

Acting: to twitter, email, or speak that is the question  
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In to today's United States, we use our loved electronic stuff a great deal. As a disclaimer I am using my iPad right now . We do gain much with these electric things, but we also lose some of our abilities at the same time. What are some of our abilities we are losing and how can we begin to get these back? In my mind we are losing some of our abilities to speak, to listen, and to form relationships. This article is from my perspective of living my 65 years as a learner and teacher.

To start, I feel that learning some of the skills of an actor can help change our current loses. How can learning to act on stage change a person? I am sure there is research on this subject. But since I feel that personal experience is the best teacher, i will use my experience to explain. Art has had a large impact on my life. Acting and storytelling have had the most influence. Acting has been a part of my life for almost fifty years. I started while in a Catholic Seminary in which I had a woman's part. My last acting role was in Servants of the Wind in which I played an old veteran of the Civil War. I have played a king, a criminal, a detective, an explorer of the South Pole and many others. I went from having panic attacks to missing lines but able to move the play forward. I have learned to be a pioneer, Revolutionary soldiers, and a storyteller of Native American stories. How has this helped me over the last 50 years? How can acting influence a person in their work world?

Acting for me started my first year in the seminary. Each of us had to take a turn in starting the Rosary. When my turn came, I began to panic as I started to say the the first Hail Mary. Somehow I was able to finish, but I knew I had to do something to get out of my fear. When we were going to put together a play, I decided to get involved. I got a part. Even though I missed my first line, I was able to get it going again. Acting began to change my life. I left the seminary and decided that I wanted to teach. Early on I tried out for a play at Warren Players. Not only did I get a part, I got six parts. I spent more time in the dressing room than on stage, but it was a start. As I worked to become better, I found that that being in a relationship with a group of people allowed my learning to multiply and expand beyond reading in a book.

The primary learning for me was how to focus and go beyond nerves. I learned to go beyond my fears. When I made a mistake, I learned that the world did not fall down. I learned that I never fell apart. Furthermore, as I worked to become a character either on stage or in the classroom to teach history, I found that the character was able to think and do things which I could not do. By getting into a character, I was able to see with different eyes.

My skill set changed as I worked to learn lines and speak them. My voice changed to be able to project to an audience. I learned to say lines clearly and slow enough so the audience could understand. As a teacher in my day job this learning translated to having my students able to understand directions and instructions.

Furthermore, through acting I played characters who had faults and flaws. Some characters grew and others did not. As I worked through liking or hating the character, I

was then able to look into myself and begin to change what I did not like. In learning to see with different eyes and hear with different ears, I could apply that ability as a teacher in the classroom. As a teacher I grew in how I could put my self in my students seat or in their parents place. As a general rule, I learned to better respect the people with whom I needed to work or teach. Seeing with a different eye has proven a great help.

Listening is also an important part of acting. As an actor one must learn his or her lines well. And the other actors lines need to be learned. Most lines are delivered as a response to what someone else says, but at times mistakes are made. Actors must be able to self correct or get things moving in the correct direction. While on stage these mistakes will not change the world. In real life failure to really listen can change the world. If a person can practice listening carefully on stage, that skill be translated to real life situations.

Where can people in this area learn how to develop skills that an actor uses. For practice in listening, Authors and Books has a writers night on Saturdays and at other events they have. Check them out. Another great place to practice listening would be a local church during the readings and sermons. For acting there is Warren Players. It is is a great group with which people of all ages can learn. You can start behind the scenes then try out for a small part. As skills develop, the parts can increase to where you are creating characters. Struthers Library Theater has a group of young people in the ARTE which helps younger people develop their skills. The high schools still have productions for young players. ACA has acting classes for youth and adults. There are many opportunities in Warren Co. to learn as an actor. Being on stage is make believe, yet the skills and character formation are not.