

Michael Chekhov

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THE OBJECTIVE
GROUP FEELING
FEELING OF EASE

THE OBJECTIVE:

We shall start today with the objective. You will remember that the objective is the will line, as it were, of the character - what the character desires or wishes, that is what we call the objective. But there are two ways to take the objective - one way is intellectually - we understand immediately what the character desires. This way we deny because everything which we have from our intellect does not help us to act. So when we take the objective, we try to take it with our whole being - with our will which is in our hands, arms, torsos, etc., and not here in the head where we have no will.

Please take the objective with your whole being. First of all, it will be a very simple objective which we can describe each for himself: "I want to leave this room," but the condition is that nobody will notice your leaving the room. Each objective can have different conditions, as you know, and can be produced in different atmospheres. Try to take the condition and do everything you can to leave the room so that nobody even guesses what your idea is. Leave the room through either door. Take the objective with your whole being - that means that the legs, torso, arms, and hands must desire to go out of the room. The whole being must get this desire to

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leave the room. Always try to be aware of the fact that your whole body, your whole being is filled with the desire to leave the room.

We have done this exercise not as a group - each of you was free to go out of the room just as you wanted. Now we will do another thing - we will take the objective as a group, in a small scene. The moment when we act together on the stage we become a group. We depend on each other and are not free. Therefore, to be able to help and not disturb one another, we must develop a certain kind of sensitiveness which we call group feeling. That means that everybody is somehow "open" to all other partners. When one of us acts on the stage, his acting must be understood by all the partners as a suggestion for us to act in the same way. Everyone must have such an "open psychology" towards his partner, to receive the suggestions and to act in accordance with them.

GROUP FEELING:

Before we do the exercise of taking the objective as a group, will you please exercise group feeling. The simplest way to get this group feeling is to produce an invisible psychological gesture - that of opening your being to everybody who is in the group. You must open your soul - make a psychological effort to open your being so that everyone is invited into your soul. Bravely open your being for your partners, so you will establish psychological contact.

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When you get this feeling of being open, you will immediately appreciate all the outer means which allow us to establish contact by looking at each other. When your soul is open, it means much more for the actor than when the soul is not open. We so often see actors on the stage trying to establish contact by looking at each other, but it gives nothing to them or to the audience. First open your souls as though you were people in love - if they touch hands, it means much because their souls are in contact.

It is unavoidable when you are trying to make a purely psychological effort that the body tries to help, but becomes very stiff. Discard this stiffness of the body - free bodies and free open souls.

Now will you please try to touch hands. You will see how much more you have established your psychological contact. This simple thing of touching hands is already acting. Imagine if you are really acting, how important it can be if the soul is open. The psychological gesture of opening your soul makes it possible to be significant on the stage. Two people who are in love are always significant.

Keep this group feeling and do the following exercise: You will do the things I give you but will choose the order in which you do them out of group feeling:

1. You have to sit quietly.
2. You have to walk about.
3. You have to run.

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4. You have to speak.
5. You have to laugh.
6. You have to fall on the ground.
7. You have to get up.

Now, having this fine feeling through the group, will you guess each time which "business" the spirit of the group requires at the moment. Do not give any signs but rely on the group feeling, and you will find what the group desires.

Keeping this group feeling, I will give you the theme for a sketch. Try^{to} act it, to improvise, relying on the group feeling. I will give you an objective. We will take the theme which we have used before: A group of fishermen and their wives are waiting for the other fishermen of the village who are at sea. It is stormy, and perhaps the men have been lost at sea. You have been waiting the whole night through, you are tired, exhausted, almost hopeless. You look and look at the horizon and see nothing. Now it is dawn, the storm rages. Gradually you notice a sail which is coming nearer and nearer. In the boat is lying one fisherman, apparently dead, and another who is alive. You get the objective to help the boat to shore, you throw ropes. When the fisherman and his dead friend are brought to shore, the sketch is ended.

The exercise is based on two things: group feeling and the objective. As it is a group exercise, the objective should be expressed as "We want to help." The action must be

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harmonious because of group feeling - what one does means everything for the others. It must be done in three minutes.

FEELING OF EASE

To feel oneself freer and freer on the stage, we must develop our psychological flexibility and also our bodies in many ways. One way is to develop the feeling of ease for our soul and for our body. The easier our bodies are the more flexible they are, and the more they are at our disposal. Let us exercise the feeling of ease. Although this exercise is done for the sake of our body, it is a psychological exercise. First of all, you must have the desire to have a light, easy body. Decide to be light and easy and do it as strongly as you can. Now move your hands up and down so that you feel there is no weight at all in your body.

First, lift your hands up and down. Kneel down and get up. Will you please increase the desire to get lighter and lighter. Try to lose the weight of your body entirely. It must absolutely be a light thing. Lie down and get up without any noise - lightly and easily. Jump forward and then lie down - without weight.

Now concentrate only on the desire to get your body light and easy. Let us do the exercise of fighting without muscles. You must give the impression that the fight is very strong, but you must not use muscles. Feeling of ease. When

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I stop you, find the inner impulse to be as easy as possible.
Now quicker and with more temperament. Wild movements, but
light and easy.

Now we have exercised the objective, group feeling,
and feeling of ease.