



## Lesson 34 - THE PANIC BUTTON

- Lesson 34: The Panic Button Okay, you've hit the panic button. You don't know what to do. You're overwhelmed, or you feel like it's going nowhere. Right now, let's take a few minutes - Let's take a deep breath together. And everything will be alright. So this video, now, I'm just putting the finishing touches for this course as I'm doing this, and I had the idea because a private student of mine wrote me an email concerning improv. And the question is often "It's not going fast enough," or "I don't know what to do," and "Things I work on for improv are not applicable," so let's talk for about 5, 10 minutes. I want to tell you this is not a scripted video. This is not something I intended to put into the course, but I'm doing this as a favor to me, because I need to get it out of my system. And I'm doing this as a favor to you because if you were a private student, and you were coming to me with any of those questions that we'll be addressing now, I would give you this straight talk right now. So I'm doing it for the camera - for more than one person, but rest assured, you're getting a real piece of me. Now nothing of this is written or planned. Just like I'm pouring my heart out, and telling you what I know as far as learning improvisation. And see, I'm human. Like everyone, I need to drink water. Little sip now. Which is something you might want to do. If you're stuck somewhere - Sometimes you're practicing, Stand up. Go grab a glass of water, or juice, or beer, or whatever your thing is, and just breathe, and come back to your practicing fresh. Okay. Learning improvisation is super difficult. I want you to realize and really internalize the fact that it's up to par with - like it's up to par with things like learning to walk, which takes years, or learning to speak. I don't speak Italian. Let's say I wanted to learn Italian. How many months or years would it take for me to become a fluent Italian speaker? Provided I stay here in Canada, and I do my thing with my studio. Six months? Maybe. I don't know. A year. Two years. I don't know, so you still have to be realistic with the rate at which you will learn these things. You can be a natural. You can be a natural in rock. You can be a natural classical player, or flamenco, or whatever, but this is a beast to tackle. Jazz improvisation is a very rich tradition, so just be aware it takes a really long time, and it's okay to take that long time. Just try and enjoy the journey. Once again, I'm not

always following my own advice. I have things I work on. I'm more after the results than I am enjoying the journey. My fiance keeps reminding me, "enjoy the journey while you're climbing the mountains." So please do that. Follow her advice. See? Now, the other thing I want to bring to the table is this analogy I keep using with language. If you think of jazz improvisation like a language, and you think of solos as speeches, such as great political speeches, so there's great speeches by Miles Davis, by Wes Montgomery, by Joe Bass, by Pat Metheny, by all these guys, right? The point is these speeches are not prepared, so it's like me right now. I'm totally ad lib. None of this is written, but I know the topic I am discussing, and I know which ideas I want to bring about, but I'm not thinking of every single word I'm saying. I'm just thinking about the ideas, right? So that's where you are going with learning your improvisation skills, so a question I have often is, "I don't see how practicing this exercise is helping me do a better solo since I will never use this exercise during my solo." Well this is the analogy of saying, "Well I'm learning a new word, and I don't know when I will put it in a conversation in my language." I had friends in high school would challenge themselves to do that in French class, or English class, to go, "Alright guys. This class, your challenge is to plug in the word, cinnamon, somewhere during the class." It was very funny, but it's very artificial. So any or all of the exercises that you practice in this course are not necessarily directly applicable. It would be like taking something word for word and just repeating it, so it would be like taking a Pat Metheny solo, or Wes Montgomery solo, and repeating it word for word in your own performance. This is not what you want to do. You want to learn the language, and learn ideas, so going back to the analogy, what we practice - Now, so your scales, your arpeggios, quint-tones, your blue scales, your elixirs, your this, your that. They're all basically constraints that we're giving ourselves to say "Oh that's the system we're using, and we can float around, say, this scale. We can use these arpeggios and connect them this way, pillar two, or phrase them a certain way, pillar three. So you have to take a really huge step back, and think of the applications being not direct. Meaning that when you practice improvisation, you do your thing, you practice your scales, and you can be super thorough, and do the exercise in this course, then you know, have an instructor review them, and all that, but after that, once it's all done, you go up on the stage, and you give a speech, and you're not allowed to bring your written notes for your speech. You're just gonna say, "Now, I'm going to talk about -" I don't know. Whatever your thing is. Physics or corn or farming or boots, but when you do that, and you want a solo on autumn leaves, you're not allowed to bring your written solo, and you're not allowed to repeat anything word for word, so you just - I know I'm repeating myself, like beating around the bush, but you see the whole point of that is you have to make something within the constraints that you've given yourself, and practicing improvisation is just to kind of set

those constraints, or sometimes you'll feel too in a box, and you'll want to practice improv to get out of the box. That might be one thing you want to do. But always keep in mind this language analogy. First, that it takes a whole lot of time to learn to speak as a child, right? And the second point is notes or scales are like words, and licks are like idioms, so it would be funny if you only spoke in idioms, in like famous sayings, or if you only spoke in quotes. Imagine if you spent a whole day just quoting Albert Einstein or Steve Jobs or Winston Churchill. You cannot spend your whole day just reusing their words. You can sometimes use their sentences, but it doesn't mean that you'll always be playing like that. And learning more vocabulary makes you better able to express your ideas, so this whole language analogy - Alright, I'm going to stop right there because I'm starting to ramble. I think you noticed. So one, it's really hard, what you're doing. Take a deep breath. Glass of water or water bottle, one liter is amazing. And secondly, think of the language analogies, so once you really solo, when you're on stage, or you tell yourself to improvise, you're not allowed to repeat stuff verbatim. Just see what comes out with the constraints you've given yourself. Alright? It's been my pleasure to have you on the course. Thank you very much. This is the very last video I'm shooting for this course, so as you can see, I'm a bit scruffy around the edges, so it's been an amazing ride this week to shoot this video for you guys. Thank you, and I will see you in Improv 102, Improv 103, in the following videos. Please do submit feedback. This is the only way we can know what to build in the future. And take care. Thank you, guys.