

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR DIY ACTING SCENE

You have been assigned a partner and given a scene to perform in next week's class. This is your chance to walk in an actor's shoes and experience the actor's dilemma. It is step one in a practice we will call "DIY Acting."

"Actors' Directors" are able to help actors give their best performances. They have a sensitivity to what an actor is feeling at any given moment. To be an "Actors' Director" it's not necessary to be an actor; this sensitivity can be cultivated. But I doubt it can be acquired intellectually. To do so you must expose yourself to the peculiar vulnerabilities actors are subject to. In order to treat a patient with cancer it is not necessary for a doctor to have had cancer. But can you imagine being treated by a doctor who had never been sick a day in her life? That is, all too frequently, the situation actors find themselves in *vis a vis* their directors.

Writer Carol Sanford tells this story:

"When my daughter graduated from Swarthmore College, **Tim William**, now a professor emeritus, granted her a Distinction in Biology. She had refused to dissect animals and insects, still graduating Phi Beta Kappa, and instead studied them in motion, sometimes with imaging equipment. In appreciation of her wisdom, he offered his own relevant experience in the Peace Corps as a teacher in Zimbabwe. He had invited the young village students to capture frogs and bring them back in jars he provided. He proceeded to show them how to kill the frogs with chloroform. The children froze and then screamed, all running out of the makeshift classroom.

Very shortly, the local Chief emerged and asked why he was teaching the children of the village to kill frogs. Tim explained it was just a necessity of being able to cut them up to be able to understand a frog.

The Chief, with a toothless grin, got down in a squat position and began to leap around croaking, in what Tim reported was a very accurate depiction of frog behavior. When the Chief rose, he said to Tim, "You cannot understand a frog, without a *whole* frog doing what frogs do." He made Tim squat and hop and "be" a frog. Smiling broadly as he walked away, the Chief added, "You have to feel the whole frog in motion, to truly understand." He had also removed the lids and gleefully watched all the frogs hop back into the brush."

From Regenerative Business Part 2 Discerning a Living, Structured Whole and Avoiding 'Part' Thinking by [Carol Sanford](#)  
March 28, 2016

## THE INSTRUCTIONS

This is an experiential exercise. Use it to become conscious of the challenges faced by an actor laboring under imaginary circumstances in language not his own in front of an audience he must not see or acknowledge.

I'm not going to tell you "How To" prepare your scenes. The two of you can do it any way you agree upon. What I want and expect is that you meet for between 30 minutes and an hour to prepare. You will assign roles and create a simple *mise en scene*.\* You may employ props and arrange furniture as you choose. Next week you will perform the scene and briefly report to the class telling us:

1. What questions arose in your process
2. What you did to address those questions
3. What obstacles you encountered in the process of performing

\*If you are unfamiliar with this term look it up in the **glossary** which may be under "Class Materials" found on the class website.