

The Ten Commandments of Clowning

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1. Prepare to be the best you can be. It is not enough to want to be the best. You must first prepare. Research. Read. Watch and learn from the pro's. Look at the techniques and study the actions and reactions. The most successful in any field have not become that way by chance. They have all prepared first.

2. Practice. Practice. Practice.

3. Go to school. There are many schools to choose from. One in particular, the Northeast Clown Institute (NCI) in Plymouth, Massachusetts has been in operation for 17 years. One weekend every January, over 200 clowns and clown wannabees gather for an awesome weekend of make-up, skits, juggling, magic, props, costumes, balloons, and so much more. NCI boasts 2 Past Presidents of I.S.C.A. as Past Chairmen/Dean and Board members. Its Board of Directors is made up entirely of Shriners. The philanthropy has always been, and will always be the Sneaker Fund. Need you know anything else?

4. Practice. Practice. Practice.

5. Develop creativity. Learn to think like a clown. Use simple humor which will be understood and appreciated by audiences of all ages and mentalities. When you develop your own personality and create your own "tools of the trade," you will certainly be on your way to successful and rewarding clowning.

6. Practice. Practice. Practice.

7. Remember, that although imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, it is something that must be used with thoughtful consideration for all concerned. When you watch your clown colleagues as they practice their art forms, remember that they too have spent countless hours perfecting their gimmicks and routines. They have faithful audience followings who remember them for these art forms. Please don't assume that using their tricks and gimmicks is simply a form of flattery. In actuality, it's stealing. If you would like to use something of theirs, whether it be a prop, routine, verbal expression, or anything else that your clown colleagues might consider their very own trademarks, just remember the Golden Rule and treat the situation as though the roles were reversed. You know the answer. And, of course, if there's any doubt, simply ask.

8. Practice. Practice. Practice.

9. Use your family and friends as your trial audiences. They will be honest with you on most occasions. And, you should be able to read their responses. If they laugh or smile, you'll know whether it's sincere or not. If you make a mistake, they will let you know. When you can impress family and friends with a beautiful balloon creation or mysterious magic trick, you're on your way.

If you can receive "The Look," then you've done it.

10. Make "The Look your goal." "The Look" is something between you and your audience that you strive to receive. It might be just a moment or it might be longer. It happens when you and your audience make that special connection and your eyes and spirits are together. You'll both know that something special has happened. Whether it's a twinkle in their eyes, a glimpse of a smile or outright and undeniable joy, when you see "The Look," you'll know.

Some of you might say that I've only listed six commandments here and that I've listed two, four, six and eight all the same - Practice. Practice. Practice. Well, the reason is simple. They deserve more attention. Practicing is the foundation for success. I can say this with confidence, if you follow commandments two, four, six and eight, you will be on your way to being a "10."

As always, have fun and keep smiling....

Do-No