



The Official 2023 Actor Survival Guide Vol 4 Part 1

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FYI: Timestamps listed here are not correct, but know that all of the content from the interview is here.

BRIAN: Hey, welcome back to Brian Breaks Character. Now, you may not have been noticing, but we even dropped an episode in a while. And I'm gonna be pretty honest, the strike threw us for a loop over here. Putting out this podcast is expensive. So if I can just say to you thank you for you if you've already reviewed or shared this podcast at any time, that really does mean the world to us because it's a cost and I love putting it out. My producer and I were just talking about how we've been missing being able to record episodes.

So we needed to buckle down and I knew that we still wanted to put out this episode because this is the first part in a two-part series, the actor survival guide. Now this is the fourth volume of us putting out this episode and on this two-part series you're going to hear from some of the greatest coaches out there. Emily Grace, Elise Arsenault, Jo Kelly, Christine Horn, Sam Valentine, Sarah Gaboury, Tony Rossi, Anthony Meindl, Jodie Bentley, Shannon Bills, DaJuan Johnson, and Moniqua Plante, and you know, of course, I've got something to say too. And I'm sure you know those names, that's like the Broadway marquee of the coaches out there who are really working toward helping actors feel grounded in their careers and having great ways to put themselves out there and feel good about their craft and their business. And I can really proudly say, I'm so delighted that you're gonna get to hear from them.

And this is the fourth time we're doing this and we did it a little bit different this time. So we asked these coaches to answer one question. What is a strategy actors can apply when things are just slow? After we're coming through these two strikes, it felt like a question that needs to be addressed. Especially because everyone has ups and downs in their acting career whether or not a strike is going on. And you know that I love an actionable game plan. So I asked each of these coaches not just to share an idea but to really break it down into a strategy so that you have measurable steps that you can take. So these two episodes are like 13 mini master classes right in your ears and don't worry we broke it up into the two episodes so it would not be overwhelming because I want you to take these strategies and use them when you need them and don't worry about taking notes. I've already done that for you. Oh yes I did.

Go to actorsurvivalguide.com and you'll be able to grab the guide where we've outlined all of these coaches' strategies. Again, it's actorsurvivalguide.com. That's one actor because you are one actor. So grab that and you'll be able to really walk away with some of these takeaways and strategies to move through the rest of 2023 and beyond. The roller coaster of an acting career, that's happening whether you are a series regular

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today, if you're in a major network market film tomorrow -ups and downs, this roller coaster is part of the business. And so these coaches really wanted to show up for you in this way. So I think that's it.

CHRISTINE HORN: So the strategy I wanna share for when you have those moments when you feel like you are in a lull, or it's really quiet and your career, you know, may not be quiet for everybody, but for you, it seems to be a little quiet. Well, I'm gonna speak for my truth because I've certainly been there. So first thing I like to do is check in. And what I mean by that is I just like to check in on why it might be slow. So if it's a moment where I'm not booking, I wanna check in, like, what's going on with my headshot? What's going on with me personally? Am I going through some kind of internal crisis or something in my life that has me just showing up into the world different, showing up to my auditions with a different kind of energy? Or is it just a moment where it's just slow in general for my type?

Um, I like to just see, like, check the data and just make sure it's not all in my head. And I, I like to ask myself that. And the important part about what I'm saying is the check-in, in how I am showing up is huge because sometimes we're dealing with trauma, sometimes we're dealing with exhaustion, we're dealing with frustration, sadness, right? Or just in a spirit of I don't feel like doing this right now. And that energy can be showing up into our work. And sometimes it's just slow just because it's gonna be slow for you. And that's no problem. So I then I ask myself and check in, well, what's coming up for me? Do I feel stressed? Do I feel worried about something? Do I feel uncertain? Like, allow myself to feel whatever I'm feeling so that I can then make a plan to address that.

So I don't just fill myself with busy work when indeed, well, what I really need is time for therapy or time for self-care going to, uh, to get a massage or visiting family taking a break. Like, that's important for me to know too. Um, I would say outside of that, the second thing I like to do when I have a lull is, is, uh, to rest and reset. And so what I mean by that is like, I actually just did that. I took a hiatus for like three months just for myself to just decompress. And that means I rested. I did not read books on acting. I did not read books on business. I literally rested. I traveled, I played, I hung out, I went dancing, I ate. And I just enjoy the art of doing nothing. And because I know when it gets busy, it can be so crazy that I wish I had those moments. Lastly, the third thing I would offer anybody is to learn a new skill. And this is if you desire to, I wanna, I wanna go back to number two with the rest and reset. You don't have to do anything, but if you find yourself in a lull and it's quiet and you wanna just stay sharp, learn a new skill, and I wanna be clear, this does not have to be around something creative. It doesn't have to be acting. Maybe this is the time you've been meaning to learn crochet. Maybe you wanna learn how to roller skate or swim or ride a bike. Like this is the time where you can allow yourself to do

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that because you have this time. I like to think of time that as a gift. And any day above ground means I still have work to do and there's a purpose for me. So I'm gonna say, say the same thing to you. Use the time as a gift. Don't stress about it.

Just be intentional in your being here now, being present, loving yourself, caring for yourself because hey, you're all, you got peace.

JODIE BENTLEY: The strategy that I would like to share with you is around fear. Let's be real when there is a lull in your acting career or some more downtime than what you might be used to. I can speak from personal experience and from my client's experience that that brings about fear. Fear that I'll never get auditions again. I'll never book again. Oh God, my agent hates me. Oh wow, that casting director hasn't called me in so long. They must think I'm terrible. All this fear and doubt starts to come to the surface, but guess what? It's inevitable that fear in your career will appear at some point or another. That's just a fact. Now, when that appears, it usually causes stasis, right? And if things are already slow or you're in a lull and all this doubt is happening, then that fear puts you in stasis.

And we don't get time for that <laugh>. We don't. So first of all, I wanna share with you four facts about fear that I want you to know. And one thing that I really want you to do when you're experiencing a slow time in your career, so first of all, fact number one, everyone feels fear. I'm just gonna say that again. Everybody feels fear. You're not special, that you have fear, okay? And sometimes we think, oh God, I'm the only one feeling this way. No, you're not. Everybody feels fear. The only thing that matters is how you react to it in the moment. Which leads me to the second fact about fear. Fear creeps in when you give it the space to. So it makes total sense that when you're experiencing a slower time in your career, that that fear is going to creep in.

So how can you not give it space? Be an action. Stay busy, stay creative. Do something for yourself. Take care of yourself up the self-care, whatever it may be. But if you are inaction, fear doesn't have the time or the space, third fact to know about fear, you gotta move towards it, not away from it. If you move away from the fear, that's when we can start to cycle down. And we've all been there and we know that's not fun. But if you move toward the fear and push into it, that's when um, we can subside the fear or else it will grow and grow and grow and make it much harder to get into action and much easier to retreat. So just know that especially if your MO is to retreat, I know mine can be, it's so important to move toward the fear and push into it than to move away from it.

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We think moving away from it is soothing when it's actually the exact opposite. Fourth fact about fear, you have to stop convincing yourself that you're satisfied. What do I mean by that? We say, oh yeah, I'm afraid, but that's okay. I don't need to do that. Oh, but that's okay. I could find another agent or, but that, that's okay. Um, it's probably just my real, I need to fix that at some point, right? We start convincing ourselves that we're satisfied in the current space that we are in, but the only way to move through that fear. So again, you're letting fear win if we start to become complacent.

So the only way to move through it is to get out of your comfort zone because you have big goals and big dreams that get to be achieved. And that complacency is the killer of those dreams. It really is. And when that fear happens, again, that complacency can, can, um, fall into place and that's what causes that stasis. And just know this success does not exist in your comfort zone. It doesn't. And nothing great was ever achieved. That didn't involve risk and fear. So we get to push through the fear, which is just a concept that your mind created to keep you safe.

Anyway, so here's what I want you to do. In those downtimes or the lulls in your career, brainstorm a list of 50 outside your comfort zone. Actions that you could possibly do for your career or your life. Maybe it's DMing that director you've always admired, calling the production company that you wanna pitch your script to doing standup, telling someone how you really feel, whatever it may be. I want you to brainstorm a list of 50. Yes, 50 outside the box, outside your comfort zone actions, and then do them <laugh>. Choose one a week, two a week. Do them. 'cause you got two choices. You either get out of your comfort zone and you risk and you do things differently to get out of your lull, or you stay in it and you settle. Fear is thinking about all that could go wrong. Instead, I want you to think about all that will go right. Have fun with your brainstorm.

EMILY GRACE: Are you frustrated by one dimensional casting breakdowns and dissatisfying auditions? Maybe it's time to finally write your script already. Let's talk about how to get started. The first step is to develop three dimensional characters who can drive your story forward and that your audience can root for. Here's how to do it in just a few minutes. All major characters have four essential components. An external want a superpower, a fatal flaw, and an inner need. The external want is your character's tangible and measurable goal. They are aware of their goal and they actively pursue it throughout the film. The superpower is the quality that makes your character unique. It separates them from other characters, and it helps them pursue that external want. These first two qualities go hand in hand and they drive the plot forward. The next two qualities are about your character's internal struggle. Starting with the fatal flaw.

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This is the internal quality that prevents your character from getting what they need. It may also block them from getting their external want. Characters are generally not aware of their fatal flaw, just like most of us are not aware of how we get in our own way in real life. And finally, we have the inner need. This is the void within that. When it's filled, we'll make your character whole to get their inner need. Your character must become aware of their fatal flaw and choose to overcome it. So let's see it all together with an example from the Devil Wears Prada. Here is the Character Square for our protagonist Andy, played by Anne Hathaway. Andy's external want is to work a year at Runway Magazine. She knows this is her goal and this is what drives the plot forward, and it's also incredibly measurable.

Will Andy last a year at Runway Magazine is part of the film's central question. Andy's superpower is her determination. She is a fish out of water. A nice Midwestern girl plunged into the judgmental backstabbing world of New York City high fashion. She must find a way to last a year at this high pressure job with impossible standards, and her quality of determination is how she does it. See how her external want and superpower go hand in hand. They also set up the world. This film takes place in, it's not called The Devil Wears the Clearance Rack at the Dollar Store. It's called the Devil Wears Prada, which gives us a number of clues about the world of this story. Then we have Andy's internal struggle. Her fatal flaw is insecurity. She's out of place in this world, and it shows this insecurity is the way, is in the way of Andy's inner need, which is to embrace her authentic self.

Over the course of the film, we see Andy make a deal with the devil who wears Prada by trading in her values one by one to fit into this world. In fact, Andy must decide if she wants to stay at runway permanently, or if she wants to embrace her true self and focus on what she actually cares about. She doesn't last a year at runway, so she fails at her external want, but she does get her inner need, which gives this film a happy ending. So to recap, give your major characters four essential components in external want that is tangible and measurable that your character actively pursues and it drives the plot forward. A superpower that makes them unique and helps them pursue their external want a fatal flaw that they aren't aware of that prevents them from getting what they need. And an inner need, which is the void within that needs to be filled to make them complete.

Your character might not get their external want, but if they get their inner need, it makes their journey to get there worthwhile. Now it's your turn. Create a protagonist using these four components and get started on writing a script that matters to you with a starring role tailor made for your unique strengths.

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Tony Rossi: The strategy I would like to share is gonna sound so stupid easy. It's almost gonna seem like what's the point? But I promise this has been a game changer for me, and that is I want you to be super intentional with the content you consume. I'm not talking about TV or movies or that type of media. I'm gonna put that into a separate category just for the purposes of this conversation. But I want you to be super intentional with consuming content as it relates to whatever area you want to improve in. So very shortly after the last time I was on Brian Breaks Character, where we had the round table episode with all the mindset coaches, I got back to Chicago and I had a pretty traumatic experience. I was at a minor league baseball home run derby, and long story short, I let my guard down and I ended up- trigger warning.

I ended up taking a baseball to the face. And during that time of recovery, I had to consume content for resiliency. On top of that, I was just three months out from running the Chicago Marathon, and I was so looking forward to this. I had never run a marathon up until that point. And so I needed stories of resiliency. So what did I do? I listened to a running podcast and I specifically looked up interviews with Adrian Haslett, who was one of the survivors from the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013. After listening to her stories, my problem didn't seem as big of a deal anymore from this casual, fun experience that resulted in an injury compared to what she went through. And not only did I hear about resiliency, I started to get all of these tips for mental health that I didn't realize that I needed at that time. And yes, that comes as somebody who already does mindset coaching. So when it comes to those challenging times, I want you to think about what area do I need help in the most? And what content can I consume? What book can I pick up or what podcast can I listen to as it relates to the challenge that I'm having?

Now, if this is a general area of stress, I recommend just looking at your general self-help category of whatever podcast app or or section of the bookstore or, or where you go online to get your books these days, whatever that is, that can help you. And then I like books and podcasts because we each have different learning styles. I am a huge audio fan. If you're listening to this, I'm guessing you're an audio fan as well, but I want you to get really intentional with the content you consume so that now you have a strong foundation to stand on because things are gonna get hard. If we're talking about a foundation for a house, there's gonna be wear and tear on the house. So I want you to think about how you can fortify your mental foundation for when times get tough, and during downtimes,

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During periods of lows. That's the time where we really get to focus on this. And my favorite thing about audio is that you can do this while you're doing other things. This doesn't have to be built in time. It can be if you want it to, but it doesn't have to be. So you're already listening to an acting podcast. You're probably already good at doing this anyway for your acting career. Now, I want you to expand this activity you're already doing to also include mindset, stress management, finances, whatever the area is that you most need help with consuming content for that specific area. And if you start doing this and you can already find ways to build this into your routine, will you let me know on Instagram? Shoot me a DMM at Tony dot Rossi. Tony with a Y. Rossi with an I. This is one of my favorite exercises to do, and it really lights me up when I see other people doing it.

SARAH GABOURY: Hello. I am so excited that Brian invited me today to share a strategy for getting unblocked and letting go so you can find more freedom, truth, vulnerability in your work. Um, these exercises are useful to anyone, not just actors. I am an acting coach. I spend a lot of my days deep in technique, right, doing script analysis, building connections, all the juicy nitty gritty, which I love. But here is the thing that a lot of actors forget. Technique alone can only get you so far. My teacher, when I was a young actor, Larry Moss, used to tell us that actors don't get careers for one of three reasons. And I agree. Technical problems, emotional problems are a combination of both. He's so right. And I see that in my work as a coach every day. So in addition to therapy or many of the other wonderful healing practices out there, like breath work, which I'm a big fan of, and I have great recs for that.

If you wanna dm me on Instagram at Real Actors Lab, these I'm gonna share today are practices you can implement right now on your own. I'm gonna share two I share with actors I coach all the time. Everyone benefits whether you're a series regular or working towards your first booking. So I'll begin with my writing prompts for actors, which might seem super simple like you've done it before, but trust me, I cannot tell you how powerful some of these prompts are for actors that I work with. And yes, keep doing your artist's way, style, morning pages if you're doing that. I love it. These prompts can be really helpful for some more targeted unblocking work. Some actors also don't like to write. That's totally fine. You can use these prompts verbally speak, speak out loud in a quiet private space. I wanna direct you to a page on my site, um, where you can access a bigger list of prompts that I often use in in class with actors.

If you go to realactorslab.com/prompts, real r e a l, actors lab.com/p R O m, P T s s, um, you'll find a full list, but I'm gonna give you a few. You can start right now. If you just chest your gut, choose one. Hit pause. Resist the temptation to stay positive no matter what. This is not what this is. This is a truth telling exploration. Don't try to be nice or politically correct. Trust what comes up. Allow yourself to explore. This is just for you. Some

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people like to burn the pages after completing. I love to do that 'cause I don't need it anymore. It's not mine. So take a breath, get yourself present, however you want to. Go ahead and hit pause if you want to breathe. And here we go. Letting go is scary because I like control because I'm afraid of letting go because vulnerability is, as a child, I remember feeling shame when and describe what shame feels like in your body as a prompt.

So those are a couple and you can head to the, to the link to get the rest of them. Do your prompt every day, either with a new one or the same. Stick with it as you're working through some stuff. A lot of you want to know what prompt you need. How are you gonna know, um, trust your gut. But let me give you an example. Where do you feel blocked? Right? Ask yourself, where do you feel blocked in your work? Um, I coach a wonderful actor who is having a hard time with confrontation in a scene. And she said she felt like too mean to challenge in this moment, but the scene called for her to stand up to her boyfriend who had betrayed her in this moment. So she shared that in her personal life, she wants everyone to like her and she rarely stands up for herself or feels comfortable standing up for herself. She feels mean. So we came up with some daily writing prompts to explore that phrases like, I have to be a good girl because standing up for myself is if people don't like me then, right? And that really helped her kind of get underneath some of the stuff that was going on.

The second exercise is a daily practice video, which is incredibly helpful for getting in your body and connected to your impulses and out of your head. You can go to realactorslab.com/express for the 25 minute video. Um, it's fantastic to use as a warmup for before you film to help you release the work. But you could think of this exercise like a ballet dancer's bar work. It's gonna give you the foundation you need to begin. I hope you found these helpful. Please reach out to me. Let me know what lands, what works. If you have any questions, you can connect with me on Instagram or via email. I hope. I hope you all find this incredibly useful. Sending a hug.

BRIAN:

Whoa, I don't know about you, but my little inspiration wings are fluttering. Aren't they just, these people are awesome. I'm incredibly lucky, blessed, and grateful to have them on this podcast and to just be on the planet with them at the same time and also with you. So I hope that some of these things have got your wheels turning. And like I said, I know there's a lot of takeaways here, which is why we split it into two episodes. So you can just keep on letting the podcast roll if you're already ready to jump into part two.

You're gonna hear from Elise Arsenault, Jo Kelly, Sam Valentine, Anthony Meindl, Shannon Bills, DaJuan Johnson, and little ol' me. And don't forget to grab that download. Like, listening to this podcast is one thing, but taking action and making this something tangible in your life, that's why it's a tangible download. Go to



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actorsurvivalguide.com and grab your copy. Again, that's www.actorsurvivalguide.com, and you'll get the breakdown of all these strategies.

All right, thank you so much for listening. If you know an actor who could use some support before you jump into episode number two, click that share button on your phone, send them a text message with this link to this episode. I know that there are actors who, in those slow times, it can feel pretty rough, and a little love from you could make all the difference. All right, I'll see you over in episode two. Let's do it.