since one of the themes of this whole teleseminar series is just how to figure out what you really want and create a plan and go get it. And my piece here is dealing with unexpected things along the way.

These two attitudes, of fun and failure really define whether or not you're going to succeed at something. And by that what I mean if you and everybody listening, thinks about an activity that they excel at, that they're really good at that something you do really well. And you know your passion about, you can hear yourself following through on. Chances are when you think about it, when you think about it you have fun when you're doing it and when you do it, you aren't really afraid of failure. Failure may have consequences, but you're not afraid of failure. Like for me that Improv comedy. I can go on with the stage and it's fun for me to do it. And I have got so much experience doing it that there is really very little stress or fear about oh my god what if I can't figure out anything to say. So it's all just fun.

On the flip side if you think about something you hate doing and you don't feel you're very good at chances are when you do it or when you think about it, you don't think about think as fun and you could put so much importance on it so you're afraid of messing it up, this for me it's like sales in phone calling. I don't excel much in phone calling. When I think about phone calling, I don't think about it as a fun thing. I know some people talk about phone calling, oh its fun, it's like a game. For me, I think about it horrible, horrible, horrible activity. And failure, for me when I make phone calls or when I used to make phone calls it is about building my business. Each call felt so important that I'm afraid of messing it up. I don't want to say no. I don't want them to be mad at me and so when you combine those two, it's really became connectivity. I

hate it and they're good at. If you apply those two filters to just about anything, you'll really able to see what you're good at, what you're not good at and what is potentially setting you up for long-term success.

And I realize we're moving a little away from the, you know, how do you Improvise. But as you go through the 7-week series and make your plans. Think about the long-term goals you set up. Do you approach with an attitude of fun? Are you willing to fail and think about the day-to-day activities you set up to reach that? Let's say working out for example, working out. If you're not, if haven't meet the activity fun, you're doomed and people are afraid in working their body so complicated that sometimes they'll workout and you will lose any weight that week even though everything is right and some people get really depressed by that and they thought, but again that's because they don't want to fail. If you approach it with the attitude that's okay if that doesn't work of you trust the plan, keep it fun doing the fail over the long-term so that you will succeed. Does that make sense?

Mike: Yeah, that does make a lot of sense actually. I think it's funny, it makes a lot of sense actually and I'm going to jump, I'm going to leapfrog this back into the Improv thing. Because what is this, what you're talking about is from what I've gathering is this idea of like, you know, making sure you have your focus correctly oriented. Now you just talked about the two core emotional attributes which is cultivating that love of fun and cultivating acceptance of failure. In an Improv, that makes perfect sense that you had that at a large level so you would say before about the Improvisers that were great in your groups had certain core focuses, what are the important things that separates them. Fun and failure are like the core mindsets. But what are the other thing that those should funnel into a sense of focus, right?

Avish: Yeah.

Mike: So what are some of the core focus of that...

Avish: So like the fun of failure when the unexpected happens, we've the tendency to get stressed and angry. So what I'm suggesting when it comes to that, approach your Improvisation up to the fun. And realize that hey things mess up, we may now fail. Embrace that and be willing to say okay that may happen. But that the flip side and revolt and once you've done that it comes the controlling focus and that again that PVT comes in to that t-phase, that thinking.

We already talked about the first thing to focus on when the unexpected happen is to think about the big picture. Where do I want this to go now? Where I am headed to? What's the best action I can take right now to move to the long-term goal as suppose to plus just making feel really good in this moment. And great Improvisers do that because they do that naturally. And a quick story about when I really learned the big picture. Is that in Improv comedy there were people who were really technically great Improvisers. They would do everything right, but for some reason they just weren't that entertaining. And there are other entertainers. There was other Improvisers who would make some

technical mistakes with their performance, but they're just so much fun to watch and that's the person. I want that second person in my group 10 times out of 10 over the technician. Because the second person understands the big picture which is if you're performing the show your goal is to entertain your audience. It doesn't matter how brilliant you are as an Improviser if you're to achieving your big picture goal which is to entertain the audience so when you're Improvising it's the same thing, when something goes wrong, do you complain, you bitch and moan or you say what's the big picture.

The second focus to have is to focus on what you can control and to let go of all the rest. This is the line that separate Improvisers from people that are paralyzed or people who fail, people who complain. Really not just one thing go wrong, but any moment of the day, but we're talking specifically about when your plans suddenly fails, you have a choice. You focus on what you can control or you focus on everything else. And they are three things that people focus on that they can't control that totally stops them and attracts them and prevent them Improvising. And this is why plans fail and this is why people give up. They just focus on three things. Number one, they focus on the past. So they'll start saying things like, "I wish I had started this project two weeks ago or I wish I got to grad school 10 years ago or oh man if my boss just listened to my recommendation at the last meeting we would have been in the situation." So they sit there and they start bitching about the past.

The second place, focus that does not serve them is the future. This goes back to the worry thing. The thing like, "Oh my God! Now that this went wrong, I'll never build my business", or "Oh my God! I'm never going to lose the weight to fit in my wedding dress", or "Oh my God! My boss has our status meeting now. He's going to wring me now because I messed this project up." Again, there goes nothing between worry and stress in your life, because you keep thinking about it. The third thing people focus on when something goes wrong, dozens of them, is other people. "How could they have done that?", "They haven't done what I've said" or "Oh my God! What is this person going to do now?", or you start worrying about a sales meeting coming up, "Oh my God! What is my client thinking?

So there are these three areas. Now, you cannot do anything about those three. You cannot control them. What you can do however, is influence them, but not the past. But you can influence other people, you can influence the future events. The only way you can learn to influence is by you, yourself, taking action right now. So what a great Improviser does is not worry about the things from the past, not really even worry about consequences of the future, other than that moment of big peak of thinking so they can pick a direction, and they don't really worry too much about other people. What they say is, "What can I do right now to either Improve the situation or to get me where I want to go?" It's a really simple technique but across the board, whether it's onstage, in business, in relationships, that is what great Improvisers do. People who don't are the ones you look at as unreliable, as flaky, as crazymakers, I think, as what you like to call them. Even when things don't go wrong, but especially when things go wrong, ask yourself "Am I focusing on what I can control, or am I giving power to things that I can't do anything about?"

Avish: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense, to ask that question to yourself. So this idea of asking yourself the question kinds of shifts your focus. This makes a lot of sense, because you talked about how you have to stop that blank spot, which we talked about half an hour ago, that initial default response. Well, the questions you can ask yourself would stop that. When you want order and focus, what are the questions that you think people should ask themselves? The first one is what you said, "What can I do right now, right here, with myself, to take action?" What are some other questions that you might want to ask yourself to get you out of your default response and get you into that focus point?

Mike: Yeah. It's the best way to redirect your mind. Ask yourself questions, especially when your mind is racing. So number one, like you said, is "What can I do right now, right here to fix the situation or get me to where I want. Number two is Go back to the big picture. Step back and say, "What is my big picture goal? What do I want to achieve here? The third is almost like a collection of them. Ask yourself a few of either-or questions like, "Am I focusing on the problem, or am I focusing on the solution?" When something goes wrong, people spend ninety percent of their time thinking about the problem, complaining about how bad it was. Great Improvisers spend time focusing on the solution. So Am I thinking about the solution or am I focusing on the problem? Similarly, am I focusing on blame, or am I focusing on what I can do? This is a big one.

The negative people, the crazymakers, they love to look for blame. The great Improvisers are the ones who look at progress, moving things forward. Now, this is not to say that at some point, you don't blame, that you don't want to figure out what went wrong, whether it's with a person. You do need to blame responsibility to, whether systems broke down or just random luck. But that would come later. This is where the half part of Improv comes in. To Improvise, to deal with the unexpected quickly, you first focus on solutions and progress. Secondly, you focus on looking back to whatever went wrong, so it won't happen again. So I'd say, it's probably those four. You'd be able to instantly change your focus when things go wrong. What can I do right now, right here to make this better? What is my big picture goal? Am I focusing on the problem or the solution? Am I focusing on assigning blame or making progress in the situation? I mean you can adapt your own as you go, but just with those four, you can get a lot of control.

Avish: Nice. That makes lot of sense. Actually, we're a little over halfway too, so it's an opportunity for me to sell you out a little bit. Let's pause for a second here. You share with people how they can learn more about you in this program.

Mike: Yeah sure. Real quick. Motivationalsmartass.com is my information. So go to that blog, sign up for the free eBook, check-out the blogs, there are products there. And if you go to the website, there's a teleseminar. This is week number five, there are two more weeks left. Go to at smartasssucessteleseminar. com. Right now, if you're listening to the free version, you can listen in when the calls are broadcast. However, if you want to relisten to this call, and relisten to all the calls, and get the transcription of all the calls,

plus over \$80 of bonuses from great experts, you can get the paid version, which is very cheap. However, maybe a week or so after the last call, on December 13<sup>th</sup>, this deal will go away. I might still sell this package but you won't get as many bonuses, and the price will be higher. Believe me, as a person running them, I've been relistening to them because they're amazing, such great information, you can buy them over and over again. So that's smartasssucessseminar.com. Go check it out, sign-up and get yourself a paid version and we'll take it from there. We got a few more things to talk about. We're coming close to the hour here.

Avish: We're in good shape actually. There are a couple of questions I wrote down. We're going to run this through I think. Here's one too that I've noticed about Improvising which can be troublesome for people, which is, they ask the questions, they take a step back, they get a view of the big picture, and their mind still gets them to just one option. Like in an Improv comedy game where they ask, "What picture appears in your head?" And the person takes a step back, but he keeps on seeing a strainer, "It's a strainer, a strainer. I can see anything but a strainer." So what do you say to those people who still feel like they are stuck in and could only come up with one option whenever they channel these questions?

Mike: Yeah. This is really about accessing your creativity. This is a giant topic and I've written a book on it. I've done workshops on it and they are like over two hours, so if people are listening to this and they want more information, they can go to howtothinkquick.com and when you enter your email, you get a free one-hour audio I did on this whole topic of just how to access your creativity, and that's free. So, just to answer your question, I think we live in a binary world. Binary is the computer language which is 1s and 0s. We live in an either-or world, and that either-or mentality is what stops people from being creative and it's what stops people from Improvising. What you want to do is bring yourself to find the third, fourth or fifth option in a situation.

For example, in the program, you created a plan, and then you needed last week to figure out how to maximize your productivity. So then you start working on that plan, but then things don't go as planned, maybe it's not just working for whatever reason or marketing did some changes, or maybe your schedule changes. You thought you have an hour every night to work on your side business that you want to start, but now all of a sudden, your in-laws are in town for three weeks, so you can't do it. So many people will look at it as an either-or situation. They'll say, either I can work one hour every night or I can't. And that is the antithesis of Improvisation. Brilliant Improvisers, whether it's being funny or being productive, don't stop at the first or second option, because they know how to access their creativity, and they can go to howtothinkquick.com because it's a really big topic, but they know how to access their creativity. So, they don't just say Yes or No. They say "What else?"

So when you pause and rethink what the big picture is, what it does for you is step back. In fact, you have to let go of your original plan quite often to make a new one. Your new one may resemble the original one very closely, but you have to first let it go. So for our example about the one-hour-a-night person, it's not like 'I can work one hour a night or

No, I can't.' Look at the third option. What's the third option, the fourth, the fifth option? The third option is "OK, maybe I can work 15 minutes a night just to get started." Maybe the fourth option is "I can't work an hour at night, but I can work an hour in the morning." Maybe another option is "Hey, my in-laws have an expertise, I can coop them and get them to help me with this to make it even better." Those are just three things at the top of my head. You can take a lunch break, whatever it is. People can't really stop in their tracks. This is why people give up when their working a plan. It's because when unexpected things happen, and their plan no longer applies, they see their plan as their only option, it's only Yes or No. If the plan no longer applies, they stop. They may give up permanently or they stop for a month or two. They go "Oh, I thought I'm going to do it, but this thing happened." Oh no! Don't give up there! Use your creativity. Come up with a third option right away. That is what great Improvisers do. One thing that I want to mention is this idea of Status Quo. If you got a plan, or you got a life and something goes wrong, you lose your job, whatever it is, big or small. So many of us, our first instinct, that emotional response, is to want to get back to status quo. So if you are an accountant and you got downsized, you rush out and try to find another similar accounting job. This is actually from a book of one of our mutual friends, Pete Hobart, and you know that annoying phrase about turning lemon into lemonade?

Avish: Oh yeah. When life gives you lemons, you make lemonades.

Mike: It annoys me. So I read Pete's book, and he talked about it. He said the Chinese symbol for Crisis and Opportunity are the same, something like that. What he said in there is the exact idea, which is when you get knocked off course, don't try to get back to the status quo, don't try to get back to where you were. Step back, and then pause, breath and think and ask yourself, "How can I get to a place that's even better than I was before. That's how great Improvisers leverage the unexpected, that's how they make the most out of unexpected, as opposed to just scrambling to get to where you were. So step back and just ask the questions. How can I not just fix this? How can I even make it better than I was before? I mean, we all know people who got laid off, they are depressed and angry. And then a year later, they're on a whole new opportunity and they're like "Yeah, getting laid off is the best thing that ever happened to me!" But you don't have to wait to get laid off, you can do that every day. Every time your plan doesn't go quite right. You can even reevaluate on your own. You can make it happen yourself. Ask yourself, how can I make this better?

Avish: Right, right. This makes a lot of sense. You want to find more than just the binary options. You want to find three, four, eight, nine. This is a critical part of your moving forward. OK, so we got to shut up your default response and create new responses, which is awesome. Here's the thing that I think a lot of people might be interested with. You come to these ideas. I could do this, I could do this, I could do this. It's so easy for us because they are outside our comfort zones to just shut those off, "Oh no, I'm not going to do that, that's going to be too hard for the customer's money, I don't know anybody in the business, no one's going to go for it." How do you take action the right way?

Mike: Well, it's a great question, because it has been the theme through all the calls in this series. You have to take action. The two-word phrase that all Improvisers know because it's the core of Improvisation is 'Yes, and'. Say 'Yes, and' to yourself, to the situation, to the unexpected, to move forward. When you come up with ideas, some of those ideas, once you've done the pause, breath, think and you stepped back, and ask yourself in the big picture, "What can I do right now?" While you find the third, the fourth and the fifth option, some of those ideas will sound good. Like you said, because we resist change, you're going to say, "No, I can't do that, that's not going to work. My wife won't go for it."

People who are great Improvisers have managed to change the internal dialogue. From saying "No" or "Yes, but" to saying "Yes, and." And all that it means is when you come up with an idea, rather than saying "No, I can't do that", say "Yes, I can do that, and here's what else I can do." It sounds like a stupid technique, but it's so powerful. In fact, it's so powerful that I'm in the middle of a new book I'm just finishing off. I have just one topic on saying "Yes, and" instead of saying "Yes, but." So when unexpected happens, people who say "Yes, but" are whiners. Yes, but this wasn't supposed to happen. Yes, but this isn't just the one I said. Yes, but this is not my responsibility.

The people who say "yes, and" are the ones, who like we said before, take action. Yes this happened and here's what I am going to do about. Yes, my plan no longer applies and here's how I am going to make an even better plan. That is what gives you that mentality of thinking big picture and thinking of moving forward. So really start paying attention to yourself. As you go forward, how often are you saying "yes, but" to other people and to yourself. When something goes wrong, are you immediately clamping up in a shell and saying "yes, but"? Or are you open to possibilities and saying, "yes, and"?

Now, the reason great Improvisers do this, what separates them, is "yes, and" also leads you to that third option, right? If you have two options, here's my plan, yeah but the plan doesn't work. Well now you're done. It's like, well, here's my plan and now it doesn't work and here's what I'm going to do about it. Or you know, I can have – well, I mean that's the basic gist of it, right? When you respond with "yes, and" it forces you out of your comfort zone, which is what's scary. But having a comfort zone for all of your success, your solutions, where your progress is going to come from. Because if it was in your comfort zone, you'd already be doing it. So "yes, and" is scary, because it's stepping out into the unknown. That's where great Improvisers love to live, because that's the land of possibility. If you say, "yes, but," what you're doing is totally locked inside your shell.

So take action. The way you get yourself to take action is say "yes, and" to yourself. It doesn't even have to be huge action. It can be little action, little steps, you know, small things. That's fine. But just say "yes, and." Take a little action because you will learn more about your plan and whether it's working or not by taking a little action than you ever would by spending hours thinking about it. Too many people try to think through this amazing plan and let me get all of these details right. If you have a good semblance

of a plan, take some action. You'll get feedback as to this is working, this isn't, here is what else I should do.

This is all, I'm kind of rambling here because there are a lot of elements and this is where they all tie together, this ties back to the fun and failure bit. When you say "yes, and" and step out into uncertainty, you have to do it with an attitude of fun. And you have to do it with an attitude being willing to fail, because you're out in uncertainty. So if you don't have that attitude, you can't say "yes, and." So that's how it all ties together.

Mike: Right, right, it all kind of loops. And, and what's nice about the "yes, and" is that it is the specific gesture you can make when you get to this point. You've got this idea of fun and failure, you're thinking of third option, and then there's this critical moment like, "How do I take action?" You say, "yes, and." So your third option is oh, I've been laid off, I can start this part-time business. "Yes and" I've got three family members that I know need this work, so I've got my first three clients. So that's the way you create the first momentum, right?

Avish: And a lot of it is just getting some momentum. Yes, the "yes, and" is about taking one step, it's not about solving the whole problem. In fact, in Improv we do it all the time where you're supposed to act out an Improv comedy scene, where you get two actors on stage and you get a location, like they say, okay you're in a coffee shop and you know, your coworkers. And the reason some people struggle with that kind of an exercise is because they try to put together in their mind, the entire scene. Like here's the whole three minute long Improv scene, like okay, we're coworkers and we're having an affair and at some point the boss is going to walk in. Those are the improvisers that always fail.

The great improvisers are the ones who just take one step forward. Like the first person will just say something simple like, "Oh man, this is a huge report we have to get done by tomorrow." And then their partner will just accept that offer with a "yes, and" and take one step forward themselves. So no one is trying to put together this whole plan. They are just, in one step at a time, seeing where it goes, building an amazing scene. Which is easier and more entertaining than if either one of them had tried to plan the whole thing out themselves.

Mike: That makes a lot of sense. And that's really comforting to be just outside your comfort zone. So just a little bit of momentum, just a little bit of step. You know, et cetera, et cetera. So we've got five more minutes and I've got one more question, which is perfect. So there's a ton of information you gave out to us about tactics and strategies of Improvising, using "yes, and" once you had to come up with third and fourth and fifth options, you used "yes, and" to actually explore those options. That is a lot to through at a new improviser, though. I'm trying to think – are there ways that we focus and maybe the amount of improving that we do really removes some of the – the types of improvising we do on a daily basis, that we can really pour improvising resources into making those critical decisions. Are there things we can do to keep ourselves from

getting overwhelmed with these universal, getting stimulated by all sides of life's unexpected things? Does that make sense?

Avish: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely and one of the things that I like to say in a lot of my blog posts is, "Don't be stupid." Just because you can improvise, doesn't mean you have to improvise. I mean, I'm a really good improviser; I've done it for twenty years. But when I'm doing a keynote speech, I still practice, I still prepare. When I'm going on a road trip, I still, you know, make sure my car has gas and make sure my cell phone is charged up if something happens and make sure my spare tire is there. Being able to improvise doesn't mean that you don't prepare at all. It just means that if out of your basic preparations, if things go wrong, you can handle it. So there's a couple of things, you know, that before you go into an event, whether it's you're taking action on your plan or you have a big meeting coming up. Think through some of the things that could go wrong. Don't stay in this space for too long, because this is where the worriers and the crazymakers live. I said before focusing on the future, you can't control it. But you can prepare for it. So if you're actually actively doing things to prepare for the future, then it's fine to think about the future.

So you've got a meeting coming up. You know, work on your Powerpoint. Put time into your presentation. Research. Think about the questions you're going to get asked. If you've got a plan, you know, think about your own personal games. We all have buttons that get pushed that tend to throw us off. Plan for those. Like, I know, and it's taken me years, I'm an idiot. It took me 15 years of doing this to realize this. I do not -- I am not very productive the day after a road trip.

So if I am flying back after a speaking engagement on a Monday, Tuesday is never really a very productive day for me. And for years I used to feel so guilty, because I would've been gone for days. And then I would've come back. And I'm like, okay, I'm going to get 55 things done. But when I got back, my energy would be low, my motivation would be low, and I would feel so guilty. Now I plan around it. So, to me the low motivation was like a ding. And I didn't deal with it well. Now I just plan around it. So plan for these things in advance. Know your personal dings, know the buttons that get pushed. So the types of things that throw you, and plan for them in advance.

The second way is afterwards. When ding happens, don't repeat it over and over again by not paying attention. So if something goes wrong, take time afterwards to analyze, what happened, what went wrong. You know I talked about, again, when it comes to quick thinking and focusing on what you can control, great improvisers focus on solutions and progress, not blame. However, after all is said and done. After you have fixed the problem, you've dealt with the dings, you've moved on. Then go back and say, what went wrong? Why did this happen? Did the system break down? Did I do something wrong? Did we not account for something? So that in the future you can prepare for it and be ready to deal with it.

So I absolutely believe that no matter how great an improviser you are, the less you need to improvise, the better off you'll be. However, you have to be prepared to

improvise because no matter how well you prepare, something unexpected is going to happen. The universe is way too clever for you to prepare for everything.

Mike: (laughs). It's foolish and folly to try to compete with the universe.

Avish: Exactly.

Mike: This makes a lot of sense, actually. And this – I had a list of things I would like to ask you to learn more about this. Really this has covered everything I wanted to ask during this time. Well, as you can hear, there's so much to talk about that we've just scratched the surface. But we've been given some good, strong takeaways about attitude going forward with your plan and running into the events that happen as you implement your plan. Some core tactics and mindset strategies to be taking away that are rooted around improvisation. Avish, that's all I have for you. Do you have any final thoughts that you'd like to share?

Avish: Yeah, just to wrap this up real quick. First off, I'd like to thank you very much for playing my role this week and being the interviewer and asking lots of questions, making sure I'm being honest. Second, you know, thank everyone for listening. I really appreciate people tuning in. And third is, wanted to give people some information, again, for information about me and what I do, go to [motivationalsmartass.com](http://motivationalsmartass.com). There's free blogs, you can download free eBook from there and there's some products.

There's my book that you can get if you want more info on this topic. Which, that book is actually included as one of the bonuses if you sign up with our entire Smart Ass Success teleseminar paid version. So if you're listening to the free version, you'll have to tune in again next week, Tuesday, at 7 PM Eastern Time to listen to James Rick Stinson talking about how do we analyze our plans and make it more and more efficient and get even more and more effect out of what we're doing. He's from [fullpotential.com](http://fullpotential.com) and that's going to be an awesome session. However, if you're on the paid version, you get the bonuses which include my book and a bunch of other things people have donated. As well as you'll get the recordings of these calls, which you can download and to listen to at your leisure. And you get the transcription, so if you like to read, you can read the transcriptions of these calls as well. And as a reminder, one more freebie I had mentioned earlier, you can go to [howtothinkquick.com](http://howtothinkquick.com) to get a free audio on accessing your creativity.

So the final thought, you know, so much of what we talked about to this point has been about planning, preparation, thinking things through. Last thing we got into was how to be effective and take action. But I really hope people got a lot out of this is to pay attention. Because no matter how well you plan, things are going to go wrong. I see so many people not fulfilling their dreams or achieving their goals simply because something went wrong and they are unable to deal with it. It broke their spirits and they gave up. It doesn't have to be that way, it doesn't have to be that overwhelming. If you just remember – go listen to this again, listen to some of the things that we talked about.

Like having that emotional control. Pause, breathe, think. Use those questions to control your focus. You are thinking about the big picture. And what you can do, what you can control right now. And then, you know, find the third, fourth, fifth option and say "yes, and" and take a little action. Do those things and really the unexpected events won't crush you. They won't stop you. Yeah, they are going to happen, but you may even be able to use them to come out looking even better than before. So thank you once again to Mike. Thank you to everybody for listening and we will see you next week with James Rick Stinson. Thanks everybody!