

Session One

The Reality of Doing

There is a great mistake, something is very wrong in the theatre today. The majority of our theatre is a theatre where nothing is really happening, nothing is really happening *right now*. Not only is *right now* all that we have available to us in life, it is absolutely the key to *LIFE* on the stage. Yet most actors are reproducing what has been done before. Attempting to repeat what “clicked” in rehearsal or to recapture what “wowed!” last night’s audience.

This raises a wonderful question about one of our jobs as actors. How do we create “the first time” every time we perform the play? Clearly, the audience is paying to see the first time tonight not *last night* tonight. Yet, we have rehearsed the play, made a multitude of choices, we’ve learned the words and mastered the blocking. So, “We already know.” When the surprise knock comes at the door in act two, we know, and, we must not know. *The actor must not know*. So how do we “not know,” not anticipate, not get ahead of where we are. (and not get ready for that big moment in the next scene while in the middle of this scene!)

The answer is really very simple (well, simply said. Or as Sandy said about acting, “It’s really very simple—just takes a lot of years to learn.”) The way to make it look like the first time is for it to be the first time and to achieve this we must be living fully in the present. For when I am with you *right now* it truly is the first time and I no longer need to make it “look like.” (What a challenge when so much of our lives are spent in the illusion of the past and the future, as if they

were real. Or as someone I once heard said, “*It’s as if we are driving down the highway of life looking in the rearview mirror!*”) In fact we must never be “making it look like” on stage. What then do we do?

Sadly, for the most part, what I see in the theatre are actors who are not *really doing* anything. Acting is doing. It is not talking about—it is really doing. (By the way, very few directors know about this.) Sanford Meisner created a meticulous and expansive process, a step-by-step, organic and healthy approach to the craft of acting. He told us that: “The seed to the craft of acting is the reality of doing.” *The seed*, there could be no better analogy, for this seemingly simple statement continually unfolds with each step of the journey, it is the spine for all of the work.

And yes, I did say a “healthy” approach. Healthy because the work is grounded in who we are today, not who we once were or what we once may have experienced. Also, and especially, because the whole realm of the actor’s emotions and the emotional instrument is handled in a way unlike most other techniques. In this approach our emotions come freely, as a side benefit, a gift, when our attention is on something else and that something else *is what we are doing*. The great news here is that when our attention is not on being emotional, our emotions suddenly become much more available.

You know, there are too many so-called acting classes which are actually therapy sessions disguised as acting classes. Teachers who instigate or push the student to “get emotional” and leave the student open and raw, without a sense of purpose or closure. I have worked with many students who have been damaged by this kind of work. What I want you to know is that acting is not emoting. Again, ACTING IS NOT EMOTING. Acting is *doing something*.

Of course acting does demand of us the ability to access our own rich emotional life and the way in, the organic way, is through meaningful doing.

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In the 1930s, in New York City, a man named Harold Clurman, out of his unbound passion and his tremendous dissatisfaction with the theatrical experience in this country, brought together some of the finest theatre artists of his time to create a company which would totally and fantastically alter the American theatre. They called themselves The Group Theatre, and in the relatively short time they were together, from 1931 until 1940, they brought a depth of spirit, a fervent life and soul to the stage that was unlike anything American audiences had ever witnessed. They were committed to building a new kind of theatre that was truly collaborative and which spoke to the moral and social issues of their time. Many greats of the theatre came out of the Group's founding company—one of them was Sanford Meisner.

When we think of American acting prior to the Group and look at the examples we have in the silent films, we think of large, cliché gestures and exaggerated posing. And though the Group Theatre members transformed acting in this country some 60 years ago, I believe the work that we are tackling here is still revolutionary. For though the old gestures may be out, the new postures are in. A real moment in the theatre is extremely hard to find and when it does happen it is often the result of an accident on stage—a prop was misplaced, the arm of a chair falls off, or due to the rain and a leaky ceiling, the actors are dripped on. For most actors these are disasters because they are unplanned, not “set” in rehearsals—rather than embraced

as a wonderful surprise, simply something new to work-off, to respond to!

I remember a scene in a play I saw a number of years ago. The female lead walked away from the two men she was in conversation with downstage right to go to a table that was upstage left. Though the two men were still talking, my attention went with the woman as she approached the table and on the table, a tray with a bottle of brandy and four glasses. When she arrived and began to reach for the brandy, she had a most wonderful, authentic moment (the only one in this play) of sheer terror as she discovered that the three glasses were already filled! She froze in a state of panic as she tried to think of a way to handle the situation. She finally picked up the bottle and proceeded to tilt it just enough over each glass so that it would look like she was really pouring. Now wouldn't it have been much simpler to notice that the glasses were already filled and then to simply serve them?

Isn't it so much *simpler* and doesn't it make so much more sense when reading a letter on stage to *actually read that letter* rather than to pretend to read a piece of paper with squiggly lines on it. With squiggly lines you must remember to move your eyes in the correct manner to make it look like you *are* actually reading. Why not actually read? Less to think about and much less effort, your eyes will look like they are reading because they are reading and you don't have to work at making the audience believe you. You know what? You can never make an audience believe you, you can only invite them to share your experience.

These examples are useful to illustrate, at a very basic level, this thing called the *reality of doing*. When you do something, you don't pretend to do it, you really do it. As I said earlier, this is the underpinning to all of our work, for

ultimately when we are supposed to be madly in love in a moment of the play, we must *BE* madly in love in that moment. When we are supposed to be enraged, we must actually be enraged. (Of course, you might ask about stabbing the hero, watching a distant sunset, or getting drunk on stage. I'm sure you've already determined that we don't actually do these things on stage. It is when we have made the meaning of these acts extremely personal and specifically meaningful that we are able to accept them and live them out *as if* they are real. With this acceptance, the impact they have on us, IS REAL!)

And though many directors are concerned with projection, not many are aware that it is only, I'll say that again, *it is only* with the actors actual experience on stage that we reach every seat in the house, reach every person where they live. I know this is true. As Sandy told us, it is never about being bigger, it is always about going deeper.

I want to give you a very simple experience of the reality of doing. Look at the following two numbers then close your eyes and in your minds eye, not on paper, multiply the two numbers. The two numbers are:

7948 X 6988.

Do it now and then read on.

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Let me ask you a few questions. Did you do it? Did you try to do it or did you quickly give up? Did you get the answer? Was it very difficult and still you gave it your best shot? Listen, the answer doesn't matter, it's never about the results. It's always about the attempt. IT IS ALL IN THE ATTEMPT. And while you tried, who was doing the multiplying? Was it you? Was it you as Gregory Peck in *To*

Kill a Mockingbird or you as Joanne Woodward in *Rachel Rachel*? Or were YOU MULTIPLYING? Though you didn't get the answer, were YOU REALLY DOING THAT?

I bet, if you really tried, something happened to you. You might have noticed yourself laughing, grunting, feeling hopeless, or having some other response to this nearly impossible task. If so, were you pretending to have that response to impress me? Of course not, I'm just a book! You responded however you did because you were really trying to multiply. YOU CAME TO LIFE because you were really doing something! And you didn't have to force or push or even think about having an emotion. Your authentic response was out of your control while your attention was on what you were doing. Remember that!

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A WARM UP

I want you, as a group, to do the following little game together. It's a story-telling game and it works like this: Sit in a circle and get real tight together, pick a person who will begin the story, and pick a direction the story will go around the circle. Now the rules are that each person may only say one word and as you go around the circle, you must tell a story. So, do you have your person who will begin and the direction? Good. Now if anyone says more than one word, you must stop and start a new story. Go ahead and give it a try. Do it for a while and when you can't bare it any longer, keep it going. Then, at some point, stop and read on.

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I want you to do it again and this time I want you to know that your mission is to become like one person telling a story. That means that you must take out all the pauses between each person. So let the story whip around the circle. This requires that you not try to *take the story* but that you allow the story *to take you*. Also, you may find the story very funny at times. (Did you all end up on the floor laughing?) Great to have a response to what is happening but when it gets in the way of what you are trying to accomplish, not so great. So, this time take out all pauses and become like one person telling a story. Go ahead and do that for about ten minutes.

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Try it one more time with two additions. First, the story must include two main characters. You will discover them as you tell the story. Second, tighten up your circle, get real close and this time I want you to do it with your eyes closed. Go ahead and do that now and then read on.

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To achieve your goals in this game, what does it require of you? Well, what happens if you try to prepare with a word when the story is on the other side of the circle or, in other words, try to make the story go where you want it to go? By the time the story gets to you, your word might not fit anymore, isn't that true? So, a big part of this game is about a giving up of control isn't it? Also, not anticipating, because in this game you really cannot prepare. In fact the more you prepare, the less you are able to tell the story! It's only in that moment, when the person right next to you gives you their word, that you will discover what comes out of your mouth.

What then must you be doing? *You must be listening* and you know what? The more you are listening the less you will be preparing, controlling. The success of this game comes from *really listening* and *taking what you get*. The more you can do this, the more you will trust that a word will in fact come out of your mouth and that with that word, you will tell the story.

Having said all that, give it one more try with eyes open and then read on.

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REPETITION The First Step

Our working definition of acting is, “Acting is living truthfully under imaginary circumstances.” *Living Truthfully*. After the years I have spent working in the theatre, I keep coming back to the profound power and beauty of this very simple phrase. It is the core of our work together.

More of our acting comes from our true listening (another way of saying that is *being fully available*) than from anything else. Our fuel on stage is our partners, the other actors, so that we must be open and receptive to them at all times. Even in the midst of the most extreme and heightened moments, it is imperative that we be present to our partners and our environment in every moment (the stage is a dangerous place!). Isn't this great! If I turn myself over to my PARTNER and instead of pushing, give up control, I get everything I need (like a good relationship). Yet most actors make acting very effortful, doing it on their own in spite of their partners on stage, isolated in their own private experience (like bad relationships).

Now, with our first step, “repetition”, we are going to bring this whole thing called acting down to its simplest level. In doing so, I am going to take a number of things away from you. Just as in the scales for a pianist, many of the keys cannot be played. The musician is not playing ANYTHING, he’s playing THIS SCALE. It is by the specific structure or boundary of the scale that ultimately he is set free. The scales will disappear and what remains is the musician IN the music. Same thing with repetition. I will give you some specific rules to follow, a structure which, down the road, will disappear and what will be left is you in your acting.

Today, I will also give the first instructions to the “Observer.” Very simply, the Observer will be assisting and supporting the Partners who are at work in the exercise. Many times, those who are working will be unable to “see” the things they are doing, or not doing, that are getting in the way of their own progress. The Observer’s main job will be to help each partner become aware of what is happening. Change begins with awareness! As your skills grow as you actually do the acting exercises, you will also grow in your effectiveness as the Observer.

Throughout the book, I will be giving the Observer specific things to be watching for as well as ways to interact with the partners who are doing the work. You may be uncomfortable playing the Observer, giving feedback when you don’t really “have it all down yet” yourself. That’s great. What a great space to be in. What a great place for true learning to occur! Listen, will you make mistakes? Probably. Is it okay to make mistakes? Absolutely! If you simply say what you see and stick to your own simple truth, you’ll do just fine. So, be honest and be direct.

Exercise 1. MECHANICAL REPETITION

1. Take two chairs and place them facing toward each other.
2. You and your partner each sit down in a chair so that you are both facing each other. Have a little room between the two of you.
3. Pick one person to start the exercise. We'll call you Partner A.
4. For Partner A: First I want you to turn your head away from your partner (who we will call Partner B).

**To the Observer: After you read through to Step 5, when Partner A has turned his or her head away, you will take a moment and then say "Begin" or "Go" to start the exercise. The Observer will continue to do this throughout today's Session.*

Partner A, when you hear "Begin" or "Go" from the Observer, turn your head back and say outloud the *very first thing* you ACTUALLY NOTICE over there on your partner. This must be a *physical observation*. (For example, if the first thing I was aware of as I looked at my partner were her eyes, I would say "eyes" or if it was her green sweater I would say "green sweater.") Again it is whatever you ACTUALLY notice and not what you might conjecture. So you would not say, "You had a bad day" or "You don't like me" and so forth.

5. Go ahead and try that a few times, waiting for the Observer to get you started. Then switch and Partner B try that a few times. Then read on.

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What you just practiced was something called *taking the first thing*. It is an extremely important element in our work. When you look over at your partner, you must say the very first thing that you are aware of. You also must become aware of when you don't do that. What I mean is that you must notice when you see something and you don't say it and then look for something else to observe so that you can say that. This usually happens very quickly, so quickly that you might not be aware of it. So now, I am asking you to bring it into awareness. Are you saying the very first thing that you notice over there?

**To the Observer: You must help them here by pointing out to the partner who starts when they did not use the very first thing they were aware of. Stay relaxed in your attention, what I mean is, don't strain to see if it happens, trust that you will notice it if it does. When you do notice this occurring, simply say, "Start again and take the very first thing you are aware of." Do this throughout today's session.*

Try Step 5 again with this information. You might start to overly watch yourself for a few moments, that's OK for right now. Go ahead and each of you try Step 5 a few more times and then proceed to Step 6.

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6. The next step:

Now, start again with Partner A making the physical observation. After Partner A begins, I want Partner B to repeat what you hear. So if Partner A says "green sweater," Partner B will say "green sweater." Then Partner A, I want you to repeat what you hear, "green sweater," and now Partner B, you repeat what you hear, "green sweater," and

you keep going, *always repeating what you hear*. Simple, right? Yes it is. Simply repeat what you hear, do nothing else. Now put Step 5 and 6 together. Partner A starts and makes the observation which begins the repetition and then you continue repeating, *always repeating what you hear*. Also, ONCE YOU BEGIN, KEEP THE REPETITION GOING AND DO NOT DROP OUT OF THE REPETITION UNTIL THE OBSERVER SAYS TO STOP! NO MATTER WHAT!

**To the Observer: You will tell them when to stop. Keep varying the length of each exercise so that those working won't begin to anticipate when it is getting near the end. Sometimes it might be painfully long and other times a number of seconds. And anywhere in-between. As they are working, the partners may begin to have all kinds of responses to the work. Certainly allow the repetition to continue through these and see where it leads.*

Go ahead and give it a try, each partner having a chance to start the repetition at least three times. Do it now, then read on.

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Some things to be aware of at this point:

While working, did you notice the word changing at all or did your partner add another word or even a sound to what was being said? Did any mistakes occur to the word you started with as you were repeating? You know what, THERE ARE NO MISTAKES. (It's the same on stage—there are no mistakes, you must accept and embrace everything that happens!) The rule is: Take what you get from your partner and repeat exactly what you hear. So if your partner changes “circle on the shirt” to “shirkle on the cert” you must repeat “shirkle on the cert.” Do you then work your way back to “circle on

the shirt?" No, what is in the past is over and dead, all you have is what is happening right now and you work from that.

**To the Observer: if either partner does not repeat exactly what the other person just gave to them, stop the exercise and ask if they were aware of what was just said to them. If not, tell them what they missed and then begin again. Also, alternate who starts the exercise.*

How will you know if they heard it and didn't repeat it? Because you heard it. You see, from your seat, you are really doing repetition with both partners. (Not out loud, of course.) Make sure they are precise in repeating exactly what was given to them.

Listen, this is new for you too, you may miss some changes. That's OK, do the best you can, right? Your awareness as the Observer will continually grow. Also, this does not mean they should be repeating a cough or a laugh, this gets you more into the area of mimicking, which is talked about in the next pointer.

Important note: When you were repeating, were you *copying* your partner? In other words, were you mimicking how your partner said what he or she said? If so, don't. It's not about copying the quality of how it is said, it is simply about repeating what you hear. How it comes out of your mouth, leave alone. That's a lot simpler, isn't it?

Did you notice anything happening with you as you repeated? Did you laugh or want to laugh or did you both laugh together? Any other responses? If so, what did you do with your experience—did you try to get yourself back together so that you could do the exercise right? The rule here is to have whatever experience you *have* and *repeat*. If you start laughing, great—laugh and repeat. If you're bored,

be bored and repeat. By the way, do you have an idea as to where your response came from? If you said the other person you are correct! What was happening with you came from your connection with each other, a connection which occurs as you really listen to each other. (Remember, listening is doing.) Also notice how naturally, simply, and on their own these responses happened. That's GREAT!

**To the Observer: Your job here is to keep the repetition going. Whatever response the partners have to repeating with each other is fantastic, AND, do not let them give up the repetition. For example, Partner A may laugh so hard that she has a hard time speaking. Help her to have her response and to repeat, allowing the words to come out however they come out AS SHE LAUGHS. Do you get that? You can yell something like, "DON'T DROP THE REPETITION!" And if it takes yelling to be heard, YELL! Make sure you are heard! Also, watch for, if in the midst of a large response like this, this partner drops out of listening to the other person. You can say, "Put your attention back on your partner and repeat!"*

When the Observer interacts with those of you who are working, do not come out of the exercise. Simply take the note the Observer just gave you, keeping your attention on your partner, and keep going. Remember, never drop out of the exercise until the Observer says to stop.

Never do anything more than is actually happening. What I mean is, be aware of any desire to *be interesting*. Do not purposely do anything with the words. Leave yourself alone and repeat what you hear. Your attention must be over there with your partner.

As soon as you hear what you hear, repeat what you hear. Take out any pausing that might be occurring between

hearing what you hear and your repeating it. This is not technical, it is not about “pacing,” it is simply, there is nothing to think about so when you hear what you hear, repeat what you hear. This does not mean rushing. You must not be “topping” what your partner is saying or in other words, repeating what he is saying before he has actually finished saying it.

Why do you think this is important? If you jump in too soon, you are working from the assumption that you already know what your partner is going to say. You are assuming that what has happened before will happen again. (Like in life when we “already know them” the relationship is dead.) Do you see that? She may have said “curly hair” the last twenty times but isn’t it possible, isn’t it POSSIBLE that this time she will say something else? (Though your father has always put down and mocked psychotherapy, is it possible that today he will have a session with a therapist? Yes it is. It is possible.) An actor must *never assume anything!* You never know what your partner will say until they have said it. So don’t wait and don’t rush, simply repeat what you hear when you have heard it.

**To the Observer: The partners who are repeating may not be aware that they are pausing or that they are topping each other. Help them take the pauses out by saying, “As soon as you hear it, repeat it” or “Take out the pauses.” If they are topping each other you can say, “Don’t rush, really listen!” or “Partner B you’re topping her, don’t work so hard!”*

7. Go ahead now and do some repetition. Work for about twenty minutes with each other and then read on.

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How is that feeling for you? Let me tell you a few keys to all of this work:

Don't do the repetition, let the repetition do you.

Stay relaxed and don't try so hard to get the exercise right. In fact, *trying to do the exercise right is not doing the exercise right!* It is the TRYING that creates a tension which will shut down your true availability.

There is no need to keep the exercise on track because there is no track.

There is no where to get to so you might as well be there. Do you see that? There is truly nowhere to get to! Isn't that a relief? How much of our lives are we trying to get somewhere else? When I do this or that I will have arrived! How often am I actually right where I am? How often am I right here, right now? You see, acting must always be: right now, right now, right now, right now, right now, right now, right now...each "right now" taking us forward. How magnificent when we can stand fully in RIGHT NOW!

We are making acting very simple. You don't have to be a "great actor" to do this, do you? You don't have to be "interesting." In fact, if you are in any way trying to make the exercise interesting, you will be unable to really do it. You know, Stanislavsky said: "...you are more interesting than the greatest actor that ever lived!" The audience doesn't need another Robert Duvall, we've already got a GREAT ROBERT DUVALL! What they need is a fully authentic, fully alive YOU! I'd like you to do something I do with my "in person" students. Spend a few minutes with your eyes closed, repeating the following three words to yourself, "I am enough." Go ahead, take the time to do that now. OK. Leave it all alone now. Go play some basketball.

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HOMEWORK

Between now and Session Two, meet with a partner two times and at each meeting do at least fifteen minutes of repetition.

Also, I want you to take this thing called, “taking the first thing” into your life. What I mean is: As you are walking down the street, shopping at the mall, eating in a restaurant, waiting in line at the bank—whatever it is—you can be practicing taking the first thing. Practicing as you encounter life. If you begin to bring into awareness your first response to people, trees, foods, the sky, and soon, even for a few minutes a day, you will discover that you have a very personal and specific response to everyone and everything. You will find that everyone and everything has meaning to you.

*Be patient toward all that is unsolved
in your heart.
Try to love the questions themselves.*

*Do not now seek the answers
which cannot be given
because you would not be able
to live them.*

*And the point is,
to live everything.*

*Live the questions now.
Perhaps you will then
gradually,
without noticing it,
live along some distant day
into the answers.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

Session Two

Point of View

WARM UP

Do repetition for about fifteen minutes and then read on. (When I give you a length of time, that is for each pair of partners in the group.)

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INTO LANGUAGE

We are now going to take a next step with the repetition. For no better way of saying it, I call this step, “putting into language.” It is a simple new element in the work and it will raise a few very important issues. It works like this: As I turn to my partner and see her green sweater, rather than saying “green sweater,” I might say, “You have a green sweater” or, “You’re wearing a green sweater” or whatever words come out of my mouth as I notice the green sweater. So as compared to “green sweater” this is now more like real talk—it is real talk! How you say it is not important, it’s however it comes out of your mouth as you notice the first thing. So I might have said, “green sweater on you there” or, “sweater, green sweater you got on.” It’s however I discover I am saying it as I say it.

Now, with this new element in the repetition, go ahead and do some. Each partner start two times, then come back and read on.

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Now there are some things to talk about.

First this example to illustrate:

I came to work with my partner today. I am wearing jeans and a grey shirt. She has on black pants and a red shirt. We sit down to do repetition and she begins. She looks over at me and says, "You're wearing a grey shirt." Repeating what I hear, I say, "You're wearing a grey shirt." She says, "You're wearing a grey shirt." And on we go.

As we move into real talk or *really talking to each other* and in beginning our movement away from mechanical-land, we have to deal with one, *what's happening* and two, our *truthful point of view*. Both of these lead you to the first changes that must occur within the repetition.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Let's look at the example I just gave. Who's shirt was my partner talking about? She was talking to me about my grey shirt. That is what was happening in the moment. So I must now repeat what I hear and include what is happening right now. She said "*You're* wearing a grey shirt," so I would now repeat, "*I'm* wearing a grey shirt." I repeated what I heard and I changed the "*You're* wearing..." to "*I'm* wearing..." to keep the truth of what was happening, which was about my shirt. (Explaining it is making it sound more complex than it really is, as you will see when you do some more repetition. Let me make a few more points before you work again.)

TRUTHFUL POINT OF VIEW

As I said earlier, all that we have to work from as actors is our truthful point of view and we never give it up. So when I respond to my partner and I repeat, saying “You’re wearing a grey shirt” what does she know to be true? She knows that she is wearing a red shirt. What must she then repeat to keep her truthful point of view? She repeats what she heard and changes the repetition to “I’m wearing a red shirt” or, “I’m not wearing a grey shirt.” The repetition is changing because IT MUST CHANGE. It changes as she holds on to what she knows to be true. ALWAYS! (And what if you really believed that her shirt was grey? What would you have to repeat back to her?)

Here are a few examples to demonstrate how this makes very simple sense. If my partner has her hands on her lap and I say, “You have your hands on your lap” and then she moves her hands somewhere else, the repetition must change. She might then say, “I don’t have my hands on my lap” or “I had my hands on my lap.” Let’s say my partner has on glasses and I don’t. I start with, “You’re wearing glasses” and he repeats back to me, “You’re wearing glasses.” What would I have to say? Well, something like, “I’m not wearing glasses.” Got it?

So you see, the repetition can change now. It changes not because you want it to change or you feel like changing it but because it must change as you work from what is happening and from your truthful point of view. Now do some repetition and work with this new information. Each partner begin five times and then read on.

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Other things to be aware of now:

As we bring the repetition into language you are going to come up against some life conditioning. First, your partner may say something to you and you may find yourself pausing to consider. Know that this is the mind's habitual response out of the *need to be right*. The mind's function is survival or in other words, being right.

At this point in your work it is vital to repeat immediately, as you hear what you hear. In this way, if you allow it to, the repetition will take you to what you know to be true, rather than you figuring it out. *Figuring it out* puts you right in your head. (And being in your head is the death of your acting.) Example: My partner says to me "You look like a bull frog." In my mind, I pause to consider, "A bullfrog? What does she mean by that? Oh God, do I look like a bullfrog? Hey, I don't think I like that she said that...oooh, is there something in my nose, and so on. If I repeat immediately, and keep in the repetition with my partner I will not be able to think about it, and may suddenly discover what I know as I hear myself say, "I DON'T LOOK LIKE NO BULLFROG!"

As opposed to what most people think, what we know, takes no thought. An infant communicates to us very specifically and with no thought. "Yeah, but that's instinct!" you may be saying to me. EXACTLY!!! EXACTLY!!!

**To the Observer: When you work again, watch for these pauses of thought and tell the person when it happens. It is so much a habit and it happens so quickly that it is often hard to notice. All of you must become aware of when you do this. By stopping the exercise and letting the person know they are pausing to think, they will soon let go of this old habit, simply out of the new awareness. Change begins only with awareness.*

Right now, you may encounter resistance to saying the first thing. In other words, you are censoring your first response. My partner might look at me and see “big nose” but not want to say it for fear of hurting my feelings. It’s not nice to say “You’ve got a big nose” and it is urgent that she does! Why do you think? In our acting, we must get beyond the *act* you and I have so carefully mastered in life. This is not a good/bad thing and it’s not a criticism. It’s survival. Most people speak of me as “a very quiet and intense guy.” Is that all I am? Of course not, I am all kinds of things, as are you.

In our work together, the beginning of becoming the full expression of ALL that we are, starts with saying the first thing and dropping the nice routine—and I’m not saying don’t be nice. You must give up being nice and I AM NOT SAYING DON’T BE NICE. Do you get that? Acting has no room for niceties, reasonableness or “being appropriate.” (When you are really living in the present, you are always appropriate!)

Also you must realize that saying the truth to our partners is a gift, always! They now have something real to respond to, OH BOY! They are real with me and I have a real response to that. As opposed to most of life where very little real communication EVER HAPPENS. Why are so many relationships dead or dying? Why are so many employees having heart attacks? How many times have I spent a week going over in my head what I “SHOULD HAVE SAID!” I love what David Mamet says, that people go to the theatre so that they can see that real communication between human beings is still possible. Oh, one more thing. When we don’t tell the truth on stage, the audience knows. No matter what you may think, they know!

In a moment, you will do some more repetition. If you are working in a group, those who are watching should start to notice what is going on with the partners who are doing repetition. (I'm planting a seed here!) As the partners repeat, what responses are they having and how would you describe what you see happening with them? (Is something making them excited, or are they bored stiff? Are they relaxed and calm or filled with anxiety?)

**To the Observer: At times, when you are aware of something specific happening with one of the partners, stop the repetition and let the group members who are not working, each say what they saw happening with that person, in that moment. Do not discuss it, simply have each person state what they saw happening from their own point of view. ("You got mad" or, "That made you uncomfortable" or, "You really enjoyed that," and so on.) Then have the partners who are working jump back into repetition. By the way, are all of you right in your observations? It's not about being right, it's about what you got from where you are sitting, what you know from your point of view. (Like the twenty witnesses at a bank robbery who have twenty different stories.)*

Go ahead now and each do a good ten minutes of repetition. When you have finished, stop. Go get some great Mexican food.

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HOMEWORK

Before Session Three, meet with a partner a minimum of two times and at each meeting do at least twenty minutes of the repetition.

Inspiration may be a form of super-consciousness, or perhaps of subconsciousness—I wouldn't know. But I am sure it is the antithesis of self-consciousness.

—Aaron Copland