

PRECEPTING

Off Script

Vonda Hollingsworth, LNHA

Vice President, Pennybyrn

Board Chair, NC NH Licensing Board

Board Member, Leading Age

NCHCFA, Standards and Ethics Committee

Informal Dispute Resolution Panel DHSR



What Is Improvisation?

- A mindset and method rooted in spontaneity, listening, and co-creation
- Not about being funny—about being present, open, and responsive

Key Requirements of Improvisation



Stay Present



Be Flexible



**Listen With An
Open Mind**



**Let Go, Give &
Take**



TRUST

Why This Matters to Preceptors

1. “Leadership in Long-Term Care Is Improv in Action.”

As preceptors, you’re guiding future administrators through unpredictable, real-world scenarios—staffing challenges, resident needs, regulatory changes. Improv teaches us to stay present, respond instead of react, and lean into uncertainty with creativity.

2. “Yes, And” Builds Confidence in New Administrators.

When an AIT has an idea or suggestion, instead of correcting or dismissing it, try “Yes, and...” This doesn’t mean you agree with everything—it means you validate their thinking and build on it. That’s how we grow critical thinking and leadership capacity.

Why This Matters to Preceptors, cont.

3. “You’re Not Just a Preceptor—You’re a Scene Partner.”

In improv, you succeed when you make your partner look good. Preceptors do the same. Your role is to support, elevate, and guide—not to perform solo, but to co-create a learning experience where the AIT finds their voice.

4. “Mistakes Are Invitations to Teach.”

Improv teaches us to ‘fail joyfully.’ Mistakes are part of the process, not something to avoid. When AIT’s mess up, it’s an opportunity for coaching, not criticism. Model how to recover with grace and curiosity.

5. “Authenticity Over Perfection.”

Residents, families, and staff want REAL leadership. Improv reinforces that being human, present, and emotionally intelligent makes a more powerful impact than rigid practices. Preceptors need to model this kind of authentic leadership.

The Preceptor as a Performer

Preceptors are like live performers—no script, full presence.

They must adapt to the moment, respond to unplanned situations.

AIT's watch not only what is said but how it's delivered and done.

Improvisational thinking helps navigate the unexpected.

Leadership is Caught, Not Taught



- How to be a great administrator is modeled more than explained. AIT's learn most by observing YOU and your team, not from books or lectures.
- Leadership style, tone, and adaptability are mirrored.
- Presence, patience, and poise teach more than a checklist.
- Improv helps leaders stay conscious of the energy they bring.

Managing the Unscripted

Real-world training involves unpredictable situations. Real life leadership moments

Surveyors, families, emergencies—no two days are alike. Everyday is unscripted

With no script, AIT's have to learn to adapt quickly to whatever happens. What are they learning from watching how you respond to the unknown.

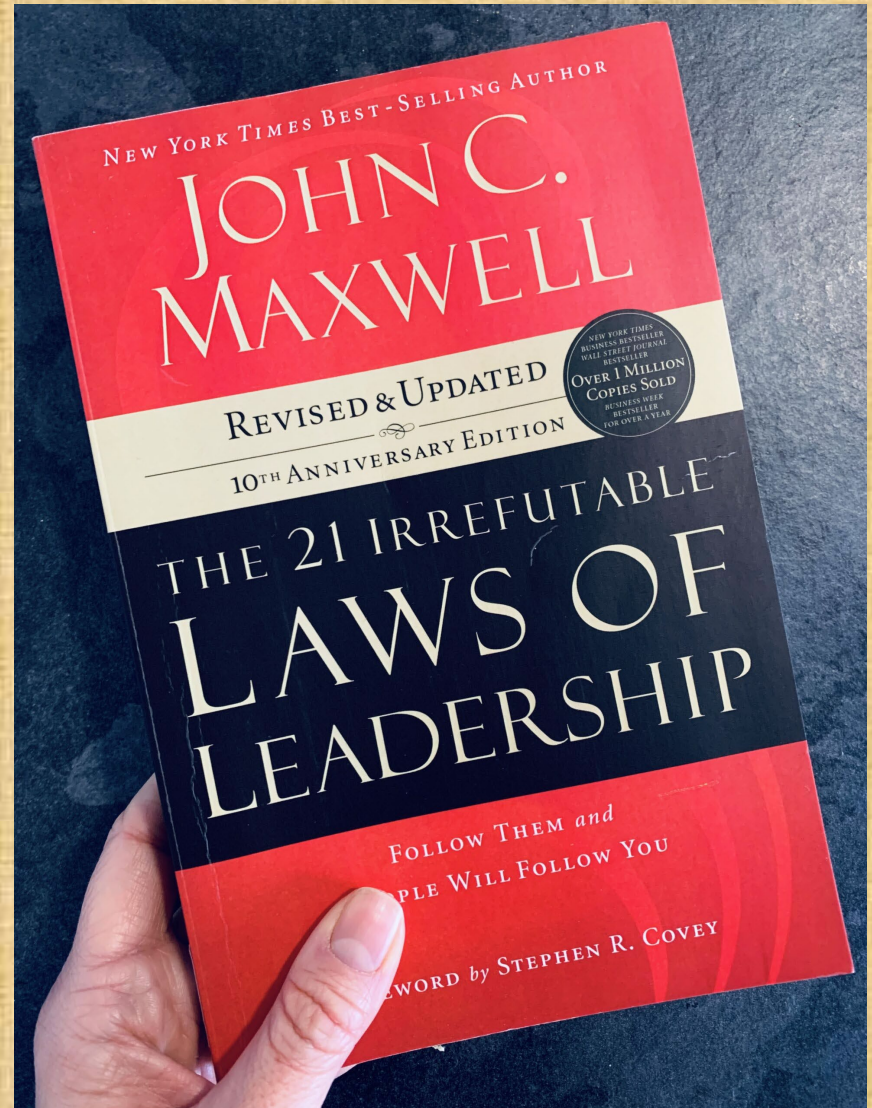
Improv teaches flexibility, calm, and thoughtful action. How to think on your feet

From

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John Maxwell

Law of Influence

Law of the Lid



Leadership is influence— nothing more, nothing less.”

Law of Influence reminds us that leadership is not about position—it’s about presence and impact. As preceptors, we influence every day: how we communicate, how we respond under pressure, and how we treat others.

In improv, one person’s energy, tone, or line can change the entire scene.

Just like leadership, improv is built on subtle influence—

how you respond shapes what happens next. Your presence in the room has power.

The Law of the Lid

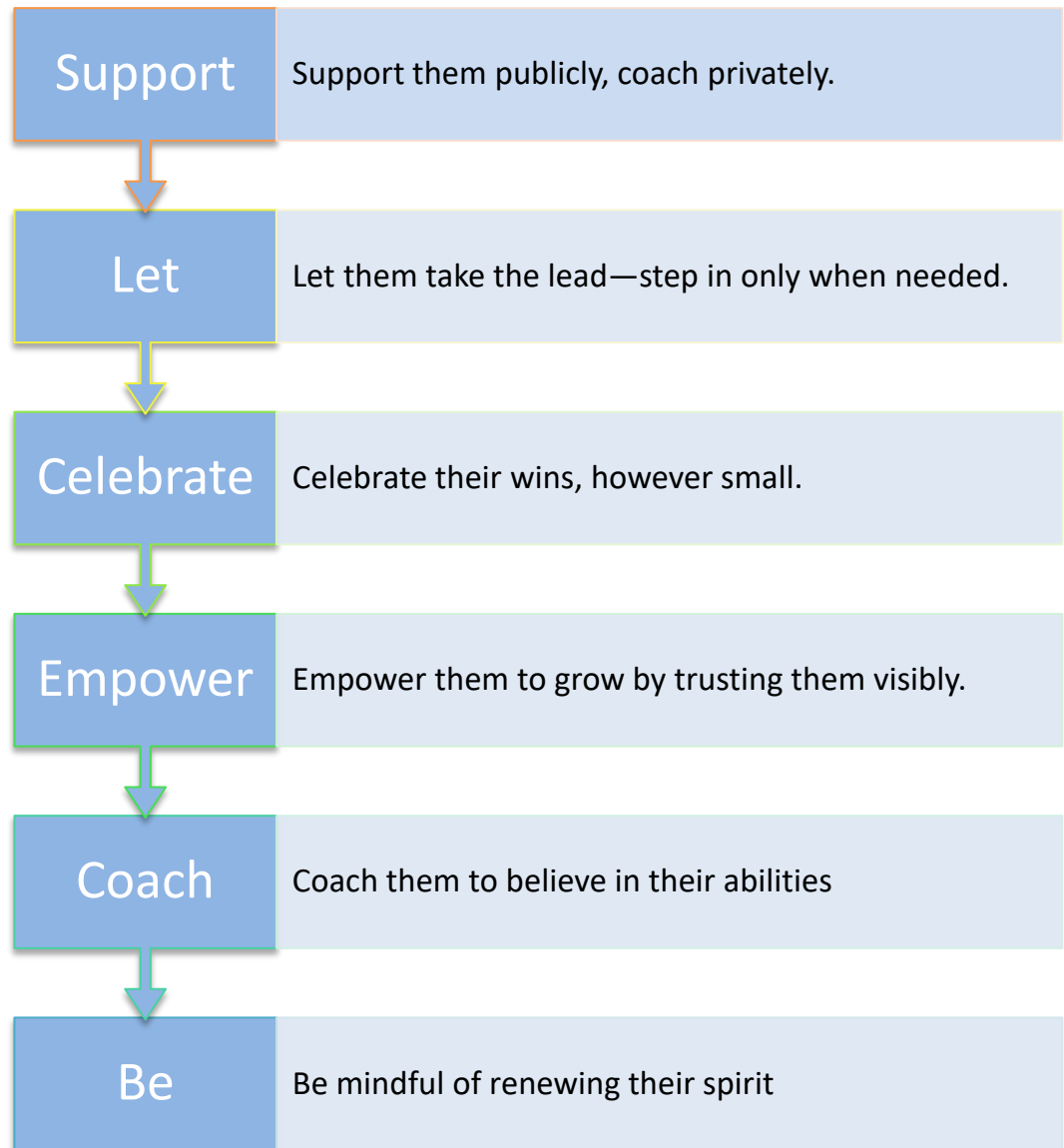
The Law of the Lid says your leadership ability sets the cap on your effectiveness. In improv, growth happens only when you're willing to take a risk, try a new role, or respond to the unexpected. The higher your leadership ability, the higher your _____

As preceptors, if we aren't growing ourselves, if we resist new approaches or stay rigid—our AITs can only go as far as we've gone. If you are stuck so are they. You are the ceiling or the elevator.

Be the elevator! Embrace the “off-script” mindset, model how to lead in uncertainty, adapt to people, and keep learning. This means developing yourself isn't optional—it's your responsibility. When you raise your lid, you raise their potential.

Using the principles of Improv raises your “Lid” stretching your leadership capacity.

Make Your
AIT Look
Good



Mistakes as Moments

*In Improv and in life —
mistakes are always learning opportunities
and very often gifts*

The Pieces of our Lives

Dr Joseph
& Sarah Rowan



Mistakes as Moments

- Give room for and CELEBRATE mistakes
- Be transparent and open about your mistakes
- Make is safe to make mistakes
- Fail forward
- Fail JOYFULLY

Fail *Joyfully*

- Mistakes will happen—yours and your AIT's.
- Model recovery with calm, humor, and grace.
- Each 'failure' is a teachable moment for resilience.
- Create a culture where growth is more important than perfection.

Creating Culture by Improvisation

- Stay Present
- Be Flexible
- Listen With An Open Mind
- Let Go, Give & Take
- TRUST