

THE TRIP

When new actors initially come to interview with me for workshop placement, the first thing I ask them is, “Why are you here?” What is the reason you want to study acting? Is it?

- a. An investigation (of the possibilities of a career, hobby or a self-growth experience)?
- b. A hobby?
- c. A career in which you are ready to dedicate yourself?
- d. To improve your craft and grow as an actor?

These are important questions for you to ponder. Most people say I am going to be an actor without taking the time to understand all that it entails: time, money, dedication, energy, life-style changes, challenges, etc. Do you want to be an actor so that you can appear in commercials, television or in the movies, or do you just love the craft of acting? Do you even understand what the craft is? Why do you want to be an actor? It is vital to know your intentions as you are about to embark on this journey. Look at what you really want and the approach that works best for you. Once you get clear on your goals, then there is less of a possibility of being disappointed, overwhelmed or frustrated in your pursuit.

I believe it all must start with an Investigation. For me, an investigation is a limited amount of time (between three months and a year) spent doing professional training and educating yourself in the ways of the craft and entertainment business in order to make a decision on what YOU want. Your goal for the investigation is to make this decision. It is a very important time. Now, depending on time and money, you can jump into the investigation with both feet or casually travel through this phase. You can take two classes a week, gets lots of information, read, audit classes, study plays and movies, etc., or just take one class. It is important to take at least one professional class to even call this an investigation. (In Chapter Four, I will give my suggestions about what workshops I suggest and how to choose them). I usually tell people that the more you can do to educate yourself during this phase, the surer you can be at the end of it on how you want to proceed.

It may be that you decide not to go into acting. This, for many, is the right decision. You won't be able to say, “I wish I would have given it a shot” and be disappointed with yourself for the rest of your life. YOU would have made the right choice for you. I guarantee that if you selected good people to train with, your life will be greatly enhanced by the experience. Professional acting training is the least expensive form of therapy going. Seriously, it would have given you more confidence and freedom. You would have met interesting, creative people and have had a lot of fun. Plus, you would have gotten an understanding of what motivates people and a rich appreciation for every good actor you will see on stage, TV and films. Often, I have people taking acting and/or improv classes for many reasons other than becoming an actor. They may do it to play and have fun, to overcome fears, to be creative, or to learn more about themselves. So, if this voyage turns out to be an investigation, you will still win big, and you can always come back at a later time and re-visit the investigation.

After your Investigation period, if you decide that developing your acting skills and working at being an actor is going to be your Hobby, this is, for many, a very smart choice. You may love acting and enjoy it as your creative outlet, but, for whatever reason, you don't want to dedicate your life to it, for now. So, you take classes when you can, audition, and work in local productions when possible. When it is convenient, submit yourself, audition for and work in projects and films you find in the entertainment trade papers or through contacts you may have. You may even try to get an agent. Most of the information in the following chapters will still apply but in moderation. Bottom line, it is a hobby. It is something you pursue in your spare time because you enjoy it and it feeds your creative appetite. You are learning the craft, being creative and having fun. Later, if you change your mind and decide to either make it a career or give it up totally, then this time has been well spent.

If after the investigation, you choose to dedicate yourself to an acting career, know that your life will need re-structuring. Life, as you know it, will change. Much of your "spare" time and money will be spent on training, marketing, research and pursuit of your career. Your circle of friends will expand to include a rather eclectic group of creative people. Your "life experience" growth will speed up. For some, it may even mean a move to a larger entertainment business area. You will learn that acting is not really an occupation. It's a new way of life. You have to be willing to work possibly for years before you make any money. It's got to be a passion in your life or it will be a burden.

I hope these probabilities don't frighten you. I hope it all excites you. I know that it will be great to get your first job, but for me, the most rewarding, memorable and empowering time in an actor's career is in these first two years.

**For more professional, specific guidance in the first 3 years of your acting career, pick up a copy of Carolyne Barry's book HIT THE GROUND RUNNING.
www.hitthegroundrunningbook.com**