

**Jay Sukow:** [00:00:08] I mean, we need to laugh now more than ever.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:00:11] Right. Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:00:13] And like a friend of mine said, you know, this self-quarantine doesn't have to mean self-isolation.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:00:19] Right. Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:00:21] And that's something, you know, you got to kind of just look at it as like you're establishing a new normal.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:00:27] You think like that? I think like that. Most the population doesn't think like that. Adaptability and trying not to use the word pivot because it's being overused now in this situation, but the ability to adapt to a changing landscape is very, very difficult for a lot of people, period.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:00:47] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:00:48] Us, we can do it on a dime.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:00:52] Well, it's also, you know, for us, in addition to the improviser mindset, it's also your life and how long you've been freelancing.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:01:04] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:01:05] And, you know, this whole terminology now of like the gig economy, it's like I've been doing the gig economy for almost 30 years. And so, in this situation, it's like that's kind of prepared me. You know, you're in—we're in a state of fear because it's also—it's not just fear of this unseen enemy, it's fear also of the unknown. And, you know, if you sit down and you list out all the concerns, they're very valid and real, it's like, "What am I to do for work?"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:01:38] What if you're someone who's a—you know, you work at a fast food restaurant or you work at a coffee shop or you're a driver of some sort and you can't go out, it's not like—you know, there are some people who can't transfer their work online. So, how do you keep that mindset? And they'll look at this as like, you know, to accept—I think it's you accept the fact that, yeah, everything is very scary right now, it's very uncertain. Whatever happens, there are going to be some pretty cool opportunities that come of it.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:02:11] Now, you might not know what it is right now, and that's the thing. If people knew right now, I think they'd feel a lot better. But because you don't know, you're dealing in these uncharted waters. I mean, literally, in at least our lifetimes and recent human history, this is uncharted. I mean, this is something that went from, you know, what is this thing that doesn't affect me, too? Now, I'm quarantined.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:02:36] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:02:36] And now, how do you deal with it? How do you keep up your sanity? How do you keep up your spirits? How do you keep up staying outside of that? That could be easily be falling down that spiral, into that abyss of like, "Oh, man, I don't know how I'm going to pay rent, I don't know how I'm going to survive. I mean, those are very real concerns.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:03:03] Welcome to Change Your Mindset podcast, formerly known as Improv is No Joke, where it's all about believe that strong communication skills are the best way in delivering your technical accounting knowledge and growing your business. An effective way of building stronger communication skills is by embracing the principles of applied improvisation. Your host is Peter Margaritis, CPA a.k.a. The Accidental Accountant. And he will interview financial professionals and business leaders to find their secret in building stronger relationships with their clients, customers, associates, and peers, all the while growing their businesses. So, let's start the show.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:03:50] Welcome, everyone. I'm recording this episode on Wednesday, March 18th, 2020, to be released on March 30th. And I'm aware that the coronavirus landscape will have changed and we may be dealing with the peak of this pandemic in the US at this point in time. We're all dealing with the stress of this unknown. And think about how I can provide an alternative method of dealing with this stress? Improv, as always, helped me, my family and my friends in our daily dealing with the COVID-19 stress, as well as dealing with everyday stress with that, the coronavirus.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:04:30] So, my guest today is Jay Sukow, who's also my improv coach. And Jay's going to share some tips on how to deal with our current situation. Jay will gladly talk endlessly about how much better the world would be if everyone just took one improv class. Jay began teaching for Second City in 2010 and teaches in both the improv and conservatory programs. He's also a facilitator of Second City Works, teaching improv to business professionals in order to drive behavior change.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:05:02] Previously, he was on faculty at the Second City Chicago, IO Chicago, and Comedy Sports Chicago. He's performed professionally for over 25 years and got his start on stages of the Second City Northwest, where he spent two years performing both original and archive material. He's also been seen on several improv and sketch comedy teams, too numerous to mention. He has taught and performed improv and sketch comedy throughout the world, including big IF4, Copenhagen International Improv Festival, Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the Del Close Marathon.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:05:40] He's been on several podcasts, including Tales of the Teachers Lounge, Improv Yak, Improv Nerd and ADD Comedy, and was featured in the improv documentary, Weather the Weather. Jay's a great guy. He's got great information. And I hope this episode will provide you some new ways or new ways to think about how we deal with our current stress levels in dealing with this coronavirus pandemic.

**Announcer:** [00:06:11] This podcast is part of the C-Suite Radio Network, turning the volume up on business.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:06:18] Now, let's get to the interview with Jay Sukow. Welcome, everybody. My guest today is, and he's a repeat offender on this show, Mr. Jay-.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:06:31] I keep coming on.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:06:32] Keep coming on. I love it when you come on, Jay Sukow. And Jay is a professional improviser, as you've heard already in his bio that I've included at the introduction of this podcast. And actually, we're going to get right to the conversation. And so, first, Jay, welcome. Thank you.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:06:50] Thanks.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:06:50] I'm sitting on the beach in Malibu and Jay is hunkered down somewhere in LA. My backdrop is the actual beach in Malibu. So, I'm trying to, you know, have that kind of mindset, that kind of emotion coming out, just to—versus looking at the back of my wall, just have some calmness out there for you. Jay, welcome. Thank you very much. Looking forward to this conversation, buddy.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:07:14] Peter, thank you. And look at that. It's just—you're right up the street. Look at that background. The blue skies, the birds, the water. Oh, wonderful. At home.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:07:27] And there's nobody on the beach as well.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:07:29] No. I mean, that's pretty accurate.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:07:31] It is pretty accurate.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:07:31] Everyone's inside. Thanks for having me.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:07:36] Oh, thanks. Thanks for taking the time. I know you've got a lot of going on in trying to figure out our new normal as it exists. But as an improviser for 30 years, I've learned so much from you and our interactions over this past year. How can we help my audience in dealing with this new normal? And it's not even new. I mean, it's new, but it hasn't become that normal because it's rapidly changing.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:08:11] Yeah, I think that that's the key phrase right now, it's like new normal. And, you know, as improvisers, we have a mindset that like don't hold on to anything dearly because everything changes.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:08:23] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:08:23] And you have to let go of that which doesn't serve you anymore, and then move forward with new information. And we are constantly being updated new information right now. And so, I think one of the things that helps me in these situations is, you know, reminding yourself to stay present, stay present, stay present. What's happening right now? What is an immediate threat to me right now? You know, I look at something like rent. It's like, "Well, do I have to pay rent right now?"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:08:55] Right now, I don't, Now, let's not ignore the fact that it's going to happen, but if you could stay present and you just—you're trying to train yourself to take things moment to moment. So, moment to moment, realizing everything's going to change. And another way to do that is to, you know, focus on breathing. Sometimes, I just take a moment, you know, turn off your computer or your phone and just breathe in for a four count, and then breathe out for a four count.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:09:23] And you'll be amazed at what that does. It also keeps you in the moment, which is one of the biggest things right now because there's so much uncertainty. There's so much—if you thought your life was uncertain before, now, it's like, oh, man, now, it's not just uncertainty of things you can do, but it's uncertainty of things that are happening all around you. So, I think take a breath. Another thing that can help with this is, you know, find those people who will bring you joy.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:09:49] I had a friend and he said, you know, this whole self-quarantine doesn't mean to isolate yourself. You know, it's not a self-isolation. So, take a moment. And I got a call from my friend, Dave, last week just saying, "Hey, how you doing?" And it was such a wonderful gesture of him to reach out and just go, "Hey, I'm just checking in", especially when you're in the similar boat, if you're both freelancers or if you're both accountants or if you both work in an office or you have the more shared experiences, then the more you could just let out what your fears and concerns are.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:22] And I'll be transparent with you, Jay. I'm really good about being present and being in the moment and trying to focus on the things that I can control, but I slipped yesterday. I got out of being present. And I went down this path. And-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:10:38] It's fun, right?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:39] No.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:10:39] It's a bit fun.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:40] Not one bit. I love following the fear.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:10:43] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:44] But this was getting outside of I think just getting, all of a sudden, caught up in this rush of—and it wasn't a good thing. And the only way I could get myself out of it and you just shared, I said, "Take a breath, dummy."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:10:58] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:10:58] "Just breathe", because I wasn't breathing.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:01] And you—and it's so hard to get out of it.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:11:03] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:03] You know, you have to—it's, you know, what we're trying to do as improvisers, is we're always trying to get out of our heads.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:11:10] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:11] And once you get up in there and you climb up in your head, it's hard to get out. And you're very smart, so you will—your brain wants to always be right. So, your brain wants to say things like, "Well"—you know, like your brain doesn't want to say, "Hey, man, everything's going to be fine. You survive. You're a survivor. Things are going to look different, but you're going to be okay." Like you start now looking around to it. There are examples of—I think in general, humanity wants to take care of itself and wants to protect the herd.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:11:45] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:11:45] And so, there are examples happening all over. There was a guy on Twitter who said, "Hey, you know, F the coronavirus. If you have a bill you aren't able to pay, post it here, give me your Venmo." And then, that started the chain of he started paying people's bills, and then people would follow him, and then people would say like, "Oh, I got that bill for you." So, people started helping each other out. There's a lot of resources as well that you can reach out to in your city or county or state, where you can find ways to help, you know.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:12:16] So, I think things are slowly starting to change. I think there's becoming—there are certain landlords as well that are saying, "Hey, can you—if you can only pay me half or maybe not this month", like—but what you have to realize with that as well is like all those people have mortgages that they have to pay. So, I think there are these examples where we're starting to slowly take care of ourselves, but it's going to take a while. This was something that, you know, people didn't take seriously for a while. And now, all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, man, now, it's here."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:12:50] So, that's adding to the nervousness. But yeah, like you said, if you could take a moment and take a breath, sometimes it's—I remember I had a therapist who said, "Imagine you have two big—visualize two big suitcases, heavy, heavy suitcases. At the end of the night, visualize your—just say to yourself, 'I'm done', and visualize putting them down." And then, that represents all the burdens you're carrying in the day. Just go, "I'm done. I've done enough today." And it's something that really has helped me, where I go, "All right. I'm spiraling. I'm thinking about all of what's happening right now." I'm only focused on the bad because, you know, it's just my brain's way of focusing on surviving.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:13:34] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:13:35] But if I can say, "Hey, wait a minute, let me put these down right now, these heavy thoughts. I'm going to put these down." And another thing is, you know, how much screen time are you having? Because the more I go on social media, especially Twitter, or the more that I see all this stress and anxiety pop up.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:13:56] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:13:56] So, like another thing is can you limit your amount of time you're on social media because that just accelerates the anxiety?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:14:05] And for old folks like myself and older baby boomers like myself who's still stuck to like TV in the morning, watching the news and stuff, I did that this morning, I said, "I'm going to watch the first 10 minutes of the Today Show and that's it."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:20] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:14:20] I'm going to work.



**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:21] That's great. That's great. I think like, first, you know, if you want to do the first—you know, set a time like the first few minutes in the day or at the end. You can go online at the end of the night.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:14:31] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:32] And you can get a recap of everything that's happened in a very short amount of time.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:14:36] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:36] So, there are things you have in your control of things you can do to kind of limit your exposure to that anxiety.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:14:44] Well, the one quote that you said, I'm giving you credit for it because I think it came from you in one of our conversations, "Improvise the scene you're in, not the one you wanted to be."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:14:57] Yeah. And that's, you know—any of the quotes I say, as you know, are not mine. I don't have a single original thought. I heard that from someone. Well, I mean, a lot of these, like I'm sharing from other people I know.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:15:10] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:15:10] And it's true. That's the one—that's a great philosophy of life. It's not the time we want right now, but it's the time we're in. And it's all to do with, you know—and I've been thinking a lot about acceptance. And for a lot of people, acceptance might equal weakness. And it's like, no, acceptance is a very brave and strong thing to do. It's like I'm accepting the situation I'm in. Once I've accepted it, then I can make decisions based on it. But when I'm not accepting the reality, I'm just struggling.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:15:39] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:15:39] When I don't want to accept what's happening, it's like, well, that gets me in trouble. But if I can accept it now, I can respond to it. And I think we're in this constant state of just being in response to.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:15:50] Yeah. And I will admit that every—since this started, "Improvise the scene that you're in, not the one that you wanted to be", Is what I said at the very beginning of my day. And to your point, when I put the suitcases down at the end of the day. And just to route in order to—okay. So, apparently, I had a problem yesterday because it helped keep me present and focused on how am I dealing with this and not getting stuck, like you said, up in your head. And-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:16:16] And with that, be compassionate for ourselves. Like this is all a huge, very steep learning curve. And so, if something happens during the day and you get frustrated with yourself, whether it's like I wasn't present or I didn't handle things a certain way or I wish I could have, you know, the old phrase like, "You're should-ing all over yourself", like, "I should have done this, I should have done that", you know.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:16:42] I'm glad you verified that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:16:44] Yes.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:16:45] You're should-ing-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:16:46] You're should-ing all over yourself, man. What my friend says, "You're practicing the art of must-urbation." Like, "I must do this, I must do that." It's like if you can let go of those and you say, okay, I shouldn't have done anything, I did what I did. Sometimes, if the opportunity presents itself next time, I'll change my response. But what I did, I have to accept that that's what I did. And now, it's time to continue to move forward and build this momentum.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:17:14] And sometimes, you know, I had a therapist once who said, "Jay, if you're depressed, be the best depressed you can be." And I was like, "Man,

forget you." But what? And I was like, "I don't want that." And I went, "Oh, right. That's the problem. I don't want to sit in this emotion. I don't want to feel this. I want to be happy all the time. I feel like I'm entitled." And it's like, no, that's not the way it is. If you're feeling overwhelmed or you're feeling depressed like it will all change, but you just sit in it and you go, "Eventually, this, I'll ride this out."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:17:52] You know, the friend of mine once told me like, "Just tie a knot and hold on." And sometimes, that involves other people. You know, when it's very hard for people to reach out, it's very hard for us to reach out sometimes. And I'd say like, "Hey, I need help" or like, "I'm not feeling well" or—but you're just like in an improv scene, you're just calling out what the truth is. And those scenes are always more fascinating when someone says like, "Hey, you look sad", rather than we're trying to hide what's going on. It's like, "What's the truth that's happening right now?" versus, you know, in improv scenes, we talk about truth and fact, where it's like, the fact is we're at the Starbucks, but that's not the truth.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:18:30] You know, the fact is we're in the situation where there is now becoming a lot more like a self-quarantine and we don't know what's happening, like that's the fact, but what's the truth? Like what are you feeling? Like when you can start naming those feelings, you start getting out of your head even more, you know, get out of your head, into your heart. Like, "How are you feeling right now?" And another thing that helps my friend and this, to me, goes a lot with improv is playing from a sense of gratitude.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:18:56] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:18:56] When I improvised with people and I walk into a scene like I'm very grateful to have this moment with you right now. Like, if you have—if you change that mindset, and it's very difficult. But if you change it to like this is a sense of gratitude, I don't know why this is a good thing right now, but I'm grateful for this situation. And then, you know, you look at it and you go, "Maybe now is the time I get—I'm finally forced to do this thing."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:19:22] Like I wonder how many people are going to try to really learn guitar now. I'm thinking about that a lot. How many people have guitars and they're like, they've been trying, they've wanted to learn it, wanted to learn it. And now, finally, they might find themselves with some free time. You know, another thing that helps with this is establishing the new routine. You know, treating the day like it's still a workday.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:19:46] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:19:46] Like for me, it's still a workday. Most of my time when I'm like, let's say I'm looking for work or I'm reaching out to people, I'm kind of doing the schedule anyway. So, establish what your new routine is, even if you just write it down. Like writing things down, it's amazing because a lot of times, those things happen once you write them down, but you put them in the light and you're like, "Okay, now, I can look back to what's my routine."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:20:10] And, you know, maybe—and everything changes. Everything is going day-to-day so that the improviser is able to be more flexible because that's what our instinct is or we've been trained to do, is like, "Okay, everything is—what's happening today, not going to be the same tomorrow." I'm undergoing some training with one of the theaters I work with and they're always saying, "This is for today."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:20:32] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:20:33] And everything's going to change. And, you know, now, we're trying to teach improv online. And I'm finding it fascinating because for years, I always thought I'd love to be able to improvise with someone who's not in my city, a friend of mine who moved away. It's how—and it's like, how can we make that happen? And now, we're forced to make it happen. So, for us, it's—in a way, it's scary, but in another way, oh, this is really exciting because also as a teacher, how fun is you don't have to leave your house and you can still affect people and you can still teach people. And now, you just—you know, it's forcing you to be more creative and innovative. I mean, this is forced innovation right now in my area of business. It's the same for you.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:21:13] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:21:13] Same for like anybody, this is like forced innovation. And you look at it and you go, "Okay, I need to do this. This is what I've been doing. Is there a way I can adapt or change this to fit what this new world is?" And right now, the new world is going into these virtual meetings. Now, I think once things settle a little bit, we'll get back to having these in-person needs, but I think this is a valuable tool set that we can have to say, "Okay, now, here's another offering I have, which I didn't have before."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:21:46] And to a sense of gratitude, and improviser is very good at doing that, to the fact of, "Okay, I'm pretty proficient with them, in virtual meetings, and I've taught online courses and I've built—"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:21:57] Look at your background.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:21:59] I know, seriously.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:22:00] Green screen monster.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:22:02] Exactly.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:22:02] And it's great.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:22:03] So, I contacted an association and said, "Hey, how can I help you and your members? This is my expertise. And your members are being forced into a virtual environment that they're not accustomed to. Utilize me. I'm not charging you. I'm not asking for any money. I'm here to help you and your members."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:22:27] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:22:27] And it was very quick to move to that mindset. It was almost—I mean, I was brainstorming with a few of my speaker friends and someone made a comment, "Perfect. I love it. Let's do it." I mean, that's the thing.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:22:40] Right. Because they're improvisers. Whether they're performers or not, they have the mindset.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:22:44] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:22:44] And it's changing that mindset to saying, "Yeah, let's do it." And not just, "Let's do it, but how can it work?"

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:22:51] Yeah. And another thing you said about playing the guitar, thank you for placing that in my head. But actually, three weeks ago, when I realized my business was beginning, to things were canceling, my mother and family have always wanted me to learn Greek because I only know the dirty words.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:23:09] Those are the best words.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:23:10] Well, the best words and my grandmother taught them to me. So, I went out and got a lifetime subscription to Rosetta Stone at a one-time cost. And I've been—now, I got to let the secret out. I've been teaching myself Greek on and off of the last three weeks. Who knows what's going to happen in like another three months?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:23:29] I think that's a great example, where you're looking at, this is like—these are acknowledge the fear, acknowledge the anxiety.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:23:37] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:23:37] Be like, "Yeah, absolutely. I'm very anxious."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:23:39] So, for some people, it's writing this down. Some people is just thinking it, some people is saying it out loud. Once you've acknowledged it and you say, "Yeah, there's a lot of uncertainty, I'm very scared", now, you move into, what can you do? What actually can you do? And you're a perfect example of like, "I'm going to

learn Greek. I'm going to do this. I'm going to purchase this. And I'm going to be of service." Like I have a scoop that I'm going to share with you.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:24:05] Okay.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:24:05] It's that—and I'm going to reach out to some people I have as far as like people that I coach or clients or things like that, and it's until this whole thing settles, I'm going to start offering free sessions to be like, "Hey, we're all in this together. If it's a situation where you can't pay, that's fine." Like—and I'll just start reaching out to the improv community and say, I want to have these one-on-one sessions with people and say, "What do you really need to work at? Let's do that", right? And like, "Let's spend this time doing it." It's going to help me—I mean, it's—in a way, it's a selfish reason because it's going to help me become more comfortable with online teaching.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:24:38] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:24:39] But in another way, it's like I want to be able to be of service and that's something I learned in improv is you're of service to the show, you're of service to your scene partner. How can it be of service right now? And what you said when you reach out to the associations, perfect example. It's like, "Let's be of service to each other right now." There are things we can and can't do. Like right now, a lot of my friends and myself and you as well, a lot of people are seeing their incomes dry up. So, you go, okay, that's the reality of situation.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:25:08] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:25:08] If I self-isolate, it's going to be a lot worse. I'm going to feel a lot worse. And it's going to be on top of everything that's happening now. It's going to be harder for me to get out of that crevice. It's going to be harder once I'm in it. Once I'm in my head and once I go, "Oh, man, this is it, it's the end, I'm not going to survive", it's so hard for me to get out of that. But if I can maintain this momentum and still do things and say, "Hey, you know, I'm very grateful for this opportunity."

**Jay Sukow:** [00:25:36] Now, I think you're still accepting what's happening, but I think it's changing that mindset, you know, which is like one of your big focuses, like how do you change that mindset? And it's a muscle. You know, you're also dealing with X amount of years of thinking a certain way, whether that's X amount of years of like I come into this office every day, this is my job and I'm rewarded for it. Like that's your mindset then, it's all changing now. So, you can hold on to it or you can let go of what that is because it doesn't serve you. Now, I move on to something new.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:26:09] Right. It's just being adaptable to a very changing landscape. And I will say this, I'll offer this up, I'm intrigued by taking improv online to bringing it as a function of an online-so, if you need to collaborate with me about online environments, I'd love to help you guys with that because that's fascinating to me.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:26:32] I also have a friend, too, who's like she does online, like online universities.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:26:38] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:26:38] So, I had mentioned something. She goes, "Yeah, I'm interested, too." So, it's like, okay, you know how it works that way. Now, reaching out to you, Peter, to be like, okay, how does it work with like the interaction, like having that discussion? And I think it's forcing people to move in that direction and to go like this, you know—and I think the issue for years for us improvisers is you have to change how you look at it. You can't look at it like how do we adapt these games that work well live into this format. You have to look at it, no, how do we adapt this—use this format? This is the format. What can we do knowing that here are the formats and here are the limitations? But here are the things that we couldn't do in person that we can do now based on technology. It's a very exciting time.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:27:25] It's funny you should say that because a friend of mine who's a CPA and an improviser, Kristen Rampe, when I met her about three years ago, we were talking, you know, "We should kind of get, you know, an improv troupe together of accountants." We'll be like two of us or five of us, it's not that many. And we know



people around the country, but we did know—and we're not in the same city. And we kept—we should do this online. And we kept trying to think through how would we—how would this work?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:27:55] You know what you do?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:27:57] And we weren't forced into it. But now that-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:27:58] You're not forced into it.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:27:59] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:28:00] And you know what you do is you just, it's Nike, Just do it. You do it and you go, my buddy, Will Hines, has written a couple of great improv books. So, if you're looking to nerd out improv-wise, one is like, How to Be the Greatest Improviser—I think it's, How to Be the Greatest Improviser on Earth?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:28:20] Okay.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:28:20] It's a—and he's just a very funny guy. And then, one is like—I think it's called Pirate Robot Ninja, which differentiates you into different types of improvisers.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:28:29] Okay.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:28:29] But, you know, I'm in the midst of I'm trying to write this book on improv and he goes, "You just can't accept the fact that the first draft is going to suck."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:28:39] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:28:39] It's going to suck, because you just got to get out there. And the same with what you're talking about. It's like, how do you do it? I don't know. You get together and you try it.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:28:46] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:28:46] Like Google Hangouts, we've done a couple of shows there and it's starting to happen. My friend, Amy Gurlitt does e-improv and she's been doing it for a while. And it was kind of, she put it on hold for a little bit and now, she's starting it back up again, which is like, how do we do improv online? And I think it's the same thing of our get together in a Google Hangout, try it. If you think about years ago, like when wireless phone was—when she was creating a lot of these improv gigs, she created the gigs out of a sense of there was a problem, how do I solve it?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:29:18] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:29:18] So, it was like there's a language barrier. Instead of set—you know, I have students from all—who don't speak English at all. They all speak different languages. How do I still get to them and affect them? She didn't go, "It can't be done." She didn't sit there and go, "Well, here are the problems." She went, "Huh? What if we had them create a language that they all share called gibberish?" And that's how gibberish came out. So, a lot of the gigs she did wasn't for performing, it was for helping solve problems.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:29:52] So, when you look at what you're doing, it's like, okay, cool, we're not in the same space, but we have the internet. We have this online capability. We have the connections there, right? So, now, let's just get up and play. Let's—you know, it goes back to—it reminds me of my old days when I first started improvising, when nobody knew what improv was, you know, when a handful of people on earth had ever heard like a form called the herault, which is pretty prevalent now throughout the world for improvisers.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:30:23] But a lot of people back in that, they had no—you were like, "Well, what it's like Saturday Night Live, but you make it up." So, they—like people didn't have a reference to it. So, it was the excitement of just getting together and sitting in a classroom somewhere and saying, "Oh, Peter, when you walked in, Pam left." So, what

if we do, every time someone walks in, someone leaves. And what—and you just kind of—you got very excited about creating this because there was no blueprint at that point.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:30:53] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:30:53] And I think the same thing for online.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:30:54] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:30:54] It's like, I don't know, let's give it a try. Get six accountants who are improvisers together in a Google Hangout, don't even necessarily do it for an audience, but like the more you do something, the better you get. It's just reiterations, improve. So, do it, sit, and that's how we would work on forms as well. It's like, "Oh, here's an idea for a form." We go through it and you go, "What?" Don't talk about the things that didn't work. We all know that.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:31:21] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:31:22] What are the moments that worked? And let's build on the moments that worked.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:31:26] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:31:26] And I think that's the thing as you continue to move forward is like we're all going to make mistakes, we're all going to be stressed out, but each day, keep focusing on what worked, what worked for me yesterday, and then celebrate. You know, there was a—I forgot who it was, but I heard there was a family who would have family dinners once a week and the whole like once a week, they would celebrate their failures. Somebody would say, "I did this", and everyone would clap and go, "Hurray." And I think the same thing is like you could celebrate the failures but build upon what's been working. I mean, that's what is really a good improv scene and a good life scene is like. What worked for you? What got you to this point? Build on what's working.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:32:10] I like this idea. I mean, I've got like 14 ideas from this conversation on how to help others and how to stay engaged and stay creative in this time of uncertainty even much more so than I began this conversation with. And it's—you're the guru, I keep telling you. The improv guru.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:32:30] These are—I'm just the conduit of other voices. I just have an ability to remember things. And I'm passing it along. You know, this is the information, too, if like you were talking about, take this as an opportunity to pass along the information you know. That's how you keep it, is you got to give it away.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:32:46] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:32:46] So, if there's something you're good at, you know, go online, do a Facebook Live thing and, you know, do a—send out an email, reach out to people. What is it that you are good at? What is it that you can offer? And people, you know, a lot of times don't—they'll be like, "Oh, I don't have anything to offer except." No, that's not true. There are things that we all do that people don't have experience in. Like your knowledge of accounting.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:33:12] Easy there. Easy now.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:33:14] Well, no, but I have zero knowledge.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:33:16] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:33:17] And I remember, too, my friend, Tony Llewellyn once. I was at a theater and they gave us a brand-new curriculum, like completely changed everything. And I was like studying this thing. And I'm like, I talked to Tony—and Tony is one of the most in the moment people I've ever seen.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:33:35] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:33:35] And I go, "Tony, man, how do you feel about this new curriculum?" And he just looks to me, he goes, "I just got to be one week ahead of the students."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:33:45] It's true.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:33:46] It's like, same thing, like so your knowledge of accounting is so much more adept than somebody like me. So, that's an opportunity to say like, okay, I am this, if anybody wants to share, you know, I have this information. And you'll be amazed people at this point, now, too, they're dying for information. They're dying for information to improve themselves. You want to learn Greek. So, you're like, "This is an opportunity I'm going to take to get that subscription."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:34:12] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:34:12] And so, there are these opportunities and we have to—if you're looking for opportunities, it's going to help change your mindset, too. But if you're looking if you find people to commiserate with how bad things are, absolutely, but it's not going to improve anything. It's not going to improve anything. All you're going to be doing is you are just going to be focusing on that negative with someone else who's co-signing your BS, as I was told once. It's like, "Oh, yeah, they're co-signing your BS." See? And again, none of these are my thoughts. I'm just like a storyteller, I'm just passing along what people have said.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:34:47] Well, yeah. And I like to pass on the same thing. I like to be a conduit as well. And by the way, for those of you who aren't watching this, he was just handed a coffee cup. I'm not sure what's in the coffee cup.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:34:58] It's tea.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:34:58] It's tea?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:34:58] It's tea. It is tea.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:01] I thought that—it looks like Irish whiskey.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:04] Hey, man, whatever gets you through.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:04] I thought that was yesterday.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:04] No, that's yesterday.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:08] I mean, great information. And it's just—I think it improvises them to stay positive more than most and calm. But-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:20] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:21] Because, you know, we focus on the things that we control, have control and we don't focus as much on things we don't have control.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:30] It's just wasted energy.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:35:32] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:35:33] The same with like at a certain point, two things happen for an improviser so they continue, one is you realize, "Oh, that scene we just did, I don't have to think about anymore because we're not going to do it again. So, I don't have to focus on it." Focusing on what I could've done better in that improv scene is useless. The other is, as you continue, when you first start improvising, you're so afraid and you're so convinced the scene is going to be bad, the show is going to be bad. As you continue, you just assume it's going to be good. You just assume it's going to work out and you go, "Man, if it doesn't, if this show isn't good, of all the shows I've done, that was one of them. Of all the shows I've done, that was the most recent.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:36:21] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:36:21] And you move on. And it's something that you are constantly practicing. I'm better at it only because I practice it more than maybe other people do. But there are people who've never taken an improv class who have this mindset already. And you're like a born improviser and they might never be on stage, but you deal with people in your life. There are people that they always seem to like take things in stride or when, you know, everything hits the fan, they take a breath and they go, "Okay, here's how we deal with it" or they make you feel heard.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:36:52] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:36:52] Another thing is people, it's very important right now for people to feel heard. So, sometimes, it's just calling somebody and saying, "How are you doing?", which might be a follow the fear thing. Like think about those people that you've—you're like, "I've got to reach out to them." And each week it gets harder and harder because you have it. This is the perfect excuse to do it, right?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:37:11] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:37:11] This is like—it's a hard reset of society, man. This is a hard reset. And you go, I can use this whole coronavirus as an excuse to reach out to somebody and go, "Hey, you know what, I haven't talked to you in a while. I feel bad. I wanted to check in. How are you doing? Because now, also, you've got something to talk about.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:37:28] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:37:29] And if you're afraid of what am I going to say to somebody, which we all have that fear of, right?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:37:33] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:37:33] There's a simple trick, you just say to them, "How are you doing?" Could we just focus on them? Everybody's going to talk about themselves. You

know, it's like, when you walk into a room, you're always scared of what like people are looking at you, talking about you, I got news, man. They aren't. We're all thinking about ourselves. Rarely is it like, "Oh, everyone's-", no, they're not. We're all thinking about ourselves. So, you can use this opportunity right now to say, I've been meaning to send an email to somebody, I've been meaning to reach out to somebody or, hey, I just haven't checked in with that person, how are they doing? And you'll be amazed at the impact it has on them.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:07] Absolutely. That's good advice. And I have been using that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:38:10] Yeah.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:11] In a podcast that's sort of after yours. And I had a friend who his doctor believe he did contract the coronavirus, but it was during the testing period that he couldn't get tested because he didn't meet some of the criteria that he wasn't out of the country or he did not become in contact.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:38:29] Right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:38:30] But he self-quarantined. And every day, I send him a text, "How are you feeling? How's it going?" "I'm feeling bad. It's terrible." I said, you know, "I'll keep checking in." "Hey, by the way, I watched the Knives Out last night on Netflix, love the movie, might want to watch it." Oh, I watched, you know, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood." So, I would just give them, you know, these movies and stuff that I was watching and just, "Oh, man, I really like that movie." So, I'm trying to help lift the spirits. And last check, he's doing better.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:38:59] That's huge.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:39:00] Yeah.



**Jay Sukow:** [00:39:00] I mean, I don't think you're going to understand the impact until later, what you had on him. Just a text saying, "How you doing?", is huge. And then, given those suggestions. I mean, that's something—that's a great example of what we can do to people in our circle and how we can affect them in our circle. And you look at it like, "It's not that I'm not going out because I'm afraid of getting it, I'm not going out because I'm afraid I'm a carrier." I think that's how we have to shift it to, be like, "I'm going to hurt people."

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:39:29] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:39:29] Like, it's not that I'm afraid I'm going to get it, it's like, you have to assume you already have it. Like, that's part of the change in mindset. But you just got to assume you've had it or you—because then, you're really making your choices based on other people like yourselves.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:39:42] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:39:42] You know what I've got, I've got so many wonderful, talented friends like my buddy, Bill Cut, does this live jive thing on Facebook. And he's utilizing that time to say like, "I'm going to do some characters" or "I'm going to share some comedy. If you want to tune in, great. Tune in and watch that." And it's—you'd be amazed at the amount of people that it affects, you know. You don't, like I went on, I will follow the Fear Friday, where I post something on social media and it's like, "Hey, fault. What are you going to do to follow the fear today?"

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:40:11] Oh, yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:40:11] And last Friday, I just went live on Facebook. And I was like, "Hey, let's talk about it." And I was amazed that—I remember thinking to myself, maybe a handful of people tune in. And I was amazed how many people sat and watched that. And then, it started the conversation for people as well. So, I think if you do something where your focus is on helping other people, you know, try to do either of these ones, too, try to do something good and get away with it.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:40:40] Trying to do something good for someone else and get away with it, like that, again, changes your mindset to, I'm not there to do it for a reason other than I'm just putting it out there. So, I'm going to steal that, what you're talking about. It's like reaching out to people and just saying, "Hey, how you doing?" or like, "I watched this movie", like giving people—you know, our job as improvisers, too, is to give people hope and bring comedy and laughter.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:41:06] We need it now more than ever. The world needs improvisers now more than ever, whether it's your mindset or the focus on the group or to make sure to look good or just to bring laughter or just hang out. You know, I have a class that I teach and I was like, "Oh, we're not—we're going to go dark and not have class." And they're like, "Well, can we just do a Hangout?", where we do a Google online Hangout. Because for some people, that's the only interaction they're going to have that day with another human being.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:41:31] Right.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:41:32] We have to remember that. And check in on those people. Check in on the people who are more susceptible. The people that are in their, you know, 65 and older because they don't want to be inside. They don't want to do this.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:41:42] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:41:42] So, now is the time to check in.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:41:44] It is. And it is the time to check in, but not just by phone.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:41:48] Yes.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:41:48] But by FaceTime.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:41:50] Exactly.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:41:51] By this. By Hangout. But it is having a face-to-face, seeing that other person goes a long way. Our NSA Ohio chapter's doing a virtual town hall meeting tomorrow from 12:00 to 1:00 to our professional members and just asking them, "How are you doing?"

**Jay Sukow:** [00:42:10] And it's perfect.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:42:13] Because we're isolated. Those who are in a gig economy, those who are so open doors were used to working alone, but also used to get in a plane, also used to getting out of the house. But now that we're—we tend to get isolated, we're realizing that. It was like, how can we help our members? So, we'd start out to be—you know, through a conversation, we're not going to do it once, we're doing it every week.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:42:35] That's great.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:42:36] Every week of virtual town hall meeting. Let's get together. If you show up—and, you know, something might branch out, maybe I'll take groups, say, "Hey, I'm going to do an improv piece on this and help", and whatever. And have that other type of meeting just see what we can—see how we can serve.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:42:55] Opportunity.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:42:57] Opportunity.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:42:58] You know, not downplaying the fact that it's very serious and not downplaying the fact that people are affected by this and people are dying like that is—accepting that, like that is true. And there is sadness and anxiety around that. Absolutely. There's also, improvisers can bring empathy to the situation and look at it like an opportunity to share that empathy and to share that joy and that hope and that love. And you know me, for me, improv is about the love, too.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:43:26] Yeah.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:43:26] It's like, when people are like, "What do—what advice would you give to improvisers?", I'm like, "More love, more scenes that involve love, more sharing of that." Like that's something I would tell people. It's like you can't get enough of it right now.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:43:40] Right. You can't. You know, we just need to keep doing that. I need to respect your time because we're getting up to about 1:00. And I think you had something going on.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:43:48] Respecting my time.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:43:53] What?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:43:56] What?

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:43:56] Yeah. Because we did—you did tell me you had something going on at 1:00 and we're butting up against that. I don't want to mess up your day.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:44:04] You tell me what you need.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:44:06] I need more of your time. Not doing the podcast, but, you know, I love having these conversations because you give me a lot of ideas. And I'm serious, let me help you, however I can help you, just ask, it's there.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:44:18] No, that's great. Thank you. And I think one thing is like as we're continuing is there are going to be a ton of these online improv shows popping up. And so, I think what would help is if people tune in and watch those. And if you just—you know, I'm sure if you go on social media, you'll see it. But I think that's one way, it's like, you know, support people and local artists. Support like there are people that are having a hard time paying rent, so they're offering some services, either discounted or maybe a

barter or something of that. So, if you see an opportunity to do that or throw a kick-starter.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:44:52] You know, for my birthday, I did a fundraiser. Facebook said, "Do you want to do a fundraiser?" I'm like, "Sure, why not?" And I did it for Room to Improv, which you know, I mean, I like Kahana and you're wearing a Room to Improv shirt right now, which I love. And I'm like, "Hey, if you've got a couple bucks, throw it up there." And I think we raised \$1,200, which I was blown away by, was like—and it was people that also I knew there were people that didn't have the money to share that did it. And I knew then, I was like, "Oh, my God, I can't believe people." That's why I go, we have to keep that thought that humanity, overall, is good. They are looking to help other people.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:45:28] So, if there's a way that you can help, you know, reach out to your local restaurant or bar and say, "Hey, you're hurting right now, is there a way I can help out?" And even sometimes, it's just they might say share this post or something, but I think to be of service and to look to help other people, I think that's the best you can do. And a lot of my people because I'm in a circle with a lot of artists and a lot of my artist friends are really hurting right now and very scared. So, if you wanted to take a voice lesson or learn how to sing, now's a great time to reach out to, you know, a local singer or voice teacher and say, "Hey, I want to do a couple one-on-one sessions." So, there's always opportunity to help.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:46:10] Absolutely. Great advice. And because of everything that's been going on, completely slipped my mind, but you just reminded me of something. Was it March 15th was your birthday?

**Jay Sukow:** [00:46:22] March 14th, the same birthday as Albert Einstein.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:46:26] Oh, that's what it is. And so-

**Jay Sukow:** [00:46:28] That's right.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:46:29] And you are going to have this big party in LA for, you were turning what? 40 or something like that.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:46:37] Oh, you're so kind. I'm not going to say I was turning 50, but I'll take—yes. It is my big 5-0, buddy, the big 5-0.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:46:44] Welcome to the club. Well, you know, a big old happy birthday to you, Jay. And I'll have a little barbecue in your honor tonight and wish you a happy birthday, because, you know, with everything going on, just slipped my mind, but, you know, it did jog my memory. Happy birthday, buddy. And-.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:47:04] Thank you, man, my friend. That means a lot.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:47:07] Cool. And do me a favor, at least initially, when you know that these improv shows are coming online, send me a note.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:47:15] Sure.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:47:15] Just send me a quick note and say, "Look for this." And then, once I get that into my routine, then I'll be able to do it, and I'll share that out as well.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:47:23] Oh, perfect. Yeah. Oh, when I've got it, I'll drop you a line, for sure.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:47:28] Perfect. I appreciate everything that you've done, everything you continue to do, and I look forward to it the next time we have time to spend together again.

**Jay Sukow:** [00:47:35] I appreciate you, my friend. Thanks for having me on. This is great.

**Peter Margaritis:** [00:47:40] I'm going to end this podcast in a different way. I want to sign off by saying, please, everyone, be safe, try to stay healthy and just implement one or two tips from this episode today. And I hope it helps all of you in dealing with the current situation related to the coronavirus pandemic that each and every one of us are dealing with. Be safe.

**Announcer:** [00:48:14] Like what you just heard? Because it's c-suiteradio.com. C-Suite Radio, turning the volume up on business.