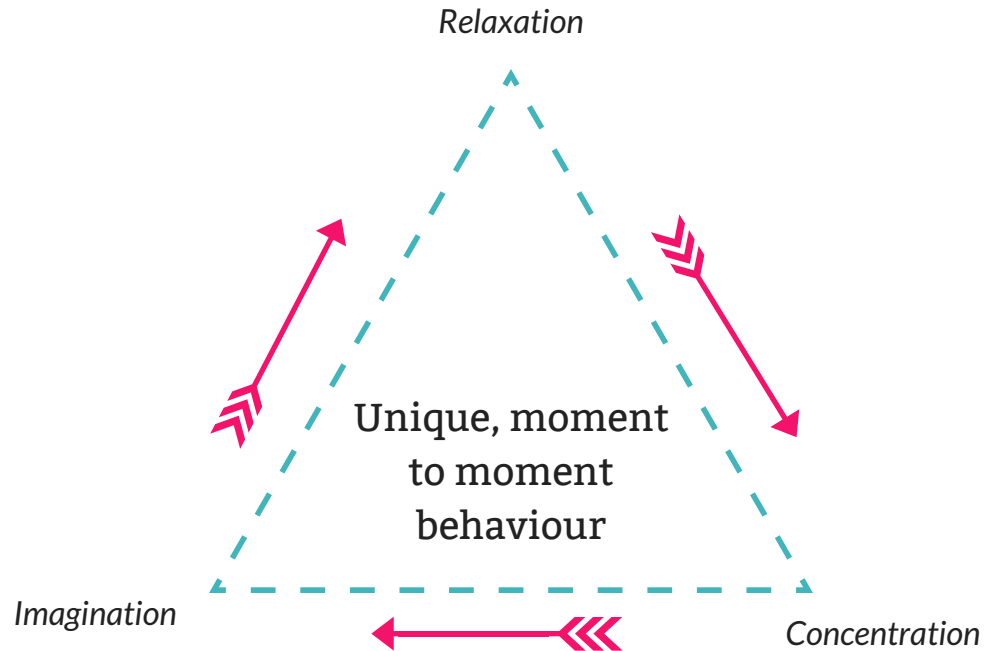


# THE FOUNDATION FOR THE ACTOR'S TRAINING

To give authentic, powerful, moment to moment, spontaneous performances that captivate your audience "The Method" works on the principle that all actors must have three things in place

1. RELAXATION
2. CONCENTRATION
3. IMAGINATION



When the artist has all three elements in place, they are able to express truthfully, and deliver a unique moment to moment performance focused upon human behaviour that no other actor can copy - even they themselves would be unable to copy this performance again as it comes from the unconscious mind.

The triangle points towards relaxation because this is the foundation of the actor's training and art. Without adequate relaxation, in which the actor focuses on their mind, body, emotions and energy the actor will cease to be able to apply an adequate level of focus to their work thus blocking their creative impulses and imagination.

When an actor isn't adequately relaxed, they go back to a default (habitual) way of acting. Their work will come from one of two places - a place of fear or a place of rote - learnt (bad) performance habits. These bad habits occur as a result of tension. Whilst the tension may have manifested physically e.g heart racing, tense mouth/face it has its roots laid firmly in the actors mind.

Tension is physical, emotional and mental. The Method's relaxation technique aims to eliminate all tension, whilst sharpening the imagination and giving the actor control over his/her instrument.

## THE GROUP THEATRE'S EXPLANATION

*Relaxation is the foundation upon which rests the "house of method". Without this foundation, the house sinks into the quicksand of chaotic convention.*

*Stanislavski referred to tension as the "occupational disease" of the actor. Strasberg believed that tension is the actor's greatest enemy. "Tension" for the actor, is the use of those muscles, thoughts and energies not necessary to accomplish the actor's specific task on the stage, this task being the actor's object of attention, or "object", upon which the actor has chosen to concentrate.*

*Strasberg's Relaxation Exercise was developed to help the actor learn to identify unwanted tension in the muscles of the body, including the neck (the final resting place of hidden tension) and the face (where mental tension manifests itself).*

# MY ROTE/BAD PERFORMANCE HABITS

The artist must become aware of their default acting habits in order to move away from them.

Fill the box with your default acting habits



## THE OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE OF THE ACTOR

Tension makes my acting...

Relaxation makes my acting...

My instrument's response to tension  
is...

My instrument's response to relaxation  
is...

# A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO RELAXATION

But first, a further (important) explanation from The Group Theater

*Strasberg's Relaxation Exercise was developed to help the actor learn to identify unwanted tension in the muscles of the body, including the neck (the final resting place of hidden tension) and the face (where mental tension manifests itself).*

*By systematic and deliberate exploration of these muscles, the actor will identify the tension in each of them, and release that tension through an act of will.*

*Sitting in a straight-backed, armless chair, the actor attempts to assume a position in which sleep could occur if absolutely necessary. After finding such a position, the actor begins to explore for tension.*

*It was common practice when I learned this exercise to first raise an arm above the head and begin exploring for tension in the fingers, thumb and wrist by moving the muscles in these areas one at a time, back and forth and in circles, slowly, while the mind asks the individual muscle, "Where is the tension there?". When the mind has identified the tension, it is simply a matter of willing the muscle to "let go".*

*This process continues throughout every muscle in the hand, arm, shoulder, neck, chest, stomach, hips, upper and lower legs, ankles and down to the toes. Special attention is given to the facial muscles, especially the brow, temples and jaw, where years of holding back unspoken thoughts, words and emotions have created habitual patterns of tension.*

*Move the lips around, stretching them to their full limits. Stick the tongue out and move it around in circles, and in and out, extend the jaw and move it in every direction. Move the muscles of the brow up and down to release that habitual "worried" expression. While exploring in this way, be certain that you concentrate fully on identifying specifically where the tension is, so that you can willfully release it.*

*Method Acting Relaxation Exerciser Daniel E. Young during the Relaxation Exercise, simultaneously exploring the areas of the neck, mouth, lips, tongue, and legs, while concentrating on preventing tension from "creeping" back into the rest of the body.*



Photo courtesy of Me, taken in 1992. Daniel Young moved to the Hollywood Hills in 1998, where he now works as an actor and graphic artist.

The process of relaxation can sometimes be painful because it holds a mirror up to you. Be open and don't get too attached to your body (mentally or emotionally). The actors who succeed with this have no pre-conceived ideas, don't aim for a specific result and leave themselves alone

## STEP ONE

*Find a position in the chair in which your body could go to sleep if absolutely necessary (we are not aiming for sleep - if sleep occurs the actor has .lost control).*

## STEP TWO

*Become present with your body - leave all external thoughts at the door and scan through each muscle group noticing the present sensations.*

*Note, at this point you are not actively looking for tension, you are simply tuning into your body*

## STEP THREE

*Focus on exploring one area at a time through slow , fluid movement. Move each area with ease.*

## STEP FOUR

*Move each area in a "larger than life" way to help you become more present with it and explore its sensations*

## STEP FIVE

*When you detect tension say "I give you permission to relax".*

*We begin the process saying this out loud until your coach feels you have learnt the discipline of focus, at which point you will then participate in this step of the exercise mentally.*

## STEP SIX

*Stay present with what happens to the sensation in this area.*

*As you notice what happens say "My \_\_\_\_ (insert area of body) feels \_\_\_\_ (insert sensation) now." out loud until your coach feels you have learnt the discipline of focus, at which point you will then participate in this step of the exercise mentally.*

## STEP SEVEN

*Use your imagination and imagine and remaining tension/blocked energy is draining out of the area you have been exploring*

## STEP EIGHT

*Stay present with what happens to the sensation in this area.*

*As you notice what happens say "My \_\_\_\_ (insert area of body) feels \_\_\_\_ (insert sensation) now." out loud until your coach feels you have learnt the discipline of focus, at which point you will then participate in this step of the exercise mentally.*

# GO BACK TO STEP ONE

*It should be stressed that while exploring, the actor must not allow tension to creep back into the areas where tension has been released. If the actor is executing the relaxation exercise, and is seen sitting motionless in his chair, it is obvious to the observer that tension has found its way back into previously explored areas.*

*When practicing the Relaxation Exercise, the actor may find unusually strong feelings welling up within. At this time, tension may re-manifest itself throughout the body, and especially in the neck and throat, resulting in a "choked" sensation in the vocal chords. The actor is encouraged at this point to help release the tension by vocalizing a long, sustained "ahhhhh" sound, or a short, staccato "HAH!" to help release both the tension and the emotion.*

*After practicing this exercise faithfully every day for fifteen minutes to a half hour, the actor develops a "sixth sense" for identifying tension in his body, and this new awareness is especially useful on the stage, where, when the actor feels tension for one reason or another, he simply "identifies where it is, and releases it".*

*Students have asked me why they can't use meditation, or yoga instead of the relaxation exercise, pointing out that these procedures help them attain a high degree of relaxation. I agree with them that the procedures do indeed accomplish deep relaxation. But using these procedures onstage proves entirely impractical. In the first place, these procedures do nothing to help the actor learn to identify when unwanted tension, which often manifests itself in very subtle and hidden ways, has become a problem on the stage. But even if the actor did learn to identify this kind of tension, the actor obviously cannot stop in the middle of a scene to meditate, or start doing yoga. Strasberg's relaxation exercise, when mastered, helps the actor identify the tension as it becomes apparent, then release the tension in a manner invisible to the audience.*

*This unwanted tension must be released, or it will block the pure expression of the actor's instrument onstage.*

*Think of unwanted tension this way: If you place your forefinger on the top of a violin and your thumb on the bottom of the violin and squeeze with considerable pressure while the violinist plays, the violin will not sound its purest tone. Remove the unwanted tension, and the violin will sound tones as purely as possible, depending upon the condition of the instrument.*

*But learning to properly relax onstage is only a part of the benefit of the Relaxation Exercise. While the actor is learning to relax by identifying tension in individual muscles, he is also learning to develop and strengthen the powers of concentration needed to create the life of the person, animal or "thing" he is representing in the story the author has invented. Remember, to be concentrated, you must be properly relaxed, and to be properly relaxed you must be concentrated.*

*The extreme degree of concentration the actor applies to identifying tension in the body and mind during the Relaxation Exercise will make the exercise itself very tedious. Human beings don't seem to enjoy concentrating for extended periods of time unless the object of their attention has some immediate mental or sensual gratification for them.*

*But the actor, not unlike the painter, the musician or the physician, must find a way to practice the more mundane elements of the art in ways that are stimulating, exciting and fun.\**

# A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO EMOTIONAL RELEASE VIA EXPRESSION

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## STEP ONE

*Loosen your jaw and allow it to dangle, like when you're sleeping or drunk!*

## STEP TWO

*Make a loose "aah" sound, whilst keeping the jaw heavy and explore the sensations in your throat*

## STEP THREE

*When you experience the sensation of choking, tightness or something feeling lodged/stuck in your throat release this tension/trapped energy with a supported staccato sounding "HAH"*

*Many actors fall prey to getting stuck in a rhythm with this. Avoid this to stay truly present.*

Your coach will move you on to expressing the emotion via the "AAAAH" sound when they feel you are ready for this step