

## HVC SCHOOL STUDENT BILL OF RESPONSIBILITIES & RIGHTS

It's extremely important to us that our school is a place where everyone feels free to fully express themselves without fear of being made to feel unwelcome or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability (to name but a few). Given the nature of improvisation, we try to balance students' freedom to explore new, risky, and potentially uncomfortable territory while at the same time respecting your feeling of personal physical and emotional safety. It's a tricky and untidy balance! **Please read and bring a signed copy of this document to your first class, so we all can start - literally - on the same page.**

We are gathering together to learn improvisation, the discovery of unscripted theater together. This process involves bringing our humanity to the stage in all its beauty and, sometimes, ugliness. Performing joy and, sometimes, sadness. Love and, sometimes, hatefulness. Let's be clear: Bigotry has no place in improvisation. However, humanity has all the space in the world, and - news flash! - humans are messy and gloriously fallible. As those qualities may be brought to the stage, the improv classroom cannot be considered a "safe space." It is, however, a *brave, intentionally caring space of trust-building*. Improvisers are advised to live our lives and bring that to the stage. As such, our classroom stage will involve moments of real life which may feel hilarious, tragic, angry, loving, hateful, boundary-pushing, boring, mean, fearful, fascinating, totally gross, complex, utterly raunchy, totally stupid, shocking, deeply inspiring ... and so on. There may be wonderful moments of improvised beauty in your class. There may also be fart jokes. You are agreeing to be responsible for being open to all of it.

Though you may learn important life lessons in class, improv is not therapy. Your teachers are here to only teach improv. That said, improv is an emotional contact sport; emotions and content brought up and the learning curve may be uncomfortable for you. If you're someone who has recently experienced trauma or are in the middle of a vulnerable healing process, the most compassionate act may be to skip this class for now. In that case, you're welcome to take advantage of the Compassionate Care Refund, which you can request *up to 5 days before the second class* in order to receive 100% refund from Happier Valley Comedy if you decide that this is not the right time for you to take improv class. (We'll be here with open arms when you're ready.)

In signing this Student Bill of Responsibility & Rights, you're agreeing that you're aware of and willing to take responsibility in the boundary-expansion journey according to HVC's #1 Rule: **ASSUME GOOD WILL**. When something challenging comes up, ASSUME GOOD WILL means that we trust that the person who challenged us means well, though their actions may not sit well. ASSUME GOOD WILL means always trying to see the positive, creative intent within a scene, trusting that your scene partners are doing their best to find the fun too. You are agreeing to ASSUME GOOD WILL from your instructors and classmates in order to help turn missteps into learning opportunities.

### Happier Valley Comedy School's Big Commitments

- ★ ASSUME GOOD WILL
- ★ Do not touch anyone without asking consent, even hugs. (See below for more details.)
- ★ You can immediately step out of any scene, performance, rehearsal, or class at any time and without explanation.
- ★ Better out than in when it comes to communication. Your class, teacher, and the HVC School administrators are here for you. Let's talk!

### Central Responsibilities & Rights as a HVC Community Member:

- ★ You have the right to define what feels fun and comfortable (and uncomfortable) for you without judgment from others. You have the responsibility for communicating your boundaries. You have the right to allow those boundaries to be respectfully expanded.
- ★ You have the right to be treated as a character onstage and a colleague offstage. Onstage, it is assumed that you are playing a character, not yourself. Offstage, students are expected to treat each other with the same respect as we would treat work colleagues.

- ★ While it's the teacher's responsibility to stop a scene/exercise if rules of conduct are broken or if something unsafe happens, you always have the right to stop a scene and address it whether or not you're in the scene.
- ★ You are responsible for using your most reserved judgment for what you say and do in class until a pattern of consent and trust has formed. A good rule of thumb for physical contact: If it's appropriate touching in a typical office, it's appropriate in the improv classroom. And typically, we don't touch each other in the office. And definitely we don't ever use aggressive contact. The same thing goes for potentially offensive language. *When in doubt, don't do it (then discuss.)* If you're in a scene and have the thought, "I wonder if this is appropriate?" DON'T do or say it. But DO bring it up afterwards in order to establish a culture of trusting risk-taking in class. If your classmates set new boundaries for content and touch, you are responsible for respecting those boundaries, whether or not they line up with your own personal boundaries. In short, if a classmate says, "I'm not comfortable with that," don't ever do it.
- ★ You have the right to honest, constructive, and thoughtful feedback from teachers and, when invited, your peers.
- ★ You have the right to turn down a suggestion you feel is demeaning or unfun.
- ★ You are responsible for not "yucking" anyone's "yum," and you have the right not to have your yum yucked.
- ★ You are responsible for practicing the assumption that your scene partners are right and making them "righter."
- ★ You have the right to have more fun than anyone.
- ★ You are responsible with providing yourself and your classmates with the compassion and patience to learn according to one's personal timeline.
- ★ You have the right to remain laughing; anything you say can and may be used for comedic purposes. You have the right to have an audience laugh with you; if you cannot afford an audience, your class will provide one for you.
- ★ You have the right to love your work.

Let's keep the dialogue open in and after class about what feels fun and "ease-ful" and what doesn't. You have the right to speak to any HVC staff member regarding behavior by any person that you feel infringes on your or any other community member's rights. You have the right to have this discussion held in confidence or to be shared in the manner agreed upon by you and the person to whom you make a report. Exercising any of these rights will not adversely affect your ability to progress in classes, to be cast in or to be booked for shows. **If there is an issue with something that comes up in class, please speak immediately to your teacher, Pam, and/or Scott, either in person, by email, or phone.** Remember: Better out than in. We want to hear from you!

Please sign and bring to your first class. Your signature indicates that you've read and agreed to these responsibilities and rights.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***Notice of Nondiscriminatory Policy as to Students:** The Happier Valley Comedy School admits students of any race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religious affiliation, age, ability, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religious affiliation, age, ability, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.*

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