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3 Situations in Which Audition Feedback Is Helpful

By **Lisina Stoneburner** | Posted Nov. 4, 2015, 10 a.m.

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I was working with a young actor on an audition for a feature film. She kept being brought back into the room. The process lasted over three weeks. It was down to her and one other actor. When she didn't book it, her manager asked for feedback. The casting director told him, "She just didn't hit it out of the park." The actor came to me completely ruined asking how we could work on her "hitting it out of the park" the next time. She was destroyed by a comment that meant nothing and gave her no where to go with her work. I asked her manager to please stop providing feedback like this. Feedback after the audition, while sometimes very specific and clear, can often be confusing and even misleading.

The bottom line is, once you don't book the job, unless they are considering you for something else, their interest in making you stronger goes away. Be careful of over-analyzing the feedback you get, taking

it too personally, or believing it is feedback that you can always directly apply to your work. In addition, be cautious about how much you beat yourself up over the comments. Sometimes, that part is just not yours.

Still, there are times when feedback can prove helpful, and I recommend learning how to identify what is helpful feedback when you hear it. Try listening for these specific things.

1. Were there comments about how you processed direction? It is crucial during the auditions to be able to process the suggestions and directions you are being given—to be able to let directors and producers see how you can fulfill their ideas for the character and story, blending your choices with their directions with a strong approach. Issues with how well you took the directions is

helpful information.

2. Were there comments about how well you grasped the material? This is by far one of my most important feedback comments. When you are told you didn't quite understand the material, you need to go back to your coach or to your class and dissect the text to see what you missed. Sometimes, it is just a piece you didn't get or couldn't relate to. Other times, you didn't know how and didn't try to. Do not expect every piece to be in your wheelhouse; sometimes you need to really work hard to find a level of comprehension. This is a note that you needed to do more work.

3. Was the comment that you just didn't do anything with it? If one of my actors receives this note, I get a little miffed with them. You are being told you did not make the moments important enough to come off the page. You did not affect anyone emotionally; you didn't make anyone laugh or cry. You didn't keep anyone interested. Your character didn't have a strong enough objective, or active enough actions. You didn't have a reason to be there. You didn't do your job.

Listening for helpful comments can move you forward in your work. Struggling to make sense of vague feedback is a waste of time. In this industry, keep what's useful to you and move on from the rest. It is your responsibility to listen for the useful stuff and do something with it. Work hard, use your coach when you need to, rely on your instinct, your intelligence, and your training, and keep moving forward.

Have questions for Lisina Stoneburner? Ask her during today's Twitter chat at 2 p.m. EST using the hashtag #backstagechat. Follow @Lisina and @Backstage for more information!

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*Lisina Stoneburner is an Atlanta-based acting coach, founder of the **Company Acting Studio**, and Backstage Expert. For more information, check out Stoneburner's **full bio!***

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