

# **Making the Stumble Part of the Dance: Using Improvisational Gameplay to Empower Year 8 Girls to Courageously Collaborate in a Social Entrepreneurial Program**

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## **Abstract**

This action research project explored how 13 to 14 year-old girls engaged in improvisational gameplay activities to empower them to courageously collaborate in a social entrepreneurial program. The research was conducted with a group of 17 Year 8 students at an all-girls independent school in Perth, Western Australia. The project examined how in social entrepreneurial teams of four to five, girls participated in one 5-10-minute improvisational gameplay warm up each lesson that didactically explored and developed a “toolkit” of fundamental collaborative skills and processes. The research tracked the effectiveness of this toolkit when girls applied it to their collaborative social entrepreneurial project as their group pitched, designed, manufactured, and sold a market product that advocated for a local charity in support of a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Both qualitative and quantitative data including questionnaires, rating scales, interviews, observations, and student reflections were collected as the girls participated in and reflected upon the process over a 10-week period. The results indicate that the girls exhibited a greater sense of joy towards collaboration, and this allowed them to develop not only a better understanding of the skills associated with social entrepreneurship but inspired them to strive for personal growth in this role. The girls were taking collaborative risks more frequently with their peers and expressed that they were better equipped with the tools to embrace mistakes and transform them into innovative possibilities or solutions. All in all, throughout the development and application of their improvisational toolkit, the girls’ felt that their voices were projected with greater confidence and collective equity, both in their collaborative groups and in their role as a social entrepreneur in the broader school community.

## **Glossary**

**Collaborate:** Two or more students working together to build something greater than what they may achieve in a solo capacity. In this context, collaboration occurred with; peers, guest mentors from the University of Western Australia “Bloom Centre for Youth Innovation,” local non-for-profit organisations, spare mentors, and the local community (Bloom, 2024).

**Courageously:** Without being deterred by setbacks; bravely.

**Empower:** Make (someone) stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights.

**Improvisational gameplay:** Spontaneous game-based enactments where students take on roles and situations to create dramatic action and extend given stimulus (verbal, physical or visual). Although these improvisations are not planned, guidelines exist that act as a framework for the broader play.

**Social Entrepreneur:** A person who establishes an enterprise with the aim of solving social problems or effecting social change.

**sparc:** A non-assessed social entrepreneurial innovation program for Pre-Kindergarten to Year 10 at Perth College. Offers up rich learning experiences that combine leadership, innovation, and citizenship to cultivate girls' leadership attributes, encourage creative problem-solving and ideas that contribute to the community (Perth College, 2023).

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's):** Seventeen world development goals created by The United Nations. Created in 2015 with the aim of, "peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" (United Nations, 2015).

## **Making the Stumble Part of the Dance: Using Improvisational Gameplay to Empower Year 8 Girls to Courageously Collaborate in a Social Entrepreneurial Program**

In relation to the International Coalition of Girls' Schools (ICGS) 2023-2024 research focus, "Leveraging girls' collaborative spirit toward courageous and joyful learning," and as a Drama educator mentoring girls through a social entrepreneurial learning journey, I had markedly observed a growing sense of uncertainty when girls aged 13-14-years-old were spontaneously encouraged to be curiously collaborative and take healthy risks to explore new possibilities (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2017; Sanderson-Green, 2021). This suggested that, at this stage in their development and schooling identity, girls increasingly need a vehicle to empower them to flex their "muscles" of self-concept preservation by separating their self-worth from their work (Simmons, 2018).

The importance of transferring the power of drama "gameplay" warmups into my non-Drama social entrepreneurial sparc classroom became clear, especially in overcoming the first potential obstacle of leveraging the girls' social tendencies to capitalise on their joy of being together. I gravitated towards improvisational gameplay skills and philosophies, with specific inspiration from Tina Fey (2013), as these approaches intend to enable female participants to strive to hold one another up, understand how to achieve a common goal where all voices are included in the solution, and help girls to better understand themselves as active learners and female leaders. This very culture and intent personify Perth College's vision to shape capable, courageous and caring young women that are ready for the greater business of life, whatever that may involve in the future (Perth College, 2023). These factors were the foundational influencers when shaping my study and research question: *How does using improvisational gameplay empower Year 8 girls to courageously collaborate in a social entrepreneurial program?*

Due to the very physical and social nature of this research project, an action research methodology was most appropriate, as it accommodated for both the theoretical components to be tested in practice and progressive observations of the girls' lived experience to be encapsulated. In collecting different data types through a mixed-methods approach, the research methodology provided an authentic narrative to support the effective transferability of drama skills and processes to different learning contexts or experiences for adolescent girls (Mertler, 2020; Sanderson-Green, 2003; Stiles, 2021). Action research provided the potential to inspire systematic shifts in pedagogical approaches to foster an enhanced collaborative culture with, and for, girls in the wider learning community.

### **Literature Review**

According to research, a "distinguished entrepreneur" is an innovator, a visionary, and a person who predicts and shapes the future by taking initiative; accepting change, risks,

and failures; learning from it, and seeing what others do not see, among other things (Carayannis & Stewart, 2013). For young female entrepreneurs, specifically, research suggests that having a mentor or role-model is crucial in helping them recognise existing strengths that they may not self-actualise and tap into their untapped leadership potential (Fey 2013; Stavropoulou & Protopapa, 2013). Conclusively, social entrepreneurs are required to exhibit a great deal of self-empowerment and leadership (Kamberidou, 2020).

A crucial impacting factor to consider alongside these insights of social entrepreneurship for young women, is that adolescent girls experience a significant developmental change in the perception of their own ability to enact leadership (Archard, 2012). The barriers that may inhibit girls in their pursuit of leadership include a lack of confidence, not engaging in competitive behaviour, and the fear of failure by an inherent need to “get it right.” Girls are likely to take failure more personally and can be more compliant due to being self-conscious or feeling shame about failing (Archard, 2016; Sanderson-Green, 2003; Younger, 2016). To add to this, during adolescence, girls experience lower levels of self-confidence and more perfectionist traits than in their pre-adolescent years (Archard, 2012). Younger (2016) has, however, referenced Gibbons (2012) in proclaiming that “humour and informality” can be effective tools for girls in overcoming this.

Interestingly, experts suggest that, like children, adolescents benefit from learning through play and more informal social interactions, assisting them to not only develop important skills such as problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking, but empowering them to overcome the fear of failure and develop a more positive attitude toward challenges (Johnston et al., 2022). To add to this, when students engage in play-based activities, it can reduce early adolescent cortisol levels, while increasing the neuroplasticity that is fundamental for students’ readiness to change, adapt, and regenerate during collaboration (Sobel, 2021). Alarmingly, however, 13 to 14 year-old girls are at a phase of their schooling career where they experience reduced teacher-endorsed opportunities for play-based learning and have adapted their social expectations when it comes to embracing or engaging in play (Johnston et al., 2022).

Improvisational gameplay, in particular, has been linked to enabling students to break away from expectations, set patterns of thinking and allowing them the opportunity to think in a divergent manner (Lewis et al., 2013). Specifically, after playfully navigating through improvisational mistakes, Stiles (2021) states that, “Your mindset is more open; you begin to look at the work with a curiosity to learn and desire to improve” (p. 125). Contextualising this for an all-girls’ context, the utilisation of games as metaphors or analogies can provide girls with the time and space to reassure, reiterate, and clarify in a low-stakes environment (Singh & Manjals, 2022). Younger (2016) goes further to advise that “high impact activities” at the start of the lesson, such as warmup games, help girls to resolve

uncertainties and seek this reassurance, while Stiles (2021) encourages teachers to “Remove stigma of mistakes by participating in these games and admitting and celebrating when you make a mistake” (p. 127). This supports Stavropoulou and Protopapa’s (2013) earlier observation regarding providing girls with a mentor or role-model on their social entrepreneurial journey.

All in all, the literature reviewed suggests that, in a collaborative social entrepreneurial context, adolescent girls could benefit from developing confidence to tap into their true innovative collaborative potential, face failure, and enact leadership qualities through targeted collaborative improvisational gameplay at the start of the lesson, whereby the teacher acts as both a participant and facilitator (Archard, 2012; Carayannis & Stewart, 2013; Stiles, 2021; Younger, 2016). I took this all into consideration and introduced collaborative improvisational gameplay approaches into my Year 8 sparc class. The effectiveness of this approach was measured in my research by investigating the degree to which the girls lead in their social entrepreneurial assigned group role; confidently engaged in divergent thinking regarding their United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and charity business development; and navigated through the associated challenges, setbacks, or failures of their collaborative project.

### **Research Context**

Perth College is an independent Anglican day and boarding school for girls, located in central Perth, Western Australia. Approximately 1000 students aged from 3-18 years-old attend our community-focused school that strives to ensure that every girl is “seen” throughout their wholistic pastoral and educational journey.

My research project was conducted with a class of 17, Year 8 girls, aged 13 to 14-years-old over a 10-week period spanning Term 3 and Term 4, from August to October 2023. The girls had their sparc class (see Appendix A) with me, on average, twice a week, for a 55-minute lesson on Monday and Friday.

At this point in the sparc program, the girls were in established groups of 4-5 students and had selected an SDG. Each group then worked to develop an innovative non-for-profit business that raised awareness of the local and global concerns surrounding their selected SDG. The research project commenced when the girls were embarking on a journey to form a partnership with a local Perth organisation or charity whose mission statement supported their SDG. In their teams, the girls worked with guest University of Western Australia “Bloom” mentors (see Appendix B) to pitch, design, secure funding for, and make and sell a real product that not only advocated for their selected SDG but also raised money to support their local charity or organisation.

An outline of the research project was shared with parents and students, and the students were provided with the opportunity to opt out. The outline also detailed how I would

ensure that the girls would not be disadvantaged through their participation, and how the data would be ethically collected, anonymised, and securely stored.

### **The Action**

I customised a series of 5-10-minute collaborative improvisational gameplay sessions and facilitated these as targeted sequenced lesson warmups with my Year 8 sparc class (see Appendix C). The objective was to playfully engage the girls in the skills and processes of collaboration to develop a progressive toolkit (see Appendix D) that empowered them to think divergently, overcome developmental fears of failure, and challenge perfectionist traits throughout their social entrepreneurial challenges that followed (see Appendix E). The improvisational gameplay was conducted in the girls' pre-established social entrepreneurial teams, consisting of 4-5 students.

We started with simple improvisational challenges that introduced the girls to the fundamental tools, skills, and processes, including hitting Bernard's (2012) "Reset Button" to re-engage the girls into a state of play. As we advanced, and I was guided by the preliminary data of the research, I extended the improvisational gameplay to utilise multiple tools in the one activity, increase risk-taking, and transform group member's mistakes into opportunities to advance and extend the action. I also introduced "The Fireball Theory" that encourages girls to work through brief delays in gameplay to improvise faster and harder than they can judge themselves, in order to "outrun the explosion of self-loathing and doubt" as they collaborate (Bernard, 2012). The lessons took place in a black-box theatre studio, where theatrical lighting and music were used during the improvisational gameplay to enhance the collaborative, motivational and "playful" environment (Sanderson-Green, 2003).

### **Data Collection**

Throughout the 10-weeks that my Year 8 girls engaged in the short improvisational gameplay activities to empower them with a toolkit for collaboration on their social entrepreneurial journey, I employed a variety of research instruments to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This mixed-methods approach enabled the polyangulation of any potential findings and enhanced the reliability and credibility of the data, whilst allowing a platform for authentic student voices to be acknowledged, as the active participants in the research (Mertler, 2020). The techniques for data collection included semi-structured group interviews, open-ended questionnaires using Likert scales, structured written student reflections, researcher field notes, and videography and photography capturing student engagement in the process.

I collected preliminary data in the form of individual reflections from the girls about their collaboration and engagement, using a four-level Likert scale open-ended confidential questionnaire (see Appendix F). To accompany this, I also completed field notes by observing students as they collaborated with their newly established social entrepreneurial teams. This

provided an accurate base-line comparative model for understanding the girls' perception in conjunction with my own professional observations. From this, I could pinpoint specific personalised aspects of the girls' perceptions of collaboration that I could target through this action research.

During the improvisational workshop sessions, I guided the girls through spontaneous discussions and reflections surrounding the improvisational toolkit and their relativity to collaboration in their social entrepreneurial project. These informal two-way conversations to analyse their own process supported the girls' inquisitive and self-analytical nature and allowed me to delve deeper into the narrative behind their open-ended questionnaire data and gather insight to any emotive qualities (Sanderson-Green, 2003).

As the research progressed, I captured video footage of students engaging both with the collaborative improvisational games and with myself as a participant and their facilitator (Stiles, 2021). This provided fly-on-the-wall observations of student collaborative engagement, which enabled me to make amendments to the way that I delivered, participated in, or sequenced the collaborative improvisational gameplay sessions from lesson to lesson.

As the project concluded, students completed an individual written journal reflection focusing on collaborative engagement within their social entrepreneurial project. This allowed them a non-biased platform to express their own perception and the opportunity to reflect more profoundly about their response before expressing it. Students then presented an interactive collaborative version of this reflection in their groups of 4-5, which allowed me to observe how the individual's narrative data may have differed to their groups. To polyangulate this, I had them re-complete the preliminary open-ended questionnaire in the format of a four-level Likert scale to enable me to see more qualitative data and measurable shifts in their perceived engagement (see Appendix G).

I wrapped up by conducting semi-structured interviews with students in their project teams that provided me with the ability to segue into any insights that the girls had conveyed, as well as the ability to collaboratively reflect on their whole experience. This bridged conclusions between how data may have changed for these students and provided one last observational opportunity for any emotive shifts in their collaborative engagement.

### **Data Analysis**

Across the data collection process, an inductive approach informed my analysis and coding process, and a number of themes were identified (Mertler, 2020). The most genuine data collection techniques were the verbatim student interviews, student written, and classroom field notes that provided a tone-specific language-based narrative which contextualised other qualitative or quantitative data. Where referenced, I have recorded these transcripts and written excerpts verbatim to honour the student tone and expression. On

examination of the data, a collective of patterns and commonalities emerged that were relative to my research question. The dominant four key themes that were identified are deconstructed in detail below.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Improvisational Gameplay Inspires Girls to Display Higher Levels of Joy and Positive Engagement When Collaborating**

The majority of the girls indicated a positive cognitive shift after the ability to, as Younger (2016) describes it, “exert energy,” “resolve uncertainties,” and “seek reassurance” through the “high impact” opening experiences of these improvisational gameplay warmups. Eight of 17 students expressed that they “often” or “frequently” felt less anxious or tense when working with their collaborative group after partaking in the improvised gameplay. Class video and field notes data also revealed positive shifts in student energy levels, a greater classroom noise level, and an ongoing faster collaborative pace for groups. Student 1 articulated their justification for these observations with:

Often, I have just come from a lesson where I haven’t gotten a perfect mark, or I’m feeling stressed, or I have had to quickly get from one place to another. With the improvisation games, I could really, like, just take a moment, and just relax, and actually warm up to my team first.

These insights supported Sanderson-Green’s (2003) idea that, “Students must be motivated within the learning environment before they can develop the skills that are being facilitated” (p. 16).

My findings from this data relate to Sobel’s (2021) theories on how play-based activities can reduce early adolescent cortisol levels and increase the neuroplasticity that is fundamental for students’ readiness to change, adapt, and regenerate during collaboration. Student 5 noted, “We just needed something to kick-start our group off again. We all become really happy and joyful after the game, and we have so many more ideas in our head as well.” To support this, the girls’ body language opened outwards to their peers, and their spatial relationship reduced, suggesting the safety of improvisation to explore social risk and reduce shame for girls (Sanderson-Green, 2003).

The field note data also revealed that the girls continued to be significantly more action-based and positively motivated to socially collaborate for the remainder of the lesson. Student 1 wrote, “It [the game] helps us work alongside each other like bread and butter. With laughs, smiles, collaboration, and creativity. We are a power group.” Student 4 reflected, “I think that we then collaborated so well because we had that joy and felt comfortable in being together.”

These data findings affirm the higher levels of joy and positive collaborative engagement that the girls experienced as a result of participating in the 5-10-minute collaborative improvisation gameplay sessions at the commencement of the lesson.

### **Improvisational Gameplay Inspires Personal Growth in the Skills of Social Entrepreneurship for Girls'**

The next theme identified supported Youngers' (2016) theory that in offering the girls different analogies, metaphors, or languages for social entrepreneurial and collaborative skillsets via the improvisation games, it provided them with the time and space to instinctively reassure, reiterate and clarify the skills prior to applying throughout their higher-stakes project (see Appendix H). Student 1 reflected with, "When we played the games, it helped us understand what we were going to do later on in the lesson with our project which helped us build a better understanding of it."

Findings from classroom observational and interview data revealed that the girls were able to utilise the language and skills during the improvisational gameplay, then immediately apply it to their groups' collaborative social entrepreneurial task during that lesson, and even re-visit it again later in their project journey. Student 12 remarked, "We were brainstorming the cookies using, 'Yes, and ...' It went from making cookies, to saving koalas, making koala shaped cookies ... then adding flavours to match! We then later used, 'Yes, and ...' to make the design of our market stall more amazing."

To further support this, and in affirming Litmans' (2008) "interest-type curiosity" theory, when the improvisational skills and processes were affiliated with the inspiring success of celebrity improvisational feminist entrepreneur Tina Fey (2013) (see Appendix I), the girls were increasingly inspired and invested in the improvisational games to further build their identity and skills as a social entrepreneur (Stavropoulou & Protopapa, 2013). 15 of 17 girls felt more curious when working on the social entrepreneurial project with their team as a result of the game explorations, and 10 of 17 students "often" or "frequently" felt more connected to their SDG. The girls were beginning to interject our gameplay with observations of what they thought the skills and game philosophy related to, with regard to collaboration and their own social entrepreneurship journey. Student 9 raised her hand with, "I guess you are kind of saying that if we look at the 'unfortunately', then we need to look at the 'fortunately' next to learn from what we did wrong or what happened that may have not been too good?" Another student interjected with, "We can try to turn the mistake into something that can be better and amazing?" (Student 17).

The findings from this data also supports Singh and Manjalys' (2022) theory in that when girls exhibit higher interest, they tend to have more "original" solutions to open-ended problems. Student 7 proclaimed:

Normally, like, we had an idea that would start off really small. Then we used the idea of 'Revolving Pictures' so that someone adds on, and yes, it became better and better. Then at the very end, we got our product and a lot of great ideas to go along with it.

All in all, these data indicate that the girls were increasingly developing a better relative understanding of and interest in the skills of the social entrepreneurial and were more invested in personal growth throughout their project.

### **Improvisational Gameplay Empowers Girls to Embrace the Collaborative Possibilities of Risk-Taking and Mistakes**

Initial survey data revealed Youngers' (2016) insight into the idea that girls can be more reluctant to engage in risk-taking, with 9 of 17 girls feeling quite unsafe to make mistakes or take on setbacks in the project, and 11 of 17 students felt negatively impacted by their groups focus on making something look "perfect," despite this not being part of the task at hand. Student 5 reflected, "We always tried to stay two steps ahead and just try and be prepared for anything. Before we took a risk, we always made sure that we had a backup plan and it took a lot of time."

Embedding Younger's (2016) and Feys' (2013) use of humour and informality into the collaborative improvisational games proved successful in encouraging the girls to move beyond their comfort zones to take risks and challenges, to see mistakes as possibilities, without fear of threat or rebuke. Student 4 exposed the security that the improvisational humour created:

We were a bit cautious and scared of taking risks at first. We got more comfortable with it in the games where we just laughed when we did something silly. We improved a lot. We took many reasonable risks and were brave enough to do things that were out of our comfort zone.

In support of Gibbons' (2012) research around the importance of improvisational informality and Bernard's concept of "The Reset Button," Student 1 stated:

When we had a problem, we just kind of took a break, had a bit of fun to reset, then worked on it together to make it a positive outcome and awesome. It was like 'Fortunately, Unfortunately'. You had an unfortunate, then you took a breath, started a new almost sentence of the storytelling, then turned it into a fortunately.

After the workshop series, 16 of 17 girls signalled they "often" or "frequently" experienced growth in being able to make mistakes or take on setbacks with their social entrepreneurial project. Accompanying this, all of the students indicated that their group had shifted away from a focus on making everything look "perfect." Student 2 reflected:

I am a perfectionist and when the process looked messy, instead of getting overwhelmed, I was like, 'Yes, and' maybe we could try this. It meant being messy in

that moment but helped to make the final necklaces look a little bit more perfect and elegant.

This student's comment supports Stiles' (2021) theory that in improvisation, "learning from a mistake allows people to use self-assessment tools like counter-factual thinking and introspection" (p. 125).

The evidence suggests that the collaborative improvisational gameplay sessions provided an informal, humorous space for the girls to rehearse making mistakes and develop collaborative risk-taking skills, which resulted in a lowered desire for perfectionism, and increased capability to collaboratively navigate through, analyse, and transform mistakes.

### **Improvisational Gameplay Enables Girls' Voices to Be Projected with Greater Confidence and Collective Equity**

The improvisational toolkit integrated throughout the gameplay sessions (see Appendix J) provided an opportunity to magnify the importance of Archard's (2016) recommendation that each adolescent girls' voice can be heard by creating a space where they felt safe to express their views and could form trusting relationships with peers and adults. Student 1 described how they incorporated the improvisational tools of "making an offer," "accepting an offer," "extending an offer," and "avoiding blocking":

We tried to accept one person's idea and then expand on it more to create something that you have both collaborated on and created together. This ensured that everyone's ideas are being heard as well as used. This helped to take our group to the next level, as a through the roof non-for-profit business.

Additionally, Student 6 reflected, "Normally I felt a bit scared if people weren't going to accept my ideas or something. But I felt quite happy about it once someone did like go ahead and accept and then build on it." As a result of these tools, during the final reflective questionnaire, 12 of 17 students reflected that they no longer withheld from putting ideas forward to their peers, sparc mentor and/or guest mentors.

The improvisational tools of "go with your gut," "it is always your turn," and "be part of the action, rather than commentate" enabled the girls to avoid immediate peer compliance or deferring to strident voices and opinions (Younger, 2016). Student 3 details this with:

Revolving pictures was definitely something that helped with collaborating because I feel like it allowed everyone to agree, but also disagree in a much kinder way. You can almost take someone else's physical idea that they put forward and then transform it by zooming in or out, which means that it's not just your idea, or just their idea, or completely separate ideas.

To confirm this, 15 of 17 students indicated that they felt their group listened more deeply to their ideas and tried to incorporate them more effectively.

Overall, through the exploration of collaborative skills and processes inspired by the improvised gameplay toolkit, an ideal environment was fostered for the girls to express their voice with greater confidence and collective equity, resulting in 12 of 17 students feeling more confident to interact with key project stakeholders including local organisations/charities, BLOOM mentors, customers at their stall and myself as their spare mentor. The relation of this to their overall collaborative success can be summed up by Student 1 with, “I think that the games really help to define collaboration because it’s not just one person’s idea, it’s all of them together.”

### **Conclusion**

My action research findings demonstrate that the participants – girls, aged 13-14 years old – were empowered to courageously collaborate when they were provided with the opportunity to “warmup” and playfully rehearse collaborative skills through improvisational gameplay activities. This method provided girls with an accumulative collaborative toolkit that they could regularly access and apply across their various team ideations, risk-taking activities, and spontaneous transformation of mistakes or imperfections. Placing their rehearsal with this toolkit into humorous improvisational gameplay contexts gave the girls the opportunity and self-permission to fail before they transferred these processes to a real-world group collaborative situation in their social entrepreneurial challenge.

A parameter to my conclusions is that spare is a non-assessed timetabled program, that all students from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 10 at Perth College partake in. If placed in an elective-based, time pressed or results-driven context, this research may produce different data or conclusions. Another notable parameter is that the groups of 4-5 students were working together over an extended period, and that a shorter, more spontaneous delivery in alternating collaborative teams is something different that I am interested in exploring in the future.

In Term 4 of 2023, I extended this research project by establishing a co-curricular Improvisation Bootcamp and Battle with Year 7 girls aged 12-13-years-old, that indicated similar outcomes. In 2024, I will continue to expand this Bootcamp project and extend this research into our Year 11 ROARR Self-Leadership program with girls aged 16-17-years-old. Knowing the proven benefits for adolescent girls, I want to provide them with access to these empowering improvisational skills and processes to use in the greater business of their lives. Additionally, through sharing this research project in practical professional learning workshops, I hope to empower fellow teachers in other learning faculties to employ high-impact warm up activities in order to harness the social spirit, joy for learning and true collaborative potential of girls.

## **Reflection**

The ability to research under the admirable mentorship and guidance of the International Coalition of Girls' Schools (ICGS) Global Action Research Collaborative (GARC) has provided me with a wondrous wider world. Thank you to Margot Long, Debbie Hill and Natalie Demers for cultivating this compassionate research and girls' education community where I feel equipped, supported, and inspired to ponder all of the possibilities and theories. I would like to acknowledge my GARC research group, especially our research advisor Núria Tapias Nadales for living and breathing the values of this collaborative research theme through harnessing, "the joy of supporting one another onto our learning and striving to hold each other up in our learning." I extend my utmost gratitude to Perth College for entrusting me to undertake this research, and to Libby Klysz, Andrea Holloway, Mystrie Monck, Melanie Wallis, Helen Aguiar, Jessica Vuckovic, and Helen Avery who supported and inspired me across this research journey.

I thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on approach that this action research has provided, and fondly reflect on the role that I was able to play as a facilitator, observer and even participant at times. As a reflective Drama practitioner, the qualitative data approach and analysis was familiar territory and with the discovery of a broader understanding through taking a mixed methods approach with quantitative data, this has propelled me into conducting further research to interrogate ongoing data into reaffirming and advocating conclusions regarding Drama education. Thanks to this outstanding project, I have finally been able to legitimise and celebrate the transferable benefits of just some of the many fundamental Drama skills and processes that I have been advocating with my students, parents, colleagues, and the community throughout my career. This holds great significance in our world today where students are being directed away from studying Arts subjects as an elective in schools out of fear of being scaled down, or the perceived irrelevancy to their post-school career pathway.

Finally, I extend my most heartfelt thanks to my 2023 Year 8 spare class of young, inspiring innovators. You have a very bright future ahead of you in any industry that you may pursue. I had a blast seeing you grow as not only humorously talented improvisation artists but as incredibly capable, courageous, and caring social entrepreneurs throughout the project. It is through your collaborative advocacy and actions, that a collective of non-for-profit community organisations were able to find their voice and their feet. Congratulations!

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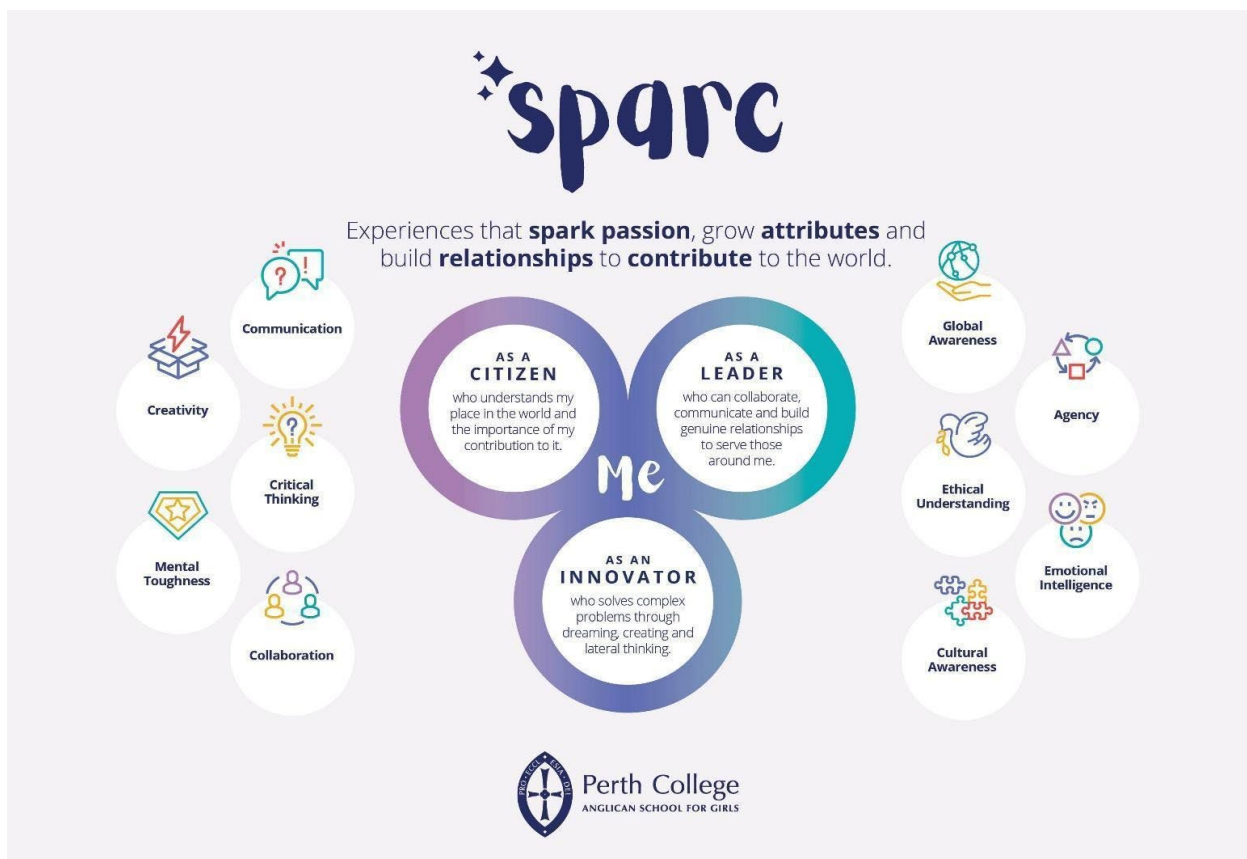
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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Perth College sparc Attributes and Focus Map



Introduction to 'sparc' at Perth College: <https://youtu.be/DMUNQZyHmj4>

More information on the 'sparc' Year 8 Social Entrepreneurial project can be found in this video: [https://youtu.be/hnO1S\\_rfewY](https://youtu.be/hnO1S_rfewY)

## Appendix B

### Bloom Centre for Youth Innovation



[About Us](#) [For Educators](#) [Programs](#) [Our Members](#) [Events](#) [Contact Us](#) [Instagram](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#)

## About Us

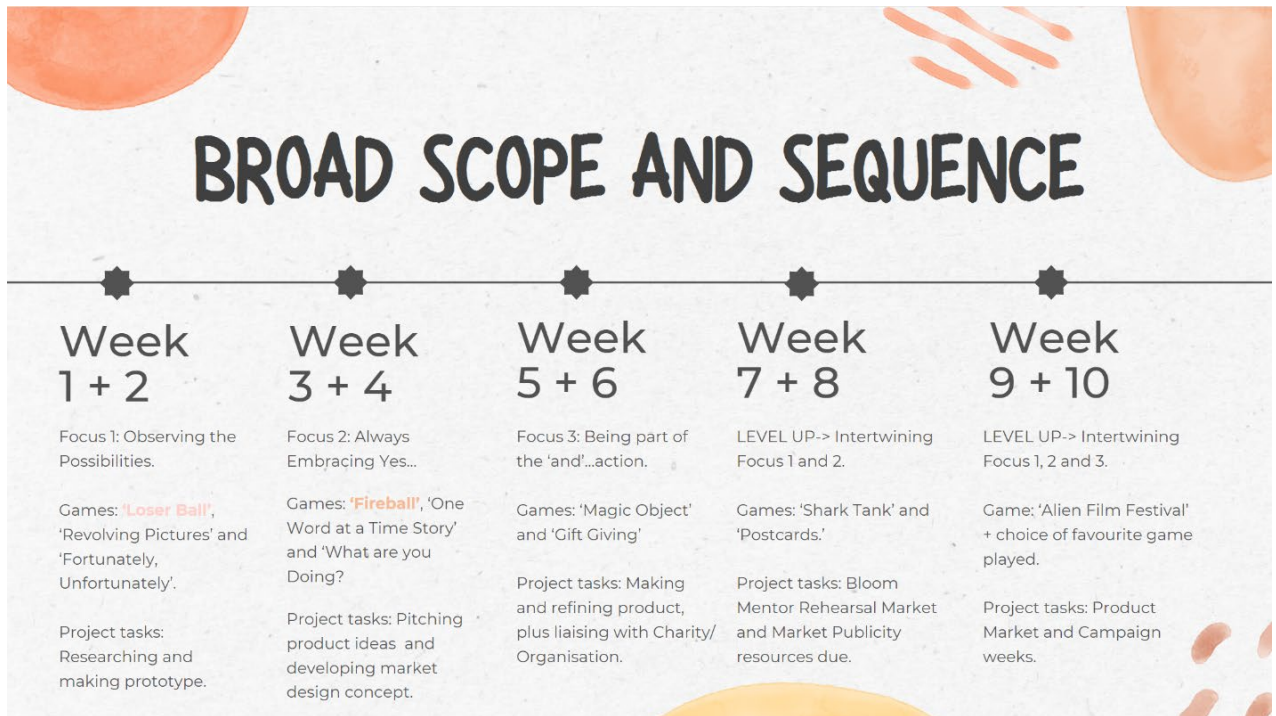
### A little more about us...

We aim to provide **world-class programs** to build great founders to thrive beyond our walls

Bloom provides a wide range of programs to cater from school-aged students to the young leaders of the future. Our **Schools Program** brings entrepreneurship and innovation into schools while catering for the curriculum. Our flagship **Launchpad** Program gives university students the opportunity to create a business through a 12-week program. **Shine** is Bloom's leadership course, providing young adults with a leadership toolkit for the future. **Orbit** is our year long accelerator which aims to support early stage businesses to scale.

## Appendix C

### Broad Scope and Sequence of Improvisational Gameplay Activities



## Appendix D

### Improvisational Tools Categories and Toolkit

The improvisational gameplay categories that progressively explored different tools and skillsets required in social entrepreneurship and collaboration.

# IMPROVISATION TOOLS CATEGORIES AND GAMES

Remember: there are no rules, just tools.

## 01 OBSERVING THE POSSIBILITIES

- There are no mistakes, only opportunities.
- The collective power of collaboration/support to recover from set backs.
- Zoom in and zoom out in the situation to view from another perspective.

**RESET BUTTON GAME:** 'Loser Ball'  
**IMPROV GAME:** 'Revolving Pictures'  
**IMPROV GAME:** 'Unfortunately, Fortunately'

## 02 ALWAYS EMBRACING YES...

- Make offers
- Accept offers
- Extend offers
- Avoid blocking offers

**PLAY BUTTON GAME:** 'Fireball'  
**IMPROV GAME:** 'What are you doing?'  
**IMPROV GAME:** One word at a time story

## 03 BEING PART OF THE ACTION

- Making verbal and physical offers.
- Focus on the 'doing' rather than commenting.
- The power of 'and...' to transform an offer.

**IMPROV GAME:** 'Magic Object'  
**IMPROV GAME:** 'Gift Giving'

The improvisational tools associated broken down in further detail

# OUR IMPROVISATION TOOLS

Remember: there are no rules, just tools.

## 01

Make an offer  
Accept an offer  
Extend an offer

Avoid blocking an offer.

*'Those that say 'Yes' are rewarded by the adventures they have.'*

## 02

There are no mistakes, only opportunities.

*'Mistakes are a gateway to a new adventure rather than digging a hole and trying to hide'*

## 03

It is always your turn: Go with your 'gut' and the first idea that comes into your head!  
This will be the best that dawns upon you!

## 04

Take turns, avoiding side-coaching peers when it is their turn.

*'Real listening takes place with more than just your ears'*

## 05

Actively play with the 'action' and it will tell you where to head next.

## 06

If stuck or a little unsure of the idea, zoom in or zoom out to see another perspective of it.

*'Unless you continually wipe your ideas out of your mind, you're paralysed'*

## Appendix E

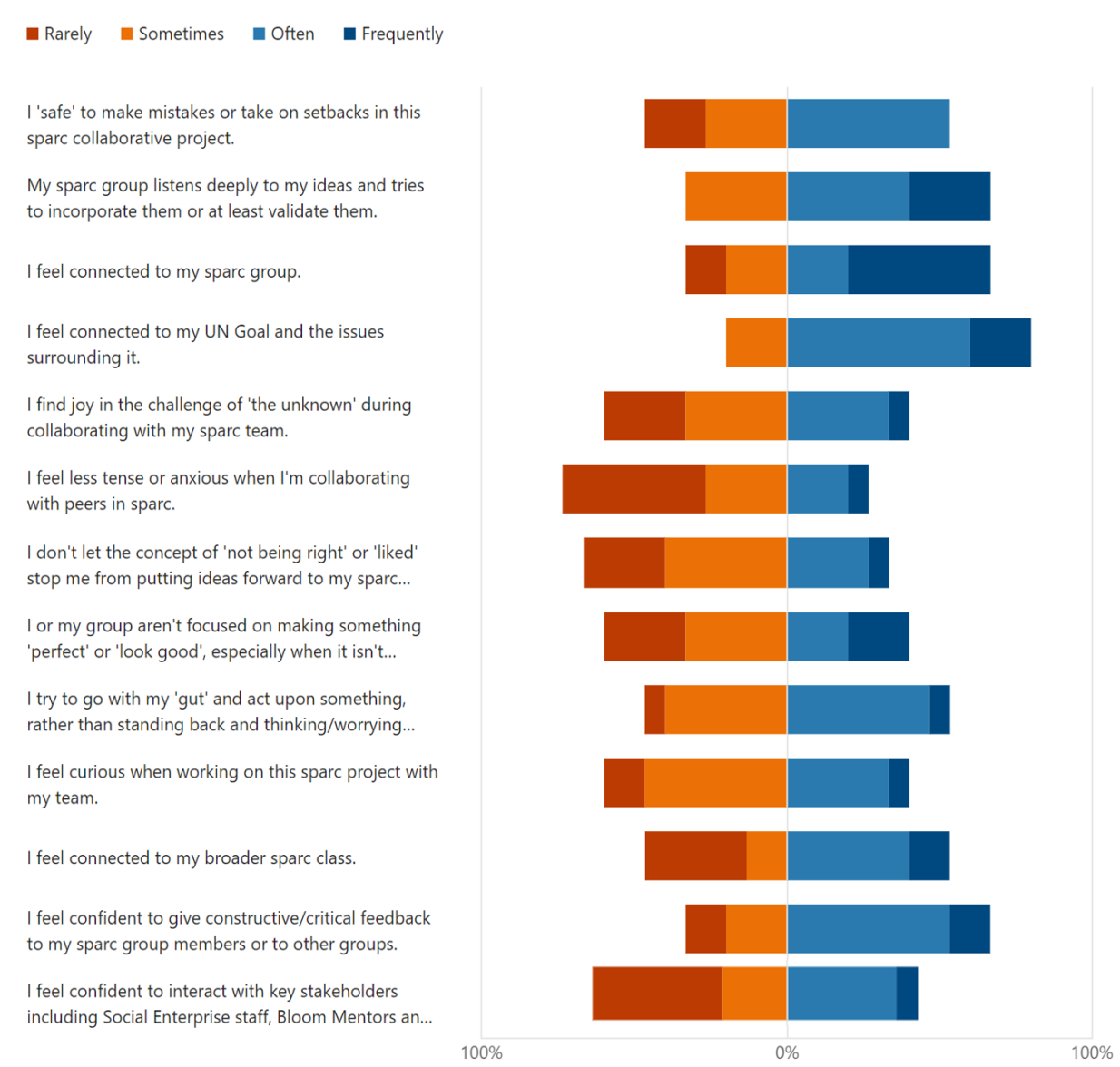
### Research Lesson Structure for spare Class



## Appendix F

### Pre-Action Research Student Questionnaire

*Individual student questionnaire responses prior to the commencement of the collaborative improvisational gameplay sessions.*

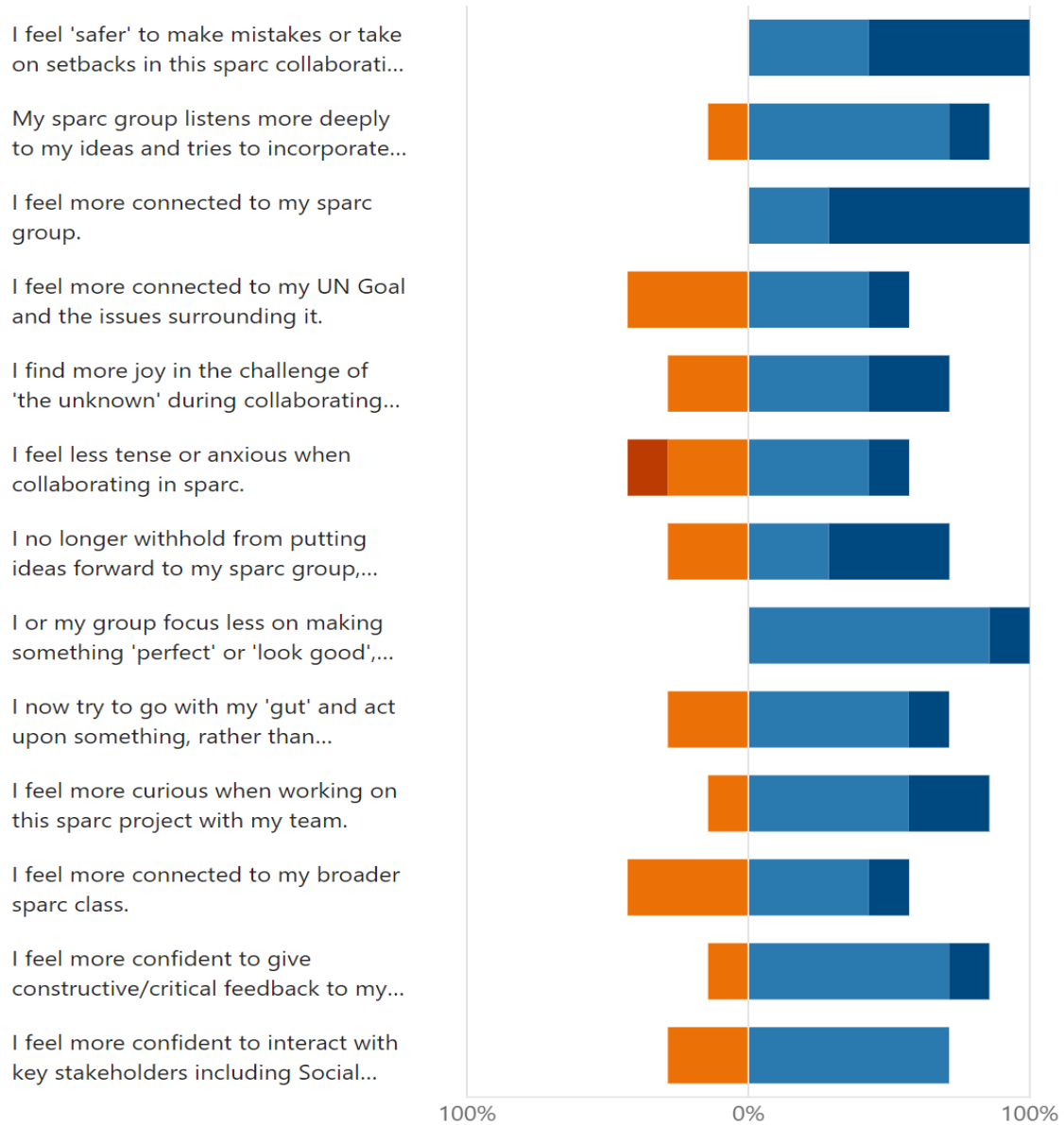


## Appendix G

### Post-Action Research Student Questionnaire

*Individual student questionnaire responses after the completion of the collaborative improvisational gameplay sessions.*

■ Rarely   
 ■ Sometimes   
 ■ Often   
 ■ Frequently



**Appendix H**  
**Improvisational Game-Play Application to a Social**  
**Entrepreneurial Context**

*“What are you Doing?” improvisational gameplay instructions.*

**WHAT ARE YOU DOING?**

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<p>Team member #1 and #2 are given an action.</p> <p>Team member #1 and #2 act out that action, creating a character and situation along the way,</p>	<p>Team member #3 and #4 step in when they observe an interesting physical offer.</p> <p>They ask: 'What are you doing?' and then take on the same physical shape as team member #1 and #2.</p>	<p>Team member #1 and/or #2 as confidently as possible makes a statement about what they are doing.</p> <p>It must not be what they actually were doing, but something completely different that COULD still work with their physical stance/shape.</p>	<p>Team member #3 and #4 bring to life their frozen shape and acts out that action, creating a whole new character and situation along the way.</p> <p>Continued by Team member #5 , #6 by repeating Steps 2 to 4 again)</p>




*“What are you Doing?” associations to social entrepreneurial skillsets and processes for a particular lesson.*

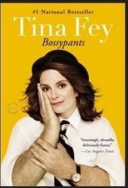
**'WHAT ARE YOU DOING?'**  
**CONNECTION TO OUR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL COLLABORATION PROCESS TODAY**

<p><b>GO WITH YOUR GUT</b></p> <p>Today, you will be further generating and refining ideas based on feedback for your market product. The first thing that pops into your head is generally the most creative idea. If we all hold back from putting forward our first ideas, there is a delay, momentum lags and we start to doubt.</p> <p>Remember to not only make offers, but accept, build on and avoid blocking others.</p>	<p><b>BE PART OF THE SOLUTION</b></p> <p>Whatever the problem with an idea or your product, be part of the solution via action. Rather than focusing on raising questions and pointing out obstacles.</p> <p>Suggestion: zoom in or out on possibilities when a little stuck OR make as many verbal offers as you do physically via doing/showing.</p>	<p><b>MAKE STATEMENTS</b></p> <p>Like in the game, facilitate taking turns in your group, ensuring everyone is having their 'time'. Have the confidence to put your idea out there as a statement to your group and spar mentor, rather than posing questions.</p> <p>Tina Fey states that this particularly applies to women, as we often make apologetic questions.</p>
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## Appendix I

### Tina Fey's (2013) *Bossypants: On Improvisation (or Collaboration ... or Life)* Overview Graphic.



**Tina Fey**  **on Improvisation**  
(or collaboration, or life...)

The first rule of improvisation is AGREE.

**Always agree and SAY YES...**

“Respect what your partner created” and...

at least start from an open-minded place.

The second rule of improvisation is not only to say yes, but

**YES, AND.**

You are supposed to agree

and then

**add something of your own.**

The next rule is **MAKE STATEMENTS.**

This is a positive way of saying **“Don’t ask questions all the time”...**

In other words: Whatever the problem,

**be part of the solution.**

**THERE ARE NO MISTAKES,**

only opportunities.

## Appendix J

### Improvisational Gameplay Toolkit Developed Throughout the Research Project

**OUR IMPROVISATION TOOLS**

Remember: there are no rules, just tools.

- 01**  
Make an offer  
Accept an offer  
Extend an offer  
Avoid blocking an offer.
- 02**  
There are no mistakes, only opportunities.  
*'Mistakes are a gateway to a new adventure rather than digging a hole and trying to hide'*
- 03**  
It is always your turn: Go with your 'gut' and the first idea that comes into your head!  
This will be the best that dawns upon you!
- 04**  
Take turns, avoiding side-coaching peers when it is their turn.  
*'Real listening takes place with more than just your ears'*
- 05**  
Actively play with the 'action' and it will tell you where to head next.
- 06**  
If stuck or a little unsure of the idea, zoom in or zoom out to see another perspective of it.  
*'Unless you continually wipe your ideas out of your mind, you're paralysed'*

*'Those that say "Yes" are rewarded by the adventures they have.'*