

DIRECTING ACTORS

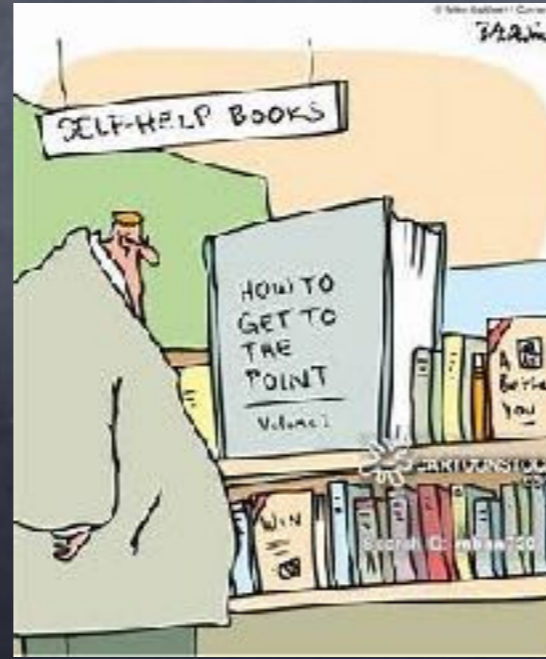
Part 3

TALKING TO ACTORS

PARSIMONY PRINCIPLE

SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE

BE BRIEF



Long Explanations – Long Directions – are, by definition, BAD DIRECTIONS

Incite – Do not explain –



Look for the light to go on in your actor's eye

CLICK
Then Shut up!

LETS LISTEN TO LENA DUNHAM ON THIS



ALSO WE WANT TO BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE

WHAT YOU SAY MATTERS

“A problem well put is half solved.”
John Dewey



A problem well put is half solved – John Dewey

WORDS ARE LEVERS: FORCE MULTIPLIERS



It's like moving a giant boulder off a ledge and over a cliff. The boulder is subject to the Law of Inertia. You remember that one: "Bodies at rest tend to stay at rest...Bodies in motion tend to stay in motion." We are trying to move people - actors, characters, ultimately the audience. Like the boulder in the example, all we need to do is to start it moving...it's own MOMENTUM will carry it to the edge and the LAW OF GRAVITY will make it fall. Similarly in a scene, once we get the action started, we can step aside and watch the force of events take over. Getting it started is the hard part. To move a boulder we use a WORD or a FEW WORDS as the lever. The words should be chosen so that they have an impact greater than their "size". They must Multiplier the Force in order to move our character into action. Words that act as FORCE MULTIPLIERS are HOT WORDS. That is, they are words that connect to people in an EMOTIONAL place.

USE HOT WORDS

THEY ARE POWERFUL – It was said of Mike Nichols that he didn't direct actors – he inspired them

Our job as Directors is to INCITE actors to action. In order to INCITE we must choose HOT WORDS.

HOT WORDS are words that have an EMOTIONAL CHARGE.

We choose them consciously and carefully with the intent to PROVOKE our actors.

WE WANT TO SAY ONLY AS MUCH AS IS NECESSARY TO PUT THEM IN MOTION —REMEMBER: GIGO

G.I.G.O

GARBAGE IN
=
GARBAGE OUT



or – put another way -- “Bad Data In – Bad Decisions Made” – THAT’S WHY THE FIRST RULE OF DIRECTING ACTORS IS THE SAME AS THE FIRST RULE OF MEDICINE TAKEN BY DOCTORS IN THE HIPPOCRATIC OATH

DO NO HARM



LET THE BODY HEAL ITSELF if possible –

NON INVASIVE DIRECTING if possible –

THE GOLDEN DIRECTION

SILENCE



OF COURSE THIS IS AN IDEAL — IN REALITY WE WILL NEED TO INTERVENE - IN DOING SO WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT — THE WORDS WE CHOOSE ARE IMPORTANT — WHAT WE SAY MATTERS

BE SPECIFIC

With your words and SPECIFIC TO THE MOMENT YOU HOPE TO ADJUST

YOU MAY NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO CHANGE YET — BUT HOPEFULLY YOU CAN IDENTIFY WHERE A PROBLEM OCCURRED



DEFINE WHERE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR CHANGE —

AN ACTIVE WAY TO ACHIEVE CHANGE IS TO CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

REMEMBER IMAGINARY CIRCUMSTANCES ARE AT OUR DISPOSAL — THEY ARE THE KEYS ON WHICH WE CAN NOODLE TO EXPLORE CHOICES — THEY ALLOW US TO COME UP WITH ALTERNATE VERSIONS OF THE SCENE — THESE WON'T GO TO WASTE

PENTIMENTI



THEY ARE THE UNSEEN BUT SENSED PENTIMENTI that give a life like quality to our decisions — after all in life our decisions are a product of a history of multiple alternate (failed) decisions.

To each new circumstance we try we must insist that our actors COMMIT

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COMMIT

- TO CIRCUMSTANCES
- TO OBJECTIVES
- TO TASKS AND ACTIVITIES

COMMITTING MEANS PLAYING TO WIN

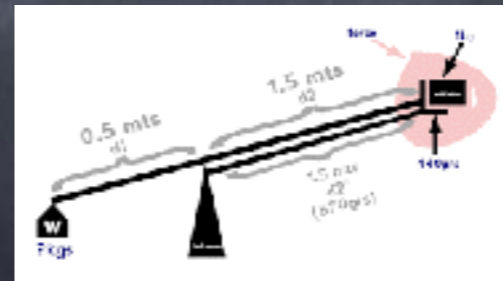
PLAY TO WIN

If a character has to lie make him commit to the lie



BY PLAYING TO WIN AND WORKING MOMENT TO MOMENT WE BUILD A COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE SCENE

CREATE A COUNTERWEIGHT



THE COUNTERWEIGHT IS THE DIRECTOR'S VERSION OF PLAY TO WIN — TO KEEP THE CHARACTERS ALIVE TRYING TO STOP THE INEVITABLE — THE PRE-ORDAINED FROM HAPPENING

THE VORTEX SUCKS

Another way to view this is to “play against surface”: to strive to thwart the incidents that the writer has written, so that when they inevitably occur, the characters have pushed themselves and gone through difficult journeys to arrive there.

RESIST THE SUCK OF THE VORTEX



THE ALTERNATIVE LEADS TO ANTICIPATING – PLAYING RESULTS – ILLUSTRATING – INDICATING AND PLAYING THE END — TO BAD — OVER ACTING

OVERACTING

DEFINE — RESULT, INDICATE, ILLUSTRATE

Classic acting example of result acting/indicating/illustrating:

When a character has to play drunk, a bad actor acts the effect of being drunk. But, when you are actually drunk in real life, you try to pretend you are sober.

Another classic example is when you feel incredibly emotional, you try and not cry, which oddly can make you cry more or make matters worse; you fight it back. However, a bad actor will feel the tears and let it out.

That's why we don't use ADJECTIVES



which only point to a result ignoring the process....

ACTORS (and Directors) have a tendency to do what the the writer has done — to illustrate it – to underline it — or to re-do it in another scene where it doesn't belong.

DON'T MAKE ACTORS
ACT
UNNECESSARILY



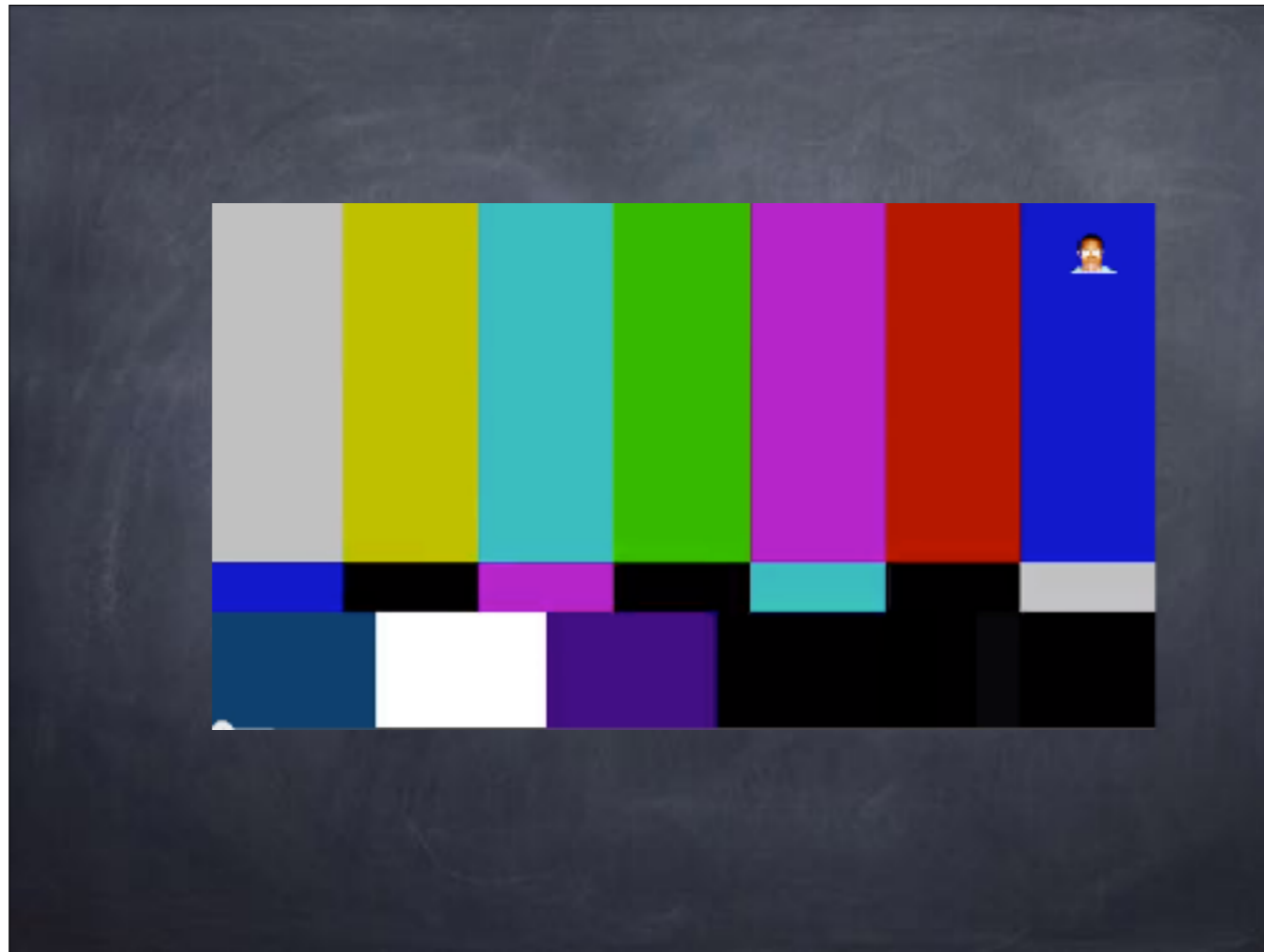
Use Real:

- TASKS
- OBJECTS
- ACTIVITIES



Consult Your Checklist!





THE IMPULSE TO INDICATE AND OVERACT COMES FROM A DESIRE TO DO THE WRITERS JOB - TO ANTICIPATE THE END AND DELIVER A RESULT.