

Acting: The Active Process by Tom McNally

Now his purpose statement involves Rosemary in the scene. He stays. He is forced to study Rosemary, look at her, to see if he's winning or losing his own purpose, and the scene. Below are examples of this process from several different plays.

PURPOSE STATEMENT CHART

Play	Part	Purpose Statement	Key Line(s)
Picnic	Rosemary	Persuading Howard to propose marriage	"Marry me, Howard, marry me."
Picnic	Howard	Maintain the status quo relationship	"Are you all right now, Honey?"
Death of a Salesman	Willy	Convincing the boss to let me work in town	"I'd rather not travel anymore."
Death of a Salesman	Howard	Finalizing Willy's employment	"I don't want you to represent us."
Oleanna	Carol	Forcing the professor to apologize	"We have a statement which we need you to . . . sign."
Oleanna	John	Persuading Carol to drop her charges	"It was devoid of sexual content." "Don't you have any feelings?"
The Rose Tattoo	Jack	Keeping his promise to Rosa's mother	"I almost forgot my promise. Almost but not quite."
The Rose Tattoo	Rosa	Seducing Jack	"Forget the promise."

Please Notice: each purpose statement contains an active verb!

Now apply the four parts: Play, Part, Purpose Statement, and Key Line(s) to your scene. Be sure you prepare this exercise with your partner. Remember, the purpose statements should clash. After all, plays are about conflict, not harmony.

Dream Endings:

Now that you have pinpointed the purpose statement for your scene, here is an exciting improvisation that will bring the purpose to life - and make it fun!

No one pursues a goal unless it can bring something positive. Even if your purpose statement sounds negative, like Hamlet's "I must avenge my father's murder," it still possesses a positive end for THAT character.

You and your partner are to now prepare and improvise DREAM ENDINGS for your character. Naturally, there will be two different endings.

DREAM ENDINGS are to demonstrate your full understanding of what these characters want if they could get their own way. Each one will get to play his or her dream ending for the scene.

Example: In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the scene in which Mitch and Blanche are on their first date. Blanche's purpose statement is to entice Mitch's interest and sympathy so he will propose. One Dream Ending Improvisation might be as follows:

Mitch arrives at the door and knocks. Blanche finishes up the last touches to her make up and spraying perfume all over herself. She calls, "Mitch, Honey," for him to enter. He comes in dressed up and full of anticipation. Blanche stops him and says, "Didn't you forget something?" Mitch rushes off stage and returns carrying a large bouquet of flowers. He makes a shy speech and hands her the flowers. She asks, "What else, Honey?" Mitch charges off stage. Soon he arrives with a small pillow and large book with Blanche's Favorite Poems" in huge writing on the cover. He kneels on the pillow and passionately reads a love poem.

Blanche gently kisses Mitch, thanks him, then quietly urges "Don't you have one more thing for me?"

Mitch exits and re-enters carrying a ring. On bended knee and in loving words, he begs her to marry him.

Wow! Blanche got more than just her purpose statement. She got all her wildest dreams fulfilled.

Now do one for Mitch. Use as many props as you want.

Dream Endings are the last game you will play in which there is no obstacle. Later on, when doing your scene, when you find that it becomes dull or negative, replay the dream ending in your mind and you will see that your energy and your love of acting return in full force.

Asking questions:

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your occupation?
4. Right now, more than anything else in the world, what do you want?

5. What's in your way?
6. What are some things you are doing to get what you want?
7. What is your economic background?
8. What is your family background?
9. What is your relationship to each member of your family?
10. What is your educational background? (be specific)
11. How is your love life? (if it applies)
12. What are your general political views?
13. What is your religious background?
14. What is your ethnic background?
15. How is your health?
16. Do you have, or have you had, any addictions?
17. Up to this moment, do you consider your life an overall success or failure?
18. Based on your past life, what are your present emotional needs?
19. What is the physical trait you most like about yourself?
20. What is the physical trait you least like about your self?
21. How independent do you consider yourself?
22. How dependent do you consider yourself?
23. What do you look like? How do you dress?
24. From what part of the country/world do you come? City? Suburbs?
Country?
25. Do you have many close friends? Just a few?
26. Do you consider yourself witty? Dull?
27. Do you consider yourself a "physical" person?
28. How did the era in which you grew up influence you?
29. Who was the greatest influence in your life? Why?
30. (This question is for you.) How am I, as an actor or actress like this person? How am I unlike this person?

You now have thirty answers which will influence the way you approach the role. Some may not appear important or necessary right away. Save them anyway. As time goes on, you'll discover every detail holds you in good stead.