



## LNP 220

### From Actress to Flight Attendant to Nurse to Actress Dr. Candy Campbell

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**Kelly:** Hi and welcome back to the Legal Nurse Podcast. This is Kelly Campbell your co-host. You're in for a treat today. We have Dr. Candy Campbell and no, we're not related. She's an international speaker, award-winning actor, author, film maker and nurse leader. She cofounded an improv company in the San Francisco area and has taught improv since 1995 to students of all ages. Her latest book to be released in 2018 is "Improv to Improve Healthcare: A System of Creative Problem Solving".

Welcome Dr. Campbell. Thanks for joining us.

**Candy:** Thank you Kelly. I just have to say that when I first heard from you I thought it was my niece. I have a niece Kelly Campbell.

**Kelly:** You're kidding, but guess what I have sister, a Dr. Campbell so we're even.

**Candy:** Well it's great to be with you today.

**Kelly:** Yes, thanks for joining us. Tell us a little bit about our topic today. I know our audience is thinking "Improv, how is this going to relate to me and my business? How can we benefit?" Tell us a little bit about this.

**Candy:** Thank you Kelly. The first thing I have to say is that we as healthcare people we're mostly living in a domain of our left brain. We read and regurgitate all kinds of facts from nursing school that have to do with our everyday life. We inculcate those into our knowledge base. We analyze, and we come up with reasons that we do this, that or the other thing. We're pretty much in the logical domain and there's nothing wrong with that. We certainly need that but in the studies of the brain that I did when I was doing my doctoral research on interprofessional communication it shed light on some interesting things.

Let me just take a little detour and tell you before I go into what I learned. One of the reasons I was interested in this is because I have been an actor for a long time, longer than I've been a nurse and I've been nurse for almost 40 years.

**Kelly:** That's so interesting.

**Candy:** I can tell you that I found out early in my career after I had one of those casting couch experiences that didn't work well for the guy who was putting the moves on me. I shoved him across the room. He was under the impression that this is the way as an actor that I understood I would work my way up in the business and that was not what my plan was. When I finally decided I am going to probably be very poor for a very long time if I don't play the game the Hollywood way or I could eat well and take off my clothes.

**Kelly:** The Me Too Movement, possibility.

**Candy:** That was a long time ago, but things haven't changed much. Of course, as a comic actor, I knew that even if I did decide to take off my clothes, which was not in my game book, I didn't want to get laughs that way. I decided to just sort of chuck the whole acting thing for a number of years and I was called into nursing when I actually had taken a job after this casting couch experience. I took a job as a flight attendant. I tell people that I got the call to be a nurse 30,000 feet up when 124 people vomited in unison.

**Kelly:** That's quite the call.

**Candy:** I figured out that day, and we had a lot of turbulence, that you either go to help or you go to hide. I was one who went to help and my seat mate at the time after it was all over she said, "Wow, I really admire you. I don't know how you did that." I said, "Well, you know my mom taught me how to breathe out of my mouth and aside for the fact that there were ribbons of vomit if it wasn't so sad that everybody was getting sick it was kind of artistic."

**Kelly:** You have a nurse's humor. You do, and I think other people are laughing. I hope it's not just me right now.

**Candy:** She said, "You have that sick sense of humor. You should go to nursing school," so I did. At any rate when the early 90s came about I

went through some personal trauma during a divorce and it's never an easy thing. After a year or so as a single mom raising kids who were 8, 11 and 13, I just needed to laugh again. I needed to get back on stage part-time, so I started doing standup comedy.

There is a principle if you've watched much standup that your pain is very funny to other people, so I started doing that and through that learning environment I met a bunch of people who were doing standup. They were all doing improv and I thought it was funny because I had been classically trained as an actor in the late 60s and early 70s, and improv was not part of our curriculum, not formally because it was just being written about then. I had to sort of discover it then in the early 90s and then a few of us, four of us altogether, within a year created as you mentioned, our own standup and improv troop here in the San Francisco East Bay. We were the only ones around in the East Bay at the time. We worked together for about three years and it was then that we were practicing improv comedy that I thought this really has other applications.

You think about how the telegenesis of ideas works. It's so interesting to study. Some guy came up after one of our shows and they always did, always people would come up and they would say, "You couldn't possibly have made that up on the fly." We're like, "Yeah well actually some of our best stuff is in rehearsal and will never be seen." This guy said, "Could you all come and teach our engineers how to play nice and solve problems? They're logger heads." A long story short, I was the only who could show up and I was the only one who had an education background. That was in 1995 and I started teaching improv to businesses in the Silicon Valley area here. I was so exuberant over this training because I had looked at it as a tool just for my standup and just for funzies, but what I saw was the application.

**Kelly:** What did they learn? Tell me how you do it. What did they learn? What's the application?

I'm sorry I'm fire gunning all these questions, but it's triggered me now. At first, I was thinking of it as a comedy act, but now I'm like the guy at the comedy show. There's an application.

**Candy:** Exactly. Getting back to what I was learning and it's a long way to answer it, but it's when I was studying the brain and the neuroscience

in order to write my dissertation about this to sort of give it some credit. It hasn't been taken seriously in the medical community although business since the early 90s has been getting it and they have been using it.

I learned that the right side of the brain and the left side of the brain are connected by the corpus callosum. Maybe if you've studied this you remember in your pathophys that it's a bundle of nerve fibers that runs between the two hemispheres. It communicates messages left and right, but if we have that fear factor and sometimes just being in a culture where you're talking to a superior in the food chain you're in some sort of situation where because of the culture of where you are you don't feel that you have a relationship with other people that's open so that you could actually say what would be helpful, or what's on your mind because of fear of recrimination. Then with these kinds of exercises you open up the corpus callosum, get rid of the fear and your happy hormones start percolating.

We know from the study of neuroscience when you are open to new ideas your happy hormones are percolating because you're getting positive feedback. Well some wonderful things happen.

- You get clarity of thought
- You get deeper relationships
- You have the ability to think on your feet spontaneously
- Number four which is so important for us in healthcare is you have the ability then to go from thinking outside of the box to solving problems on the fly.

It's just so helpful and so I've been working with all kinds of teams. I began with the research that I did over at Stanford with a couple of teams who were having problems and one way or another it's a long story, but I worked at the University of San Francisco, so I was able to get in there and work with some teams. Their feedback from an all-day workshop was absolutely astounding. They just wanted everybody to learn it. It was so helpful.



Before we continue with the show, I want to share a resource loaded with tips for delivering powerful presentations. Get more in-depth knowledge about presentation techniques from my colleague Stephanie Scotti by investing in the webinar she did with me, Pat Iyer, called **Accelerate! Powerful**

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**Kelly:** That makes sense. I mean being able to think on the fly and not just in the medical arena but if you're on the stand being questioned, if you're in an attorney's office and you don't want to be fearful to make a suggestion. That makes absolute sense to me. What is a typical medical improv workshop like? Do you have to be an extrovert or no you don't?

**Candy:** No that's the happy news. As a matter of fact, some of the people who I've worked with, I just did a two-day workshop with a group of nurses from all over the place and a lot of them were introverted. Their comments in their testimonies are so heartening to me because they were so shocked at not only themselves but the fun that they had and that this new knowledge was so immediately applicable.

To answer your question directly about what the workshop like is, it just depends on how long I get hired to do it. Like at conferences I'll do maybe an hour and that's a very interactive lecture that talks about the neuroscience. I've done it for groups of like 500 where we have some interaction and it's plenty simplistic. It's just introducing the basics of the "Yes and" principle. It sounds obvious but most of us as healthcare people we are trained to be analytical and say, "Yes but."

**Kelly:** Isn't that so true. You're also an academic. How do you use improv with the students?

**Candy:** Thank you for that question. I would love to do more with the students but what I do now is even in my theory classes, and it doesn't matter what class it is, in order to break the ice there's so many exercises that are immediately useful in order to get them to break the ice not just with me but with each other. In terms of nursing education, I work in a graduate school, we want people to think and in order to think you have to feel free to raise your hand and offer what might be a stupid suggestion or somebody might think it's stupid and you might think it's stupid if you don't know. Again, this bouncing of ideas has been

such a fertile ground for projects, of changed projects in the healthcare system.

I teach the Clinical Nurse Leader Program and that's exactly what we're trying to do, to get nurse to get out of the background and say, "Look if we're not at the table, we're going to be on the menu."

**Kelly:** Right, to be nurse leaders, not in the background. It does make sense. The improv led you to not be fearful and to be more confident. Tell me how to sign up, I'm at a distance though?

**Candy:** Well that's all right. We are going to be having some more improv classes. Probably the next one is going to be in May next year, but that's going to be on a cruise. It's called "Re-Energize Your Life Greek Isles Cruise". We're going from May 20th to May 29th on the Royal Caribbean Jewel of the Seas. I am just getting the flyer made and finished today. I can send information. It's a very minimal cost and we're only having outside and balcony rooms. It's really going to be great and of course I'm an educational provider so there will be CUs also.

In terms of your area, I will just say to all your listeners if you would like me to come I'm very happy to do so. You just need to send me a little email and we're work out the details. I'm at [Candy@CandyCampbell.com](mailto:Candy@CandyCampbell.com). That's just like Kelly Campbell's last name.

**Kelly:** That's how I break it down. Sorry for interrupting, give that email one more time.

**Candy:** [Candy@CandyCampbell.com](mailto:Candy@CandyCampbell.com)

**Kelly:** Okay thank you so much. Just to break it down, let's give some highlights one more time for our audience.

Improv, it is not just a comedy. It's a way to communicate, to not be fearful.

What else would you say are the highlights?

**Candy:** It's a way to think on your feet, to spontaneously adapt to untoward situations, to come up with solutions to emanate problems and to

forecast in terms of change management with a future. It's very helpful in many aspects of your personal as well as your professional life.

**Kelly:** That's so true. It's a way for us to lead ladies and gentlemen. All right thanks so much for joining us today. I really appreciate it. Tune in next week and don't forget to like us, bye-bye.

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