



by Rhonda Musak, Acting Coach

Study, find all the good teachers and study with them, get involved in acting to act, not to be famous or for the money. Do plays. It's not worth it if you are just in it for the money. You have to love it.

Philip Seymour Hoffman



5 MISTAKES ACTORS MAKE BY NOT HAVING AN ACTING COACH

I was recently having coffee with a casting director friend and the topic of acting training came up. She said, with a dreamy far-off gaze, that there was a time in the very recent past that when an actor was asked who their coach was the actor in question always responded with a name of a coach. "This actor" she said "was studying with so-and-so coach and that actor was studying with such-and-such coach..." Everybody was studying with *somebody*. That's just the way it was.

Now the response she has begun to hear more and more is, "I don't have an acting coach."

Let's admit it, times have changed. It's not the 1990s anymore. Or even the early 2000's. The industry has changed. People have changed. Why should actors today do what actors did yesterday?

All of that may be true; however, my friend's next comment to me was that "It shows." That it is apparent that the person auditioning for her is not working on his or her craft. And, she continued on, that more often than not she's asking who their coach is because she has just given an adjustment that the actor was completely incapable of doing.

We spent quite a while pondering this baffling situation, looking at it from all angles. She spoke from the perspective of how this trend is impeding actors, while I examined exactly what it is that actors do receive by having an acting coach.

Whichever way we sliced it, we agreed—**actors pay a real cost by making the mistake of not having a coach.**

MISTAKE #1: BELIEVING YOU CAN BECOME A BETTER ACTOR WITHOUT AN OUTSIDE EYE.

The good news is that some acting issues are technicalities that can be improved almost instantly, "Don't do that, do this." But the bad news is that other acting issues can take many, many months of consistent attention and effort to resolve.

But an acting coach is most excellent news for both of these issues. An acting coach's job is to hold both a short-term as well as a long-term eye toward a student's growth and then join with the student in creating the very conditions to bring that growth about.

When a coach works with a student on a regular basis, not only is the coach able to address the student's current needs, but the coach is also able to get a sense of anything else that might need to be strengthened throughout the student's work as a whole. And often, without the acting student even knowing, while work progresses on the focus of a given coaching session their coach is also helping them build up and fortify another area or areas of their skill set.

An acting coach also monitors the progression of a student's work by making sure that the student is sufficiently challenged. Holding a long-term perspective, a coach will keep raising the bar, pushing the student to develop and acquire skills that they might not even know they are lacking.

It might seem daring if not downright scary at times to work on acting material that you might otherwise avoid, but the payoff is huge. It can be a game changer in the way that it can realign the way you approach your acting work with the deeper knowledge and increased skill.

On the flipside and focusing on the short term, powerful coaching will also leave a student feeling grounded in what they are capable of now as an actor, so that they can stand confidently when facing the pressures of auditions and performance.

And, above all, the most important way a coach helps a student improve is not just by giving a student a powerful acting experience, but by teaching the student an exact method or approach to re-creating the results achieved during a coaching session.

BOTTOM LINE:

An acting coach provides a measure of support is absolutely indispensable to becoming a better actor. If you are not working with a coach – as many actors are – you will not be able to stay competitive without this outside eye. Your coach is critical to your success and will push you harder than you can ever push yourself to achieve the kind of results that you are capable of achieving.

*A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear,
who has you see what you don't want to see,
so that you can be who you have always known you could be.*

Tom Landry

MISTAKE #2: WAITING UNTIL A BIG AUDITION TO THINK ABOUT WORKING WITH A COACH.

The joyful news arrives that you have booked an audition for a dream acting gig.

Absolutely elated and jumping with joy, you are hit in the next moment with the sinking feeling that you'll need someone to help you really nail this one. But who?

I've seen actors end up in this unfortunate eleventh hour panic. They post on a Facebook group asking others actors to recommend coaches. They call friends and acquaintances and get yet another set of recommendations. And now, instead of using their precious time to prepare for their big audition, they're sorting through a pile of recommendations trying to figure out which coach might be right for them.

By the time they choose a coach and book a session, the stakes have become even higher.

They've never worked with this coach and this coach has never worked with them. The actor wonders if they can trust the coach. Will the coach "get" them enough to understand what it is they want and how to get the results they need for this audition? Is the coach good with this sort of material? Or is this going to be wasted time, effort and money?

Instead of being supported, this actor adds an extra layer of stress to an already stressful, high-stakes situation.

It is much more empowering have your go-to coach in your back pocket so you can schedule a session and get cracking on your work. You want to prepare for your coaching session knowing that you will be in good hands so you can have the very best shot at booking that job.

When you finally walk into the audition you want your attitude to be, “I can’t wait for them to see my work!” The last thing you want to feel is that, in hodgepodge fashion, you’ve slapped together your preparation because you had to scramble at the last minute to find a coach.

BOTTOM LINE:

When the stakes are high and the pressure is on, an acting coach’s job is to cut through the stress and help you achieve quick results. That’s only possible when you have been working with a coach for some amount of time. It’s not that you won’t get any results working with a coach that you don’t know, but you want to be sure that you are getting the very best results when the audition demands nothing less than your A+ game.

Every director should take an acting class.

Paul Feig

MISTAKE #3: UNDERESTIMATING THE POWER YOUR INNER BLOCKS HAVE TO HOLD YOU BACK AS AN ACTOR.

Actors get blocked and become stuck. It happens to all actors at all levels and at various times throughout a career. An actor can stop having confidence in their work. Their skill level plateaus. They keep getting cast in X roles when they really want to be cast in Y roles. When facing an acting-related block, your first line of defense is an acting coach who knows you well and whom you trust.

Part of the work of an actor is living and working with an open heart. It's what allows actors to be present and vulnerable in their work and even tenacious enough to take enormous risks and face a fair amount of rejection throughout their career.

Actors excel at this openhearted vulnerability and in the very best of times it is an extraordinary way to approach life. But this dazzling high wire act also includes some terrifying moments of realization that, indeed, the ground is very far away.

When those moments strike, you want someone at the ready who can deftly identify the problem, strategize a solution and help get you back on track quickly. It takes a considerable amount of effort to build momentum in a career and you just can't afford to be out of the game for any length of time.

BOTTOM LINE:

A good coach skillfully helps actors navigate the rough waters that are bound to crop up in a career that demands so much both personally and professionally. This level of support is built on a strong student-coach relationship.

It takes time though to build trust in a coach; it is not something that can happen overnight. Planning ahead and having a coach already in your corner by the time you are dealing with a block or facing a crisis can be the difference that makes the difference in keeping you moving forward in your career.

Wanting to be a good actor is not good enough.

You must want to be a great actor.

Gary Oldman

MISTAKE #4: APPROACHING YOUR PAID OPPORTUNITIES WITH CASTING DIRECTORS AND AGENTS AS A FORM OF ACTING TRAINING.

It is a very costly acting error to mistake casting director and agent workshops for acting training. When an actor pays to meet with anyone who has the potential to hire them it is, at heart, an audition situation. It may be called a class, it may be called a workshop, but it is not.

If you're going to grow as an actor you need a safe place to experiment and fail and in front of industry professionals is not that place.

Smart actors attend casting director and agent workshops strategically. They prepare by doing all the work they usually do to prep for an audition. They break down their role, study their sides and are rehearsed and close to memorized. They've taken the time to dress appropriately for the part. And though they may pick up a few helpful acting pointers, their real learning is about the casting director or agent, what they cast, who they work with and how they can further their relationship with this industry professional in hopes of working with them in the future.

A short handful of years ago, opportunities to meet with these types of industry professionals outside of an actual audition were few and far between. This is absolutely phenomenal news for actors. Truly, a new day has dawned! But when I attend these types of classes and see someone get up and work who has barely prepared and is approaching the work like it's an acting class, I know that they are throwing this really great opportunity away: not only will they not make an impression on the industry professional, but they will also not sharpen their acting skills.

BOTTOM LINE:

Start by getting in tiptop professional shape by bringing your acting training needs to a qualified acting coach. This will allow you to show up like a pro to casting director and agent workshops so you can show them what you're capable of as an actor and hit it out of the park.

I believe that where ever there is mastery coaching is occurring.

And whenever coaching is done, mastery will be the outcome.

Andrea J. Lee

MISTAKE #5: BELIEVING THAT THE INDUSTRY VALUES NETWORKING ABOVE TRAINING.

Do not believe it. It may seem like it in the pages of a glossy magazine. It may seem like it from an interview on the red carpet. It may seem like it because, and here's the big "secret"—talent is assumed.

It is *assumed* that you are a trained actor. It is *assumed* that you are prepared. It is *assumed* that you continue to stretch and grow in your work. By the time you've walk into an audition room, it is assumed that you are committed actor that has already put thousands of hours into your acting.

It's not likely that anyone will harangue you if you have not done or are not doing this. They're not going to openly question you. They're not going to make you feel bad. They're not going to beg and plead with you. They're probably not even going to talk about it. They're just not going to hire you.

Every time I turn around it seems that another actor networking event has popped up. I attend these events now and then and when an attendee hands me their headshot and resume and I see that they have very few credits, I am dumbfounded. I have to wonder why it

is that this person is working so hard at networking and are not, at that very minute in fact, in an acting class. (And by the way, an acting class IS a phenomenal networking event.)

Every actor has to begin somewhere and I would never want to discourage anyone.

However, it seems that the equation has become inverted. Maybe TV shows like American Idol and So You Think You Can Dance give the illusion that anyone can succeed in this business just by sheer desire. But that is an illusion honed for entertainment value. Do not mistake it for anything other than that.

Someone once shared with me a fitting analogy:

Imagine you need surgery and you discover that your “doctor” never went to medical school. You are shocked but, they assure you, they are very passionate about all things medical. They have read about surgery. They like wearing surgical scrubs. They think surgery would be really fun. They have watched many doctor themed TV shows. Training, they tell you, takes too much time and energy. They just want a big break. They just want to DO IT!

Now would you agree to let this person operate on you? Of course you wouldn't. But whenever an actor believes that the industry values networking above training, that is exactly what they are asking of industry professionals.

BOTTOM LINE:

Without solid skill, you will not get anywhere. Networking should be done strategically and go hand-in-hand with ability. If you've got nothing on your resume you really owe it to yourself to get the training that you deserve. If you are not well trained, why would someone at a networking event want to hire you?

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

Actors are some of the busiest people I know and have to manage an unbelievable number of things. But I can think of no single thing that is of greater asset to an actor's career than having a coach. Yes, it is an investment. There's time, energy and money to consider, but the return on investment has the ability to catapult you and your work to where you most desire.

It's coming up on my 20th anniversary of having found my go-to acting coach, my honored acting mentor. My acting has grown exponentially over the years through my work with this coach. My coach has led me to achieve things in my acting that I could only have dreamt about in the past. Even though I am a coach myself, my coach still takes me farther in my work than I can ever take myself.

If you are intrigued, I invite you to investigate and explore the difference that an acting coach can make to your acting and your career. I promise you, it is an investment that will shift the entire trajectory of your life as an actor.

WORKING WITH RHONDA MUSAK at ART & SOUL ACTING

WHO: Hi, I'm Rhonda Musak. I work with committed actors who want to book more acting work.

WHAT: As an acting coach, I blend powerful acting techniques together with transformational solution focused life coaching; a dynamic combination that insures that my students learn sustainable acting tools as well as know when to use them and why.

HOW: I invite you to connect with me so I can hear more about you...what it is that you love to create as an actor, what is working for you acting-wise, what is missing and where you want to be.

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Rhonda Musak, Acting Coach

Rhonda puts her heart and soul into the art of acting.

Brandon Vlach

Many teachers only tell you “what” you need to work on but don’t tell you “how” which IS the key to getting better quicker. With Rhonda you will receive strong, effective techniques that will give you straight forward ideas and answers that will serve you in the professional acting world.

James Pravasilis

I thoroughly enjoy Rhonda's energy and her commitment to the creative process. Her generosity of spirit and the soulful way she approaches the work is powerful, transformative.

Duvall O'Steen

I cannot speak highly enough about Rhonda as a coach. Before working with Rhonda I was struggling with my confidence as an actor. While working together she knows exactly what I need to focus on when I'm tripping myself up and how to get out of my own way. Because of working with Rhonda I have now grown as an actor and a person. I definitely recommend Rhonda as an actor coach, with her you can't go wrong.

Psacoya M. Guinn

MORE INFO: I invite you to [visit my website:](http://www.artandsoulacting.com)

www.artandsoulacting.com. There you'll find information on the following:

- Acting Classes
- Workshops
- Private Coaching
- Summer Acting Intensive for Teens
- College Audition Prep
- Book Club for Actors
- Book That Job Blog
- Subscriber Gift: When you subscribe to my e-mail list, I will send you my audio program “How to NAIL Your Next Audition - Secrets for Prepping in the Waiting Room” - A 19-minute audio program designed to be done as you wait to be called into the audition room.

