



ATLANTA 2016



"A systematic approach to auditioning that creates consistency. Everything working together: mind/body/spirit, causing reverence for the craft and an efficient way of working that builds confidence in the actor.

This system allows the actor to adeptly handle an audition professionally and with a profound connection to the piece."

Crystal Carson

WELCOME TO AUDITIONING BY HEART

- ▶ 90% of actors memorize lines and say them as they think they are supposed to be said.
- ▶ These Freshman level actors pre-plan and shape their auditions.
- ▶ They don't listen and react. They pretend to.
- ▶ Now, WHY are YOU an actor?

GET ZEN WITH IT

- ▶ Find a comfortable quiet space.
- ▶ Shut off your phone & eliminate all distractions.
- ▶ Clear your mind of negative self talk and sit in the unknown wonder of possibility.
- ▶ Tap into WHY you are an actor.

???DID YOU KNOW???

- ▶ Studies have shown that material is learned more easily when you are **focused**. And that it's easier to focus when you are calm and positive.*
 - ▶ * <http://learnnow.org/topics/stress/reduce-stress-to-increase-learning>
- ▶ Thinking positively is the first step to making sure visualization is actually effective.**
 - ▶ **Kay Porter, Ph.D., a sports-psychology consultant and the author of *The Mental Athlete*

RESEARCH THE PRODUCERS, WRITERS AND DIRECTOR

- ▶ You can do this at any time that the need arises, but if you haven't had a need by now...then just do it now.
- ▶ You may find that in the beginning, asking the questions, "Why? What does this mean to me?" requires stepping further into similar projects, and googling these folks may bring up some.
- ▶ You may find that you can't understand the tone, and googling the people that are making the piece may help.

BACKGROUND FOCUS - WHAT'S THE STORY?

- ▶ Read **EVERYTHING** on the page, **OUT LOUD**. Pay close attention to the stage directions. (ie. environment)
 - ▶ You engage more of your senses this way.
 - ▶ Ponder and imagine the stage directions carefully.
- ▶ It's okay to **highlight** your lines (or your transitions) during the first read. (More on this later...)

FLESH OUT THE STORY

- ▶ Ponder (as yourself):
 - ▶ “What is this story about?”
 - ▶ Are there parts you can’t understand yet?
 - ▶ “How does it move me / speak to me?”
- ▶ Ponder (as your character):
 - ▶ “Who am I in the story?”
 - ▶ Where do I come from? What do I do for a living? How do I see the world?

FOREGROUND FOCUS: BECOME THE DETECTIVE

- ▶ Read the sides again, asking yourself after each sentence, including stage directions: **"Why? What does this mean to me?"**
- ▶ You are a detective looking for clues... PONDER, THINK, IMAGINE.
 - ▶ What does ... mean? What does - - mean?
- ▶ Do NOT audition until you have made-up something for everything you reference throughout the sides.
 - ▶ Note: You don't have to be "right", but you have decide something within the parameters of the script to be truthful. Make this promise to yourself; you won't just say words, you'll invent images / history.

FLESH OUT THE ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ Ponder:
 - ▶ What time is it?
 - ▶ “What is this environment look like (colors)?
 - ▶ “What does it feel being in this space?”
 - ▶ “What are the smells and sounds?”
- ▶ Opening beat: Where did you come from?
- ▶ Closing beat: Where are you going next?

???DID YOU KNOW???

- ▶ Color is believed to be the most important visual experience to human beings.
- ▶ It functions as a powerful information channel to the human cognitive system and has been found to play a significant role in enhancing memory performance.*
 - ▶ Imagine your environment with **colors** (smells/sounds, too.)
- ▶ In particular, **warm colors**, like red, yellow and orange, may help us to memorize things by increasing our level of **attention****
 - ▶ **Highlight using warm colors.**
- ▶ [*http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3743993/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3743993/) [**http://www.human-memory.net/processes_recall.html](http://www.human-memory.net/processes_recall.html)

BUILD THE WORLD

- ▶ What stage directions are "necessary"?
- ▶ Evaluate what you need to feed you, and how to give it to yourself.
- ▶ Set the environment for yourself, and begin working out the necessary "blocking/set/props":
 - ▶ How can you use the Chair to your advantage as a set piece or to express your feelings?
 - ▶ Don't use props, use "props" (Next slide)

Continue...

“DRESS” THE WORLD – PROPS

- ▶ How can you use resistance for objects you need?
- ▶ How can you use things that “happen” to be on your person?
- ▶ How can you use the SIDES to your advantage as a prop?
 - ▶ **NOTE:** If step 5 is too difficult to complete now, don't worry...you can revisit the Environment after you have explored the Relationship and Objective. The aim at this point is to do enough to “stand in the environment” while you do the 3rd read.

???DID YOU KNOW???

- ▶ Several studies have shown that memories are better recalled when similar **movements** are used for both encoding and retrieval.*
- ▶ Emotions (and thoughts) are stronger when connected to movements. **
 - ▶ **Move in character** as you read the script. (Even if you must "do less" during the actual audition. Your mind will feel "muscle memory" which will support you.
- ▶ * www.human-memory.net/processes_recall.html and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotion_and_memory
- ▶ ** <http://www.humankinetics.com/excerpts/excerpts/quality-of-movement---emotions>

BACKGROUND THOUGHT: FEEL THE RHYTHM OF THE CONVERSATION

- ▶ Imagine & feel the environment, and while “standing / moving inside it”... Read the script for the 3rd time.
 - ▶ Read out loud all the dialogue (only) - skip the stage directions.
 - ▶ You will begin to hear/ feel the rhythm of the dialogue. It will also start to give you a sense of the relationship.
 - ▶ Discover the topic changes (new units).
 - ▶ Discover some mini-changes within a topic (baby beats).

CHECK THE ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ Ask yourself:
 - ▶ During the 3rd read, how did it feel to move in your environment? Were you fed by your choices of "props" and "set pieces"? If not, how can you set yourself up better?
 - ▶ Did you give yourself images & history to begin to explore any "emotional" indications in the stage directions?
 - ▶ Note: "Cry" does not mean cry. Underlines, capitols, and exclamation points don't mean LOUD!
 - ▶ Did you fill eclipses with images? Give a reason for dashes?
- ▶ Do you need to go back and re-read/re-think some stage directions where you were not completely clear?

CHECK THE RHYTHM (UNITS / TRANSITIONS / BABY BEATS)

- ▶ Flip your paper back over so you can see the dialogue and make notes:
 - ▶ Mark the Units/Transitions by drawing a pencil line at the transitions points that are obvious to you. (Do this in the beginning, but soon it'll be optional)
 - ▶ Mark with // marks an mini-transitions that jump out. (Optional)
 - ▶ Name the units. (Give them exciting titles) (Optional)

FLESH OUT THE RELATIONSHIP

▶ Ponder:

- ▶ What did you discover about your relationship with the other main character(s)? How do you feel about them? How long do you believe you've known each other?
- ▶ Who do the minor character(s) remind you of? How do you feel about them? Are their opinions different than the other major character(s)?
- ▶ What did you discover about the your relationship to the significant object(s) in the scene? How can you substitute or endow them with memories to give them a stronger pull on you?

???DID YOU KNOW???

- ▶ Studies have shown that material is learned more easily when the material has emotional content.
- ▶ And when the emotional state at the time of retrieval is similar to the emotional state at the time of encoding. *
 - ▶ Endow the story with with quick, little imagined histories as you work. (More on this later.)
 - ▶ Do NOT attempt to memorize your lines while doing your script analysis work. Let the emotional work give you the lines...“by heart”. (Don’t fight learning them, either. Just don’t concern yourself with memorizing at all. Focus on discovering and taking-on the character’s life.)

BACKGROUND FOCUS: INTENTION / OBJECTIVE

- ▶ While “standing inside the environment” and tapping into your relationship... Read the script for the 4th time.
 - ▶ Sense the other character, while paying attention to discovering what you want/need from them.
 - ▶ Read out-loud (dialogue only).
 - ▶ If you are ready, cover up what you say. Generate from “listening to the other character” what you want to say. Speak it out loud.
 - ▶ Look at how your thoughts lined up with those of the conversation. Re-think where necessary. Speak your new idea.

Continue...

CHECK THE OBJECTIVE / INTENSION

▶ Ponder:

- ▶ What is your overall intention/objective throughout the story. (Or throughout your character's life) - SUPER OBJECTIVE
 - ▶ What is your state of being at the beginning of the conversation vs. the end? Remember, intention progresses.
 - ▶ What is your overall intention/objective in the scene in relation to the other main character(s)? What do you want?
- ▶ Add correct and/or mark any changes in the units/transitions.

INTENTION/OBJECTIVE - CONT.

- ▶ Find the "The Key Phrase".
- ▶ Find the character's "core moment".
- ▶ Use the Stanislavsky's "What if...?"
- ▶ If needed, use substitution from your own life to gain a personal "understanding" of your character's objective and the consequences of failing.
- ▶ Do the objective sentence...(next slide)

Continue...

THE OBJECTIVE SENTENCE

- ▶ What do you want from the other person?
- ▶ What will happen if you fail?
- ▶ I want to ___(Physical Action)___ **this** ___(3 Positive Adjective)___
yet ___(3 Negative Adjective)___, ___(Colorful Noun)___
into ___(Intense Desire)___
or ___(Dire Consequence)___.

Continue...

STAKES

- ▶ What are the obstacles hindering your success? A brief list:
 - ▶ Internal obstacles?
 - ▶ External obstacles?
- ▶ Check that the relationships to people or significant objects mentioned in the scene are strong enough to create high stakes. (If needed, endow them again with (brief) imagined histories or use an even better substitution from your personal life than you first chose.)

BACKGROUND FOCUS – TACTICS / ACTIONS

- ▶ While “standing inside the environment”, own the relationship, tap into your objective and sense the obstacles...Read the script for the 5th time.
 - ▶ Cover up what you say. Generate from “listening to the other character” what you want to say. Speak it out loud... Look to see if your thoughts aligned. (Re-think where necessary, and “re-listen” and speak.)
- ▶ Referring to the internal and external obstacles:
 - ▶ Explore different ways to get what you want (different tactics or actions). Try different manners of communication to overcome your obstacles. Don't lock onto anything, just expand what's available to you.
 - ▶ NOTE: This is about auditioning: Not all obstacles will be provided. Some obstacles must be sensed in the other person by you, some may be anticipated by you because of your relationship history.

END OF SOPHOMORE YEAR: COMPLETED ACTING 101

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

90% of actors audition at this level

Now onto your Junior year....

JUNIOR YEAR – TYPICAL BACKSTORY

10% of actors do some kind of backstory.

And it looks like this:

- ▶ Journaling about the current circumstances, and what directly led up to them.
- ▶ It expands on the moment before.
- ▶ This work is in the right direction.

TO RECAP:

90% Never make it past Sophomore level.

10% of actors do go deeper in their preparation and do some kind of backstory.

But only 1% of actors go beyond the Junior level and work in the way I'm about to teach you.

Now onto your Senior year....

HISTORY HOMEWORK - WHERE DOES "BAGGAGE" COME FROM?

- ▶ In life, something happens. It doesn't mean anything by itself. It just happened.
- ▶ As humans, we automatically assign meaning to what happened (based on how we see the world.)
- ▶ We believe our thoughts about what happened to be "true".
- ▶ When what happens is thought to be "bad", and we let it mean that "we are not good enough" in some way, it can become baggage.
- ▶ This is especially true 3 times in human brain development.

HISTORY HOMEWORK – WHERE DOES “BAGGAGE” COME FROM?

- ▶ Current neuroscience, using functional MRI analysis, tells us that human brains generally grow and develop in stages. One thing that happens is, before age 30, the brain re-wires about every seven years:
 - ▶ At approx 7 years old, 14 years old and 21 years old (and in fewer individuals, once again at 28) the synapses of the brain move from area of the brain to reconnect to another area.
 - ▶ For example, the synapsis of the left inferior frontal gyrus and the left parieto-temporal system, (used for language, cognitive functions & reading) move to a third area of the brain, the left occipito-temporal lobe. (*Sally Shaywitz, Yale neuroscientist, Michael Gurian of the Gurian Institute, Richard Gentry, Therapist, Abigail Baird, Assistant Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences-Dartmouth, and others)

HISTORY HOMEWORK – WHERE DOES “BAGGAGE” COME FROM?

- ▶ During the time that synapses are switching locations, there are misfires, jumps and starts. Studies funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Development, hypothesis that:
 - ▶ The disorganization of the recirculating brain
 - ▶ As time goes on, we will gain evidence to support our BAGGAGE.
 - ▶ It becomes bigger and truer baggage, that we feel worse and worse about.
 - ▶ We don't want anyone to know we have BAGGAGE, (mostly). We must hide it.

HISTORY HOMEWORK – WHERE DOES “BAGGAGE” COME FROM?

- ▶ Something happens in the present that triggers the baggage from the past.
 - ▶ BAGGAGE is “meanings” we unknowingly made-up about ourselves, (about what is wrong with us) that we believe to be true.
 - ▶ BAGGAGE is emotional.
 - ▶ As time goes on, we will gain evidence to support our BAGGAGE.
 - ▶ It becomes bigger and truer baggage, that we feel worse and worse about.
 - ▶ We don’t want anyone to know we have BAGGAGE, (mostly). We must hide it.

CHARACTER'S HISTORY

- ▶ The character may have lived for many years, but you can't experience their entire life...nor do you need to do so. Their outlook on the world, behavior and belief system was set up by a few defining moments, call them "inciting incidents", that have since been reenforced over and over.
- ▶ These "inciting incidents" tend to be personal and private. They come out as the last part of your argument.

BE THE CHARACTER'S THERAPIST

- ▶ The character has lived through experiences that cause him/her to think, feel and behave a certain way. They may or may not do this with any awareness. In any case, they come by it naturally. It's automatic.
 - ▶ You may not think, feel and behave as your character does.
 - ▶ Figure out 3 incidents that the character might have lived through that could cause them to think and behave as they do.
 - ▶ Then "experience" the incidents yourself as part of your acting preparation...(History phone call exercises.)
 - ▶ So that you will be thrown to think, feel and behave as the character does... "naturally."

WHICH 3 INCIDENTS TO CHOOSE?

- ▶ #1) Ask yourself: Why are “you” doing what you are doing?
- ▶ Choice of Occupation and / or what you are doing in the scene
- ▶ More often than not, films, television and theatre scripts are filled with people who are driven to a fault. Whether they are aware of it or not, these people have a great need to solve an unsolvable problem that stems from their past. Since “what happened” in your character's past is causing their current beliefs; rather than choosing, they’re doing what they are *driven* to do.
 - ▶ While it may benefit some of the people in “your life”, “you” are off balance... sacrificing valuable aspects of “your life” to try to solve the problem. Even if it’s unsolvable (ie. pleasing a dead father, undoing something you did in the past, etc...)
 - ▶ Your character may or may not know why they’re doing what they’re doing...but to own their thoughts, feelings and behavior, you must. :-)

FEELINGS...NOTHING MORE THAN FEELINGS...

- ▶ #2) Ask yourself: Why are "you" feeling what you are feeling?
- ▶ Look to see what the sides suggest that you are feeling. (Remember to also look at the consequences of failing for clues/feelings)
 - ▶ What happened to "you" in the past, that you're making what is happening to you now, mean something that would cause you to feel this way?
 - ▶ The incident from the past has been reenforced over the years since it happened. "You" believe what it means about you **to be true**. (It usually means you are "not good enough" in some way.)
 - ▶ Your character may or may not know why they're feeling what they are feeling...but to own their thoughts, feelings and behavior, you must. :-)

ONCE UPON A TIME...

- ▶ Now that you know 3 powerful things that happened in your character's past that are driving their current choices, it is time to experience them. I call this doing your **History Phone Calls**.
 - ▶ Invent 1 (and eventually perhaps 2 or 3) scenario(s) that will cause you to bring up 1 thing that happened that led "you" to feel the way you do now about the world that you uncovered in the previous 2 steps.
 - ▶ Note: Start with 1 scenario about 1 thing that happened that led "you" to feel the way you do now about the world, rather than trying to invent all 3 scenarios. Sometimes this one phone conversation will drift and end up going places that "handle" 2 or 3 scenarios in one phone call.
 - ▶ Do this by having an imaginary phone conversation where you are in conflict with the other person on the phone about something to do with the current story of the script.

IMAGINARY PHONE CONVERSATIONS

- ▶ Do this by having an imaginary phone conversation where you are in conflict with the other person on the phone about something to do with the current story of the script.
 - ▶ Allow yourself to improvise and argue on the phone why you are right and they are wrong.
 - ▶ When you have used every reasonable argument, then in a last ditch effort to win, express (and “relive”) by sharing an experience and/or relevant moment in your history with the imaginary person on the phone. Take them through it, step-by-step, and share the feelings.
 - ▶ In order to share feelings, you must experience the feelings: “Re-live” each step as if you are in the past and it is happening to you now. Share (out loud) what you are seeing, hearing, thinking and feeling as you “re-live” it in your mind.

CONGRATULATIONS. YOU'VE GRADUATED.

- ▶ What does mastery look like?
 - ▶ Script Analysis
 - ▶ Figuring out 3 incidents
 - ▶ Imaginary phone conversations
 - ▶ Drawing upon the inciting incidents as a way to tap into the character's emotional truth.

LET IT ALL GO!

- ▶ Trust yourself and throw it all away.
- ▶ Listen and respond from inside the relationship.
- ▶ Go after what "you" want!

FEEDBACK

- ▶ What percentage of the time were you in the environment(s)?
- ▶ What percentage of the time were you inside the relationship(s)?
- ▶ What percentage of the time were you going after your objective(s)?
- ▶ What percentage of the time were you aware of the consequences of failing?
- ▶ What percent of the time were you present in the moment (listening and reacting)?

BE NICE TO YOURSELF

- ▶ What were the takeaways and lessons?
- ▶ Treat yourself.
- ▶ Move on with YOUR life.