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2 Signs Fear Is Affecting Your Work (And How to Fix It)

By Lisina Stoneburner | Posted Sept. 24, 2015, 3 p.m.

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The interesting thing I have discovered about fear is that most actors have compartmentalized the concept of fear and applied it mainly to a conscious fear of the audition room or performance anxiety. They have not acknowledged that fear is a sneaky infiltrator of the artist's psyche. It buries itself inside the thought process, the preparation, and the character's moments in the most harmful of ways. Identifying and managing fear can be one of the most freeing things an actor can do for their work—and subsequently, for their life.

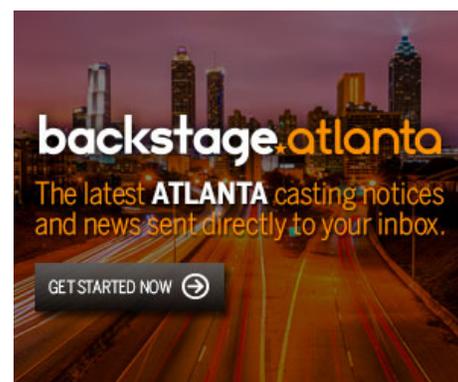
Here are some common causes of fear infiltrating your work:

1. You are not master of the text. Words and sounds are not flowing confidently and you need more rehearsal with them.
2. You are not confident in the story. You have not found a way to connect emotionally to the event.
3. You do not trust yourself, the text, or the director. In your efforts to feel in control you refuse to believe in the choices of others.

Here are some manifestations of fear in your work:

1. You do not have control in your body and voice. Your performance is disconnected and you are not grounded in your body.
2. You lack imagination. You continually find yourself unable to reach a level of connection with other actors or with the emotional moment because you cannot imagine the believability of the circumstances.

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We can work on battling fear that is deeply ingrained in us by applying the most basic acting concepts and grounding ourselves in foundational technique.

Your character's objective must be active. The thing they need so much they may not even be able to admit it. A series of actions must be at play to catapult you into the moment beyond your own level of resistance. This will cause change. Change is what happens when you address your fears.

Ground yourself in the relationships of the character. Relationships are layered with history, vulnerability, and connective emotional tissue you can be affected by and attach to so you remain involved and engaged in your moments instead of working outside of yourself to control the performance.

The causes, manifestations, and solutions are all interconnected. One cannot be managed without activation of the other. However, much of the work necessary to tackle this process lies in the actor's ability to diagnose this problem in the first place. You must have a sense of yourself. You must be able to feel the disconnect and know that it needs to be remedied. You must have perspective on your own ability to fully comprehend, engage with, and perform the moments on the page. You must be able to tell when you are cheating, retreating, or just simply not doing something. You must know when you need help, a coach, a class, a perspective.

As you continue to move forward in your career you will change as a person, so your relationship with fear will change. Find coaches you can go to for life—partners in perspective to help you see where you aren't trusting, aren't understanding, and aren't pursuing an objective so you can always be challenged to fight for the change necessary to bring believable and engaging moments to your audience.

This is your job, your responsibility to the material. It is our responsibility to have perspective on those things that cause fear to bury itself deep inside of us. Then we need to work towards having a better relationship with it rather than let it be the master of our actions.

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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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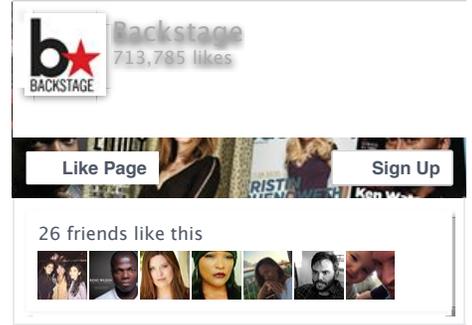
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Nathaniel Jacobson

>You must know when you need help, a coach, a class, a perspective.<

I would like to apply this to myself, as I have done in other aspects of my life, as I revisit my proclivity for performance.

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