

SESSION 2 – THE INSTRUMENT PART 1

On Your Feet - Breathing & Improv(isation)

HOMEWORK REVIEW:

- 1) How have you been doing with your OBJECTIVE awareness--studying you in the world you live in?
- 2) Do you have a clearer understanding of story structure: Who, What, and Where - Character? As an added benefit, (and we will get more into this in later session) you may find that watching stories with more focus on the Who, What, Where, and Character has already started to help you better understand the 3 act story structure: Act 1, Act 2, Act 3 - Beginning, Middle, End.
- 3) Have you been practicing active listening (listening more than you talk)? What's been the result?

NOTE: Keep a list of your questions as you go through this course so you can get them answered during your one-on-one coaching session with your CBSI coach!

THE INSTRUMENT

Now comes the fun part of the training --dealing with The INSTRUMENT, which is YOU.

ON-YOUR-FEET EXERCISES

Connect to your body. Follow along with the exercises at home. These are awareness exercises. They are designed to work your instrument through basic stretching, movement and breathing.

1. WARM-UPS

- Roll your shoulders - open the sternum
- Breathing (IN through your nose, OUT through your mouth) several times
- Roll your neck around gently both ways
- Stretch your legs - shake them out
- Loosen your hips in both directions
- Shake it all out
- Space walking - become aware of yourself in your environment

2. STRETCHING

- Bring awareness to yourself and to your environment
- Gravity Exercises - Raise your arms up and then let them fall back to your sides naturally. Make note of any resistance.

3. BREATHING & FEELING ENERGY

A. Power Breathing

- Take a deep breath in and hold it. Then take three small breaths in on top of that. Next, let the air out with some resistance - and then let out three extra small breaths. Do this several times to oxygenate your blood. Be careful not to become faint.

NOTE: Until you get used to this, there's a slight chance you may become dizzy. Take your time and be careful not to make yourself pass out. Learn to control your breathing.

B. Power breathing increases your capacity to hold and control more air.

- When you do power breaths, your diaphragm contracts, the lungs expand, the solar plexus opens up. This is an exercise to help increase your lung capacity. When you let the breath out, you're really squeezing the diaphragm and your lungs to send that extra air back out.
- Power breaths are like stretching when you weight train. The act of stretching actually helps your muscles to get stronger than if you were just to lift weights without stretching. Think of this training as **lung push-ups**.
- Power breathing regularly gives you the ability to better command dialogue because with a greater lung capacity, you won't have to stop to take a breath in the middle of delivering a long line of dialogue. (Like reciting the sentence you just read... in one breath. Try it!)
- Power breathing gives you more oxygen. When you're oxygenated, you have more energy. This activation will give you more life and allow you to perform better. It's also a good way to rid your lungs of stale, toxic air.
- **You can find more information about power breathing by going to: <http://bit.ly/2Ar6H50>**

THE SPINNING PLATES

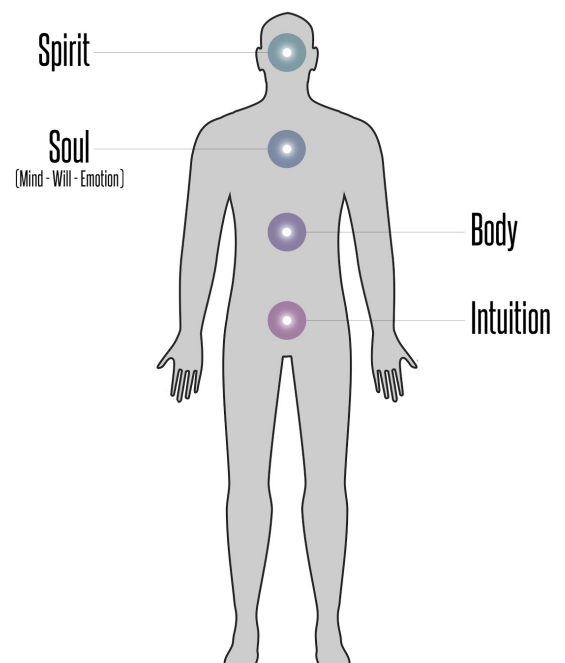
Question:

What compiles US to be who we are?

Answer:

We are Body, Mind, Spirit, Emotions, and Intuition. With the exception of body, you can think of these other aspects of your instrument (Spirit, Soul, Intuition) as spinning plates that are within you. The body houses them and is a part of them.

NOTE: Spirit, Soul, Body, Intuition, Mind, Will, Emotion make up the entire person. For now, the order in which they're explained or listed is not relevant. What's important is that they all make the person (actor) complete.



THE BODY PLATE

1. THE BODY - The Physical Aspect of Our Instrument

A. Creating Energy

- A simple way to increase energy in a scene between you and your scene partner is through _____. A lot of actors are afraid to do this, but you shouldn't be! Appropriately touching your scene partner expresses your emotions physically. This has a direct effect on him/her and assists in energizing the scene that much more. (Note: Appropriate touching.)
- If you're auditioning with someone who is supposed to be your husband/wife or significant other, giving them a hug will help you make a connection (if they're open to it). It's important to ask permission to touch them prior to auditioning. Physical contact will increase the energy in your auditions and scene work.

B. Keeping Energy in a Scene

- Too often actors get frozen in a scene. If you and your scene partner are just standing or sitting in one position talking to each other for the entire scene, it can easily become boring to watch. We call this a Talking Heads scene.
- In a Talking Heads scene there's no touching, no physical movement, nothing's really going on. When this happens, the scene's energy can drop. But, if there is _____ in the scene, it will make a difference, even if it's a subtle movement-like putting your hand on your hip or touching your hand to your face.
- However, if you're moving but you're not moving with _____ or purpose, that's an issue. The scene will start looking very contrived, which is bad acting. Your movements must be motivated by your character's intent. Don't move just for the sake of it, put movement in the scene.
- When you're a trained actor and are aware of the fact that touching and movement are important parts of keeping _____ in a scene, you'll be able to jump into a new scene with a person you've never met before. And if they too are trained, you'll be able to more easily bring in the energy needed to keep the scene interesting and dynamic.
- Remember, as actors we need to be emotionally available and easily able to show affection. In order to do this properly, we must be comfortable using our bodies to express our internal dynamics. Refer to the previously explained inner plates (mind, emotion, spirit, intuition).

Personal Reflection Questions:

- 1) Think about how you use your physical body on a regular basis. When is your physical instrument most energized?

- 2) Even if you've never done On Your Feet exercises, what are some tricks, methods, or techniques you've used to "activate" your physical instrument?

THE MIND PLATE

1. MIND - How We Think & Thoughts We Have.

- A. Mindfulness** - It's important to have an awareness of the thoughts you're thinking. Don't just let your thoughts run like a crazy intersection in a busy city. Over time, we're responsible for developing the ability to hold our thoughts captive so that we better know and understand our thought patterns -- and the way in which we process our thinking.
- B. The Character's Mind** - The thoughts that we process as an individual (the actor) are not always going to be the same thought patterns that are being processed by the characters we play. Every character we play is going to have their own way of thinking and processing information. As you advance in the craft of acting, you'll learn to take more and more of your own thoughts captive so that you can do pure character work that's not directed or restricted by unrelated thoughts of your own.

Personal Reflection Question:

- 1) Do you control your thoughts or do your thoughts control you?

THE EMOTION PLATE

1. EMOTIONS or EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE - Awareness of How We Feel.

- A. Controlling Your Emotions** - Just as it's important to have control and awareness of your thoughts, it's important to have control over your emotions.
- B.** See the **Demonstration** at the end of this section for more on Emotion.

THE SPIRIT PLATE

1. SPIRIT -Your Source, Your Power.

- A. Spirit** - The source of your power. Even though all source of power ultimately comes from the same place, people perceive it differently. For most people, that power is God. Their spirit is God-empowered! However, it's perceived differently depending on your religious/spiritual/ethical background. Try not to get caught up in the dogma of it all.
- Your spirit life is the result of the source of that power, how you process it, and what you do with that power. This force has a lot of different names but we're calling it Spirit.

- Spirit Dynamic is essentially the actor's Power. This power is the source or charge that keeps you electric. You can keep that spirit active and open or allow it to be closed up. Keeping it open and active is ultimately the actor's responsibility.

NOTE: A Spirit that is not kept activated, over time, will grow very dim, dismal and weak.

B. Closing Your Spirit Off - If you close yourself off by putting your hands together -- your feet together -- your shoulders pulled in -- your head down and hunched over... you'll then be restricted spiritually. It causes your breathing to be shallow (due to your position/posture), which will cause you to project a dim energy. This energy is not very interesting to watch or experience.

C. Opening Your Spirit Up - If you do the opposite -- open up your stance -- open your hands -- open your solar plexus -- open your arms -- put your head back -- smile and breathe that in, you'll open your spirit up causing you to be much more charged! This will result in more accessibility to your source, ultimately to your power. This is by far much more interesting to watch and empowering to personally experience.

Personal Reflection Questions:

- 1) What is your Source? Do you have a healthy spirit? Do you feed your spirit regularly by returning to your source? (Quiet Time, Meditation, Prayer, Reflection, Time Alone)
- 2) Do you generally operate in your daily life with a closed spirit posture and attitude -- or do you operate with an open spirit?

INTUITION

1. Intuition - Awareness, Knowingness, Gut Feeling, Suspicion.

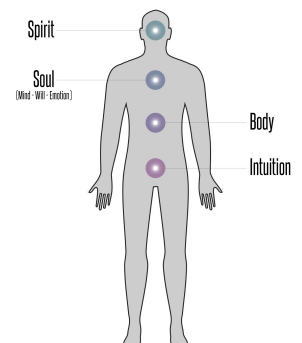
A. **Intuition** - It's an unspoken thing that you... just know.

Personal Reflection Question:

- 1) When was the last time you knew something intuitively but couldn't think of physical evidence for knowing what you knew was true?

Putting It All Together

When you have all of your core dynamics in tune with each other -- Spirit, Soul (Mind - Will - Emotions) Body, Intuition -- you'll be playing at a whole new level and... you'll know it when you do!



NOTE: The discs represented in these graphics are not necessarily indicative of their actual location. The instrument (human being) is holistic, and operates together as a whole unit.

Interactive Exercise - Pause the video and take a moment to do the breathing and stretching exercises for about 3-5 minutes. The focus is on becoming more aware of your instrument.

IMPROVISATION

DEFINITION - Improvisation is extemporaneous. You make it up as you go along; you create out of nothing, unaware of what's coming next. It's working in the _____.

1. HISTORY OF IMPROVISATION

- A.** Improvisation as an actor's training tool (Theatre Games) was first invented by a woman named, Viola Spolin, in mid-20th century American theatre.
- B.** Spolin is considered the grandmother of improvisation. She is the internationally recognized originator and founder of improvisational theatre and improvisational acting training... Theater Games. Over time, this training method gave birth to entertainment in the form of improv comedy, such as the television show, "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" and other free form improv comedy shows/groups, such as Second City, UCB and Groundlings.

2. IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVISATION

Why is improvisation important for the actor? Why should you study/apply it before doing scene work?

A. Awareness

- Improv helps the actor become more aware of their instrument (the spinning discs) so that you perform at a higher level of disciplined freedom.

B. Creativity

- Improv helps the actor learn how to create something out of nothing.

C. Character Work & Storytelling

- Through improv, you learn how to use yourself and the environment to grow in awareness to create scenes and characters.

D. Personal Dynamics

- The exercises will work out different dynamics of you - mentally, emotionally, intuitively, spiritually, and physically.

3. KEYS TO IMPROVISATION

A. Be a good listener

- **Technique to become a better listener** - Try this exercise in real life: while you're in a conversation with someone, wait two seconds after they finish speaking before responding (The Two Count).

At first, this is going to feel awkward. However, the more you do it, the more natural it will become. Soon, you'll be fully listening and effectively processing what the other person has to say. You'll then be able to respond in a more honest and truthful manner to the information they gave you -- as opposed to you thinking thoughts in your own head while waiting for them to stop talking, so that you can jump in and take over the conversation. Get it?

- For more information on listening, read some archived blogs by coach Banks: <http://www.old.claybanksstudio.com/?s=listening>

B. Be open and receptive, Always say yes (accept and build), Don't deny

- Most people have a natural defense mechanism to protect themselves. For example, if you're in a department store and a salesperson comes up to you and asks "Can I help you?", the normal response is to say, "No thank you." A few minutes later, you go and find the sales person because you actually do have a question. Your initial response was a result of your innate defensiveness. It often takes training to become more open and receptive to other people.
- When you're closed off, you're protecting yourself by going into an internal place to process. It's better for you, the developing actor, to be open. When you're open, you can embrace the unknown and respond freely and outwardly.
- Acting is about getting out of your _____ and getting into the _____.

4. BEING AVAILABLE - the importance of being freed up & emotionally available

A. Hearing vs. Listening vs. Active Listening

- **Hearing** -
- **Listening** -
- **Active Listening** -

B. Seeing -

C. Thinking -

- Processing information that you obtained with your senses -
- Getting caught in your head -
- Being in the moment -

D. Feelings

- How does that make me feel?
- It's a balance between feeling and thinking.

E. Movement/Blocking

- Movement adds interest.
- More on movement will be discussed in Session 6. The homework assignment for session 6 will include the walking and talking exercise Coach Banks mentions here.

F. Responsiveness -

G. What's the difference between acting for theater and acting for the camera?

- Acting for theater -
- Acting for the camera -

“Effective acting is the actor having a carnival of activity taking place on the inside while being completely composed on the outside. The outside is steady, poised, focused and moves with intent and purpose. Internally, everything is fully activated and alive! That's what makes the actor powerful and fascinating to watch.”

~ Clay Banks

DEMO: Meisner

You'll watch a Meisner exercise in relating to and being aware of what the other person is feeling. Concentration of attention on the other person is one of the creative sources of film acting. For now, we're going to work with the five basic emotions:

- **Fear, Love, Anger, Sadness, and Happiness. F.L.A.S.H.**

Personal Reflection Questions:

- 1) What did you learn from watching the Meisner exercise?
- 2) How can you apply this to your acting, both in scenes and in your personal life?

NOTE: This is just one level of repetition work (Meisner). These exercises move on to many different levels and styles of application within their framework.

REVIEW

Acting is an inside job. We feel things inside and respond naturally outside.

"Be completely available to whatever challenge comes your way, by being totally in charge of your craft, your material, yourself."

~ Michael Caine

HOMEWORK: Heighten Your Senses

These are sensory assignments to assist you with learning how to use your normal senses at heightened levels.

1. Experience Life at a Heightened Sensory Level (Mindfulness/Emotional Intelligence)

- When you see something, really stop and look at it. Look past the first thought.
- When you hear something, stop and hear it at the next level.
- When you smell, stop and really smell it at a deeper level.
- When you feel something, feel it at the next level. (This can get a bit scary.)
- When you get into an intuitive place (that sixth sense), stop and process what you really discern is going on there.

The mere act of paying attention will heighten your awareness and force you to be more in the now moment.

2. Go to the Produce Section of a Grocery Store or a Farmer's Market

Establish an in point and an out point so you know exactly when you're stepping into an acting exercise and when you've completed it, returning to your normal life.

In-point - When I step into the produce department of the grocery store.

While you're in the produce section - Take in the colors of the produce section, feel the temperature, the humidity, the smell of the section. Look at the fruits and vegetables. Pick up a piece of fruit/vegetable and feel it, the weight, the shape, the smell. Listen to the sound of the fruit when you thump it. Take time with this -- if you buy it, taste it.

NOTE: You may feel funny, silly, or self-conscious while doing this or any of the real-life exercises found in this training. Get used to it. Different is how the actor lives!

Do the intuitive work, involve all of your senses:

- **Hear** - if you hear something, stop and really listen, hear intently
- **Look** and see deeper
- **Smell** all that's around you
- **Taste** and be patient (if you purchase the fruit)
- **Feel** with more capacity - where is this feeling coming from?
- **Know** with more intuition

Fully involve yourself in this experience. Get past the insecurities. Don't multitask!

Out-point - When you leave the produce department, whether or not you purchase the produce. Your out-point can even be when you get home, after you've tried some of the produce you've purchased.

My personal suggestion: spend the 59 cents and purchase the piece of produce. You'll take the exercise full-circle and the nutrients will do you good!

Personal Reflection Questions:

- 1) Did you learn anything from this exercise? Did you notice anything that you normally overlook?

- 2) Were you able to stay activated in the exercise the entire time? Was your smartphone getting a piece of your attention?

END SESSION 2

Go over your notes and prepare for the Session 2 Quiz. You'll find **Quiz 2** by clicking the blue TAKE TEST button under this Lesson's main menu.

You must complete and pass the Session 2 Quiz before proceeding with Lesson 3
