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## Clown's act

By Vidya Unnithan, Pune Mirror | Mar 25, 2018, 12.00 AM IST



The clown workshop focuses on exercises on selfacceptance

Let go of the inhibitions that hold you back, at this residential workshop which will teach you to be a clown.

Sukhmani Kohli, a 33-year-old theatre actor from Udaipur, knew right from when she was young that theatre was her lifeline and did not hesitate to turn it into a profession. The decision made 14 years ago, has generated a huge body of work, which includes acting and directing plays, teaching, and storytelling. She is the co-founder of Purple Mangoes Facilitators, an organisation that has created a space for people to reconnect within themselves and with others using theatre tools — and clowning. “I was active in theatre and was introduced to clowning 11 years ago. When I began training and taking lessons, I realised that clowning helps you unmask and connect with your authentic self,” says Kohli, who will be helming ‘The Juicy Genius of Play’, a one-of-its-kind clowning workshop in the city this week. “Clowning proved to be transformative for me,” she adds.

The three-and-a-half-day residential workshop, which is open to anyone above the age of 16, will begin with ice breakers, and have simple exercises that will help participants let go of their inhibitions. It will conclude with each participant walking into public spaces with a clown nose, entertaining and amusing people. “Being a clown is about accepting your vulnerability and it takes a lot of courage and self-assurance to let people laugh at you willingly,” says Kohli, adding that clowning is not only about exaggerated movements, expressions or loud costumes, but about unearthing the person, to find out who they could be if they were not controlled by the fear of judgement. The workshop is not highly structured, but it will have miming and body movement workshops among other exercises. “A major part of the clown workshop will also include exercises on self-acceptance,” she says.

While the workshop is for anyone who wishes to unburden themselves from living up to the expectations of society, it is especially beneficial for theatre enthusiasts. “Clowning is all about unlearning and the theatre community can benefit from the workshop because they are pushed to use movements and expressions to tell their story,” says Kohli, adding that clowns are spontaneous storytellers and have the ability to create a story using only emotions, props, improvisation and movement. “The presence of a clown is also known to heal people and that is why clowns are often invited to perform in hospitals and refugee camps,” she adds.

Kohli, who has previously conducted day-long workshops in cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and

Chandigarh, designed a residential session in an attempt to help participants connect better with each other. "If people are put together in a new space and are living together, it will just help them to create deeper connections," she explains.

The workshop will end by celebrating April Fool's Day, when the participants will perform as clowns. "The experience of being able to express oneself without any fear or worry is something that each participant will take back. I am certain, once they experience how that feels, they will be on the path of transformation," says Kohli. Participants interested in attending the workshop can opt for shared or single accommodation and the cost will differ on that basis.

**WHERE: Hidden Oasis, Kondhwa–Saswad Road WHEN: March 29–April 1, 11 am onwards CALL: 9650118376 COST: Rs 7,000 to Rs 10,000**