

# SESSION 8 -- ENERGY

## Chemistry, Synergy, Levels & More

### HOMWORK REVIEW:

- 1) How did rehearsing a scene with your own recorded voice go?

### LEVELS OF SCENE WORK REVIEW:

- Ice Cold Read
- Cold Read: Line Lifting Sheet (your tool for developing amazing CR skills!)
- The Gray Zone / The Pit /The Abyss
- Memorization: Script Analysis & Character Development
- Performance Level

### QUICK NOTE: The Differences Between Theater **Acting & Acting for Film**

#### Theater

- Audience Distance: the audience is further away from you.
- As a general rule, you project so the person in the last row of the room can hear you.
- This style of acting is more about **performance**.

#### Film

- Audience Distance: the audience is as close as their microphone (boom or lapel).
- Cameras push in and you're magnified. You do not need to reach for the back row.
- This style of acting is more about **behavior**.

## ENERGY

### 1. ENERGY - POWER - CHARGE

A. Power - Act

B. We are energy "power packs."

#### (1) The Two Extremes of Energy Level:

- **Atomic Power Plants** - A high level of powerful, compressed energy which powers things to act. People with this level of energy are very interesting to watch on screen.
- **Couch Potatoes** - People with low energy--not a whole lot of action taking place. These people are not very interesting to watch, especially on screen.

## (2) The Three Energies in a Scene:

1. **Your Energy** (your personal energy contribution in a scene)
  2. **Their Energy** (your scene partner's energy)
  3. **Our Energy** (The energy experienced together, a.k.a \*Synergy.)
- You're only in charge of \_\_\_\_\_ energy. \_\_\_\_\_ energy is what you have control over.

## (3) The Healthier You Are, The More Energy You'll Have:

- **Are You:**
  1. **Resting** - getting enough sleep? (Apx. 7 full hours).
  2. **Living Life Fully** - allowing yourself the opportunity to have full human experiences?
  3. **Emotionally Healthy** - free to express your emotion? Or do you bottle things up?
  4. **Mentally Healthy** - thinking clearly? Or are you stressed and overwhelmed?
  5. **Eating Well** - giving your body what it needs to create real energy? Or filling your body with junk to satisfy the flesh and curb the hunger?
  6. **Staying Hydrated** - drinking  $\frac{1}{2}$  your bodyweight in water (in ounces) every day? Or are you only hydrating when thirsty?

Note: On average, the body can only assimilate apx. 4 oz. of water every 15 minutes. So don't chug! Drink throughout the day.

7. **Exercising** - No less than 1 hour a day, three days per week.
- The more energy you have, the more \_\_\_\_\_ you can create.
  - **Synergy** -

## Personal Reflection Questions:

- 1) On a scale of 1-10, how healthy are you? What change(s) could you make in your life to live healthier, granting you more energy?

- 2) Which of these points (resting, living a full life, being emotionally & mentally healthy, eating well, staying hydrated, exercising) could you improve on?
- 3) Which of the above do you find energizes you the most?

#### (4) Energy that Sustains:

- You need the ability/energy to sustain yourself while you work. The average work day for an actor is \_\_\_\_ hours.
  - a. **Example:** You might get a 9pm call time, but may not be brought to set until hours later, possibly into the early morning. You may not be wrapped until noon the following day. This erratic schedule will more than likely throw off your body's natural rhythm, especially if this goes on for several days.
  - b. If you're not prepared for the intensity of the actor's schedule, it can very easily wipe you out.
- The better you take care of yourself, the better you're going to work, look and feel. As a result, you'll be much more enjoyable to watch (and work with!).
- Acting is a visual medium. You'll want to be someone who's interesting to look at.

#### (5) Your body is Your Instrument

- **Example:** A Stradivarius violin is an expensive and revered instrument. Most people wouldn't abuse and neglect the care and upkeep of this violin. As we discussed earlier, the actor's body is their instrument. In order to keep our instrument playing beautifully, we must protect it and treat it right. Our body is far more valuable than a Stradivarius, why would we treat it as any less?

#### (6) Attention

- When we're being watched, something happens to us. Attention brings power.
- If you're with a scene partner and you find that their energy level isn't where you'd like it to be, then give them more attention. The more \_\_\_\_\_ you give your scene partner, the more they're going to be \_\_\_\_\_.
- To be fully activated, you must incorporate as much of your sensory awareness as possible.
- The more of your senses you use, the more energy you'll have, which results in a more dynamic personal performance.

### Personal Reflection Questions:

- 1) When was the last time you did something knowing someone was watching you?
- 2) What were you doing?
- 3) What effect did their attention have on you? How did it make you feel? How did it alter the performance of the task you were trying to complete?

## 2. THE SYNERGISTIC EXPERIENCE: Yours + Theirs = Ours

### A. Synergy is about your energy coming together with your scene partners' energy.

- In a scene, each person brings their own energies.
- There's often a separation between the energy each actor brings to a scene. Each person is doing their own work and their energies often don't meet. In these cases, it is as if there are two separate scenes happening instead of one. This isn't a good goal for the actors involved!
- One job of the actor is to connect with the other person. The more intimate and involved we become with the other person, the more we create the Synergistic Experience - and that exchange of energy becomes the scene.

### B. To Create The Synergistic Experience:

- You can't be isolated!
- It is helpful to make (appropriate) physical contact with your scene partner before your audition or scene work. Doing so will prevent the separation of your energies and bring your worlds together. In an acting class, it's ideal to start a scene with a hug. On set, however, you must be tactful and "feel out" your scene partner's receptivity to touch. As an alternative to a hug, you may find that a handshake, fist bump, or high five may be what they are open to. Whether it's a hug or a handshake, it is important to try and make the physical connection.
- While on set or in auditions, the role may require a deeper level of professional intimacy (i.e. husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, lover). In these situations, being open to a stronger professional physical connection will help create a necessary Synergistic Experience.
- Be open to your scene partner. If your scene partner is giving off the "stay away from me" vibe, you can't control them. You're responsible for your own energy, only.

**CAUTION:** Don't you be the actor who gives off the "stay away from me" vibe. Be open and available to your fellow actors.

- Follow the above guidelines and you'll find it much easier to produce energy and chemistry between you and your scene partner. This is when the real fun takes off!

### C. Creating Energy

- Getting bigger with your movements or louder with your voice isn't creating energy.
- You create energy by \_\_\_\_\_.
- CARE: The more you care about something, the more energy you'll produce.
- Care comes from \_\_\_\_\_ - how much you value something is in direct relationship with how much you care about it.
  - Example 1:** You buy things because you get something out of it -- you get energy. You feel good about buying a brand new shirt because you care highly about the new shirt. When you try it on for the first time, your energy level is lifted. In most cases, when you've had the shirt for a long time, it just becomes another shirt. Your energy level is not the same because your perceived value of it has shifted into something else that doesn't produce the same type of energy. When the shirt is old and ready to be discarded, your energy level will shift yet again.
  - Example 2:** Going on a first date vs. being in a long-term relationship.
  - Example 3:** Throwing a Pen vs. throwing a Smartphone.
- Perceived Value - Different things mean different things to different people. For a visual artist who does not care about staying connected to the world, their paint brush or pen may be of more value to them than a smartphone. If you were to throw the smartphone, they may not react as much as if you threw their paint brush, even though the actual monetary value of the phone is greater.
- Adjustment of your perceived value of things will directly alter your energy level.
  - Example 4:** A Couch Potato vs. A Paramedic/First Responder.
- When you're in a scene, if you're not caring about your character, the other person, or what's going on in the scene, then you're not producing enough energy to be watchable. If you don't care, why should we, the audience, care?
- When you care more, you'll raise the energy level. You'll create more power. You'll have a greater effect on your scene partner. Interesting things will start to happen.
- When two caring people work together, they generate energy like a power plant.

NOTE: The use of the word things in this section refers to all things (including people and places).

## **CHEMISTRY**

### **1. CHEMISTRY DEFINITION:**

- A.** Chemistry is what happens when energies come together, creating a synergistic experience. Two (or more) come together to produce a stronger third (+).
- Chemistry does not have to be quaint and romantic, it can be explosive, or even negative.
  - In real life, chemistry is what it is. In acting life, we're responsible for creating chemistry the way we want it to be. The challenging part is-- you only have control over yourself...your energy.
  - When everything comes together in a scene there's great chemistry. Likewise, when there's great chemistry, everything comes together in a scene. Big paychecks and awards are often rewards for just that. On the other hand, when chemistry doesn't work, the entire scene/project can be a dud.

## **SHARING THE ENERGY OR STEALING THE ENERGY**

### **1. TYPES OF ENERGY SHARING**

#### **A. Feeding or Bleeding**

- You're a direct participant in adding to the energy or taking it away -- feeding or bleeding.
- Energy can be stolen if:
  1. You aren't open to your scene partner. (i.e. You exude the "stay away from me" vibe).
  2. You're an Energy Vampire -- someone who sucks energy out of a scene and gives nothing back.

#### **B. Following The Follower (Birds In Flight)**

- Following the Follower is when actors in a scene follow each other, as in an interdependent relationship. (Like birds in flight.)
  - a. Following the Follower, when done correctly, will be a very natural and organic experience. However, this doesn't often happen naturally. Our

tendency is to overthink or try to control things, thus putting us “in our heads.”

- b. This is why training is so important! Training helps us learn to get out of our heads and operate in the moment, where we can experience synergy and allow chemistry in our scene work.

## INTIMACY

### 1. THE MOST POWERFUL DYNAMIC OF THE ACTOR

#### A. Professional Intimacy - In-To-Me-See.

- **Definition:** Intimate work done between characters in a scene - not to be confused with you and others in real life. (i.e. on screen romantic partner).
- When you share a professional level of intimacy, it affects and changes things.
- Intimacy creates energy, which causes us to respond.
- Intimacy causes interest. People are attracted to it because it's not the way we normally operate in day-to-day life.
- Intimacy is not just about romance. Sometimes intimacy can be aggressive and even violent. Intimacy is about allowing people to see more of you and your ability to see more of them. It requires going to the next level of emotional availability or vulnerability.

**Example:** When someone raises their voice above the normal level in a quiet restaurant, it draws our attention. Similar attention is drawn when a couple gets cozy.

- You should be willing to create / share intimacy with people, being careful and appropriate about it.
- Keep everything in context, so as not to abuse professional intimacy.

## STRONG CHOICES

### 1. INTENTION

#### A. Making Strong Choices

- Know your intentions in the scene and what you need out of the scene.
- Know what your intentions are with your scene partner and what you need from your scene partner.

- Make strong choices for the character as the character is written (within the parameters of writer's intent).
- You can't be vague, you can't be indecisive. Even if you play an indecisive character, you need to make strong and decisive choices about them.

REMEMBER: Your choices don't have to be true, but you do have to be true to your choices.

## HOMEWORK: Energy Awareness

1. Experiment with creating chemistry, care and energy with people in real life.
  - **USE CAUTION!** Use life as a playground, but don't abuse it. As you dive into exercises where you interact with the real world, you must make sure that you are never manipulating people or harming anyone through the work of the exercise.
    - 1) Set a timer on your watch or an alarm on your smartphone that asks the question: Where's your energy level now? Set it for a time that will not create a conflict for you when it goes off.
    - 2) When the alarm goes off, check-in with yourself and your energy. How are you feeling at that exact moment? Are you high or low energy? Why?
    - 3) Once aware of your energy level, see if you can change it. Take control over your instrument. When you build more value into what you're doing, you increase your energy level. The more control you have over your instrument, the more professional you'll become.
    - 4) Make a point of elevating your energy and care levels for a designated frame of time. Mark an in-point and an out-point for whatever you decide to do. Do this with people you're familiar with, but don't let them know you're doing it. For example, you can do this assignment when you're meeting with a friend.
    - 5) Actively raise your care level and the value of what you're doing during your time together. At any given point, you are either celebrating or tolerating. This is an exercise in intentional celebration. Make a note about the results of your experience.

NOTE: In addition to these random alarm check-ins, it's a good idea to check your energy level at the start of your day.

## DEMO: Intimacy

### CHEMISTRY CLASS: INTIMACY EXERCISE

Danielle and Jack will improvise a scene withholding intimacy.



**Take 1:** Danielle and Jack are ordering coffee at a coffee shop. For the most part, they're in their own worlds.

- 1) How is their energy level and chemistry?

NOTE: \*Tableau - Actively doing nothing in a scene, silent, motionless, but not frozen.

**Take 2:** Danielle and Jack are instructed to continue the scene with more dialogue -- Jack will be short fifty cents for his coffee and Danielle will respond. Even though Jack and Danielle have been given the direction to continue with the same ambivalent attitude towards each other from the first take, something still changes.

- 1) How would you describe the change in their chemistry in this take, and why does it occur?

**Take 3:** Danielle and Jack pick up the scene again from the point where Jack receives the fifty cents offered to him. In this take, Jack and Danielle become naturally more open with each other.

- 1) What did you notice was different in this scene compared to the first one?

**Take 4:** Danielle and Jack will improvise the entire scene they've created from beginning to end (starting from their first positions). This time, they'll be instructed to take it to the next level of intimacy.

- 1) How different is the chemistry level in this scene, compared to the previous take?
- 2) What did Danielle and Jack say they did differently?
- 3) What does Coach Banks say about intimacy?

**Take 5:** Danielle and Jack are asked to do the scene once again. This time, slowing it down and taking each other in a bit more. The goal is to bring the scene to the next level of intimacy.

- 1) What did you notice was different in this scene, compared to Takes 2 and 3?

**Take 6:** Coach instructs Danielle and Jack to do a Meisner repetition exercise. Then they perform the scene one final time. Coach gives the direction to handle this take as if it were the climactic scene in a two hour romance (movie). Doing so creates the moment when the two lead actors find each other for the first time.

- 1) What change did you notice in their performance after the repetition exercise?
  
- 2) How did the scene change when the intention and direction changed?
  
- 3) Which of the six takes did you feel had more energy? The most chemistry?

“Live up to everybody’s expectations as well as surprising them. If you’re not attempting to surprise the audience at the same time, well then, you’re coasting.”

~ Tom Hanks

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## END SESSION 8

Go over your notes and prepare for the Session 8 Quiz. You’ll find Quiz 8 by clicking the Blue TAKE TEST button under this Lesson’s main menu.

You must complete and pass the Session 8 Quiz before proceeding with Lesson 11.

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