

HVC Show Procedure for Calling-in + Redirection

At HVC shows, our #1 priority is to do no harm. Secondly, we aim to entertain and bring laughter, joy, and ease to audiences. Part of our mission is to use improvisation as a tool to amplify each person's authentic voice and creativity in an inclusive, welcoming community inspired and empowered by the diversity of all members.

Because we currently live in a white supremacist society, we unintentionally bring the baggage of bias to the stage. **Our calling-in procedure provides a structure for stopping and redirecting possibly offensive or biased material as one way we can take care of each other ... and the audience.** Missteps are inevitable and not a call for shame and blame. Instead, we assume best intentions, have each other's backs, learn so we can do better, and prioritize reducing the impact on people of non-dominant cultures by immediately stopping and redirecting the scene.

Using this model, every cast member is responsible for and empowered to redirect a scene at any time, preferably as early as possible. It takes great courage to redirect a scene during a show or rehearsal, so the immediate and audible response by the called-in player(s) is to show each other - and the audience - their appreciation by saying, "Thank you!" or "Thanks for having my back." And then making a totally different choice in the scene. This process is quick, smooth, and positive.

PRE-REHEARSAL/SHOW CHECK IN:

- State our intention: Redirecting a potentially harmful moment is one way we have each other's backs onstage. I'll do it for you, and I'm grateful when you do it for me because that's how we take care of each other.
- "How can we take care of you today?" - At the start of every cast rehearsal/show, check in about current boundaries around subject matter, physical needs, etc.

CALLING-IN PROCESS FOR REHEARSALS & SHOWS:

There are different ways to pause/redirect based on how problematic you feel the choice is. No matter what, do it sooner rather than later.

If the audience doesn't need to hear us recognize the problem:

1. **The calling-in player says "New choice!" or "Let's make a new choice!"**
2. **The redirected player simply says "Thank you!"**
3. **Immediately move on with a new choice.**

If the audience needs to understand the reason we're redirecting:

1. **The calling-in player says with care “Pause. I know they didn’t mean to offend, but this feels potentially harmful. Let’s start this scene again.”**
2. **The redirected player simply says “Thank you!” or “Thanks for having my back!”**
3. **Immediately move on with a totally new scene offer.**

Onstage, the redirection should be quick and positive. If you're redirected, remember that your scene partner did it because they saw something you might have missed and want to take care of you. It took tremendous courage. Thank them so the audience can hear!

*“It’s everyone’s responsibility and right to edit and redirect.
We’re all writing the show, we can all direct it.”
- John Gebretatose, HUGE Theater*

The redirected player should drop the offer even if they don't understand why the scene was stopped or if they think they can turn it around to something less harmful. This process is different from our typical improv training, which is to double down and recommit to a choice. *Just drop the called-in offer. Do not try to explain, clarify, justify, or ‘fix’ the offer at any point during the show.*

Even when we're confused or thrown by the redirection, called-in player's responsibility is to put on a brave face during the show, smile, say thank you, and move on in a totally different direction. The time for clarification and explanations is privately with the cast after the show.

AFTER THE SHOW: LISTEN & LEARN FROM A CALL-IN

- Rather than viewing the situation as a problem, treat it as an opportunity - a gift! - to learn and grow together and make our show stronger. *It's only a mistake if we don't learn from it.* Let's have a productive conversation about the redirection, so we prevent future harm.
- Before processing the call-in, do what's needed to get into a responsive learning (rather than reactive) mindset, which may include taking some breaths, taking a break, meditating, taking a walk in nature, asking for time before the discussion, consulting a therapist and/or trusted friend, etc.
- Acknowledge how brave the calling-in player was and that their intention is to take care of their castmates, reduce harm, and make the show better.

- Keep in mind that intention is different from impact. Though we all have good intentions, it's possible that our actions have a harmful impact. Both matter, but impact is more important.
- Speak to the action rather than the actor. Use I-statements. Start from a place of assuming good will. The goal is to learn together from the experience, so we can better perform a show that does no harm.
- If a castmate requests that a behavior be considered out-of-bounds, you don't have to understand or agree to respect their stated boundaries.
- The debrief doesn't have to be protracted. The person who was paused can simply respond, "Noted" or "Thank you." Learn, do better, move on.
- Collectively, we're all responsible for making the calling-in process easeful and positive, so everyone feels comfortable redirecting each other as often as necessary. The process itself shouldn't feel like a big, heavy lift. Ideally, it's a quick, positive learning moment... and then we move on.
- When you're called in, you are responsible for taking time to reframe the situation to remember that the person calling you in cares enough about you and the show to make both stronger. How you respond to being called in can make the show and the cast more connected and this process more effective. You now have a gift to learn, grow, and prevent future harm.
- We hold space for the fact that it's normal to feel shame about being called in. Onstage, we're immediately grateful and move on quickly. Offstage, we can process our feelings, both together as a cast and privately on our own. We all have a lot of learning to do.
- When called in, be mindful of how much emotional work is placed on the team. Do not put any more pressure or work on the person calling in, who already took a big, brave risk. They don't have to acknowledge your good intentions or offer "proof" to their point. Please don't require the person calling in to have multiple conversations to help you understand and emotionally process the event. It's not the calling-in player's job to convince and support. It's your job to respect all boundaries and maintain a positive, supportive learning environment.
- Bring a learner's mindset. We're all in different places in our education around inclusion and equity. Be respectful of where we are each at and be open to learning more.

"Drop the ego and do your own work when necessary."

- John Gebretatose, HUGE Theater

- See below for more guidance for responding to a redirection

Taken from “That’s Not Funny: Understanding How Racial Privilege and Microaggressions Play Out on Stage” with Mandy Anderson and Fallon Abel

Consider the power dynamics between the identity group you belong to and the identity group you are imitating.

- If you are coming from an oppressed group, it’s okay to “borrow” from a dominant culture
- Also okay: a dominant culture “borrowing” from another dominant culture
- Not okay: someone in the dominant culture borrowing from an oppressed group

If you’re struggling to understand whether a particular group is dominant or marginalized, consider the following questions:

- Are there laws or policies that specifically target or disempower this group Or do past laws/policies continue to have a substantial impact on the lived experience of this identity group?
- Does this group have proportional representation in societal positions of power (ex. Congress, judicial system, CEOs, education)?
- How frequent and diverse are representations of this group in the media?

Accept that there are characters you shouldn’t play

- Part of privilege is feeling entitled to do/say whatever you want so long as you have the right intentions ... but good intentions don’t excuse the negative impact that your character choice is likely to have.
- Not proscriptive: you need to reflect on your identity and your own stereotypes about this particular group identity to figure out which choices should be off limits

Fallon and Mandy provided the following suggestions as drawn from Ijeoma Oluo’s “So You Want to Talk about Race...”:

When a microaggression is perpetrated against you:

- State what happened
 - Ex. “You just assumed that I don’t speak English”
- Ask some uncomfortable questions
 - “Why did you say that?”
 - “I don’t get it. Please clarify.”
 - “Would you have said that to a white person?”
 - “How exactly was I supposed to take what you just said?”
- Reinforce that good intentions are not the point
 - “You may not have meant to offend me, but you did”

- “If you do not mean to offend, you will stop doing this”
- Remember that you are not making this too big of a deal. You have every right to bring this up!
 - “I can see that this is making you uncomfortable, but this is a real problem that needs to be addressed”

Sometimes you will have the energy to employ these strategies, and sometimes you just want to walk away. Both are valid.

When you have perpetrated a microaggression and it is pointed out:

- Pause
 - Before you respond, remember that your goal is to understand and have a better relationship with the person who has pointed this out.
- Ask yourself: “Do I really know why I said/did that?”
 - If you can’t think of a good reason, this is a sign that you need to examine this more yourself
- Ask yourself: “Would I have said this to somebody of my own race?”
- Ask yourself: “Was I feeling threatened or uncomfortable in the situation? If so, why?”
- Don’t force people to acknowledge your good intentions
 - What matters is that somebody was hurt; meaning well does not absolve you of your guilt. Do not make this about your ego.
- Remember: it’s not just this one incident
- Research further on your own time
 - Take whatever knowledge that the person confronting you is giving you, but do not ask for more. Remember that they likely feel exhaustion, and you can do a quick Google search to start answering your own questions.
- Apologize
 - “I’m sorry that I _____” (be sure to say “that” not “if”) ...