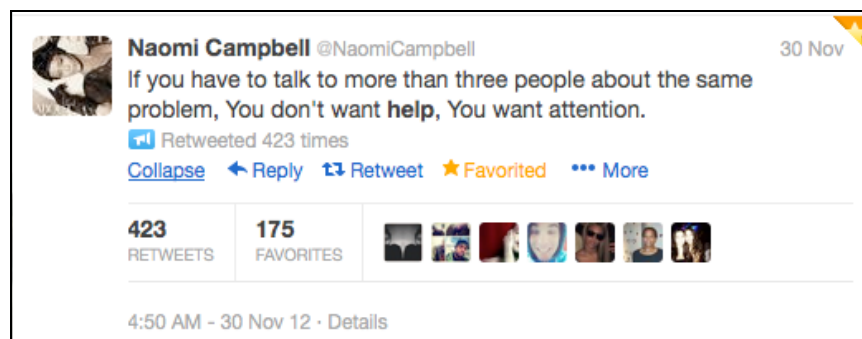


## When You've Tried EVERYTHING

Let's start with a question. The answer should be easy—but for some, maybe not so much. Ready?

### Do you want to be RIGHT or do you want to be CAST?

So many actors "fight for limitations." They feel the need to explain, to justify, to defend, rather than choosing instead to surrender the need to be right, to let growth be the goal, to move forward... finally. Of course, I mentioned the Naomi Campbell tweet in the MP3, but here it is again:



Did you do the homework from the MP3? Did you add "until now" to your vocabulary—especially when engaging in negative self-talk? Did you write on your mirror with a grease pencil? Did you refuse to stay mired in "What Is" and allow yourself to play in the brainspace of "What If"? Did you eliminate conversations with Negative Nellies and Complainsy Janeys? Did you open your mind to approaching your attitude about your career differently?

Be honest with yourself. I'm not looking over your PDF workbook with you. I'm not asking you to report in. I'm asking you to look in that mirror of yours, engage yourself fully, take a breath, and be honest about whether you did any of the above in the time since you listened to the MP3.

If you did, good. You should already be feeling a shift and these exercises should be more a formality than hard work. When you develop questions for the interactive Q&A MP3 for this month's module, you should already be feeling more optimistic about where you are and simply be asking for clarification on specifics, rather than being overwhelmed by what you feel is a hopeless situation.

If you didn't, well, I'd like to ask you to stop reading this PDF workbook right now and write down—longhand—why. Why couldn't you be bothered with adding two little words to your vocab? Why did you refuse to write on your mirror or even put up a Post-It note? Why did you continue to celebrate any poison that's in your life by talking about it for hours on end? If you're filled with reasons "nothing

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works," consider that you're arguing for your limitations. You're begging to keep them around. You're so stuck in your STORY that you refuse to consider rewriting the next chapter.

Think about that. You've chosen a creative career—one in which you crave taking on roles that force you outside your comfort zone, one in which you thrive on creating worlds that didn't exist before—yet you refuse to take steps toward thinking more creatively about your business as an actor.

Wow. Steven Pressfield would call that Resistance. I would call that Actor Darwinism. You're guaranteeing you won't be able to reach your next tier, just by refusing to open your mind beyond your current story.

Journal about the WHY, here. Why are you attached to "the way it is" and talking about how "they" won't let you reach your next tier? My suspicion is it has more to do with fear of success—and the need to be right—more than anything else. But, analysis beyond that, on my part, is outside the scope of **SMFA Essentials**. So, now's your chance to get honest with yourself about your blocks. If you didn't fully embrace the exercises in the MP3, write about that here. If you did your homework and are already feeling a shift in your relationship with your career (Yay, you!), use this space to write about how awesome you are.

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If problem-sharing is your drug of choice, honor yourself enough to put yourself in detox from it. Refuse to engage in grousing. Even if you're sure it's not that big a deal, consider that if *\*that\** is the ONE THING standing between you and the career you've always dreamed of having, that fucking figuring out how to STOP engaging in your addiction to your blocks will change your life forever.

Start looking at the blocks that absolutely do exist in a creative career as awesome opportunities to get even more creative about how you're gonna "make it." Get excited for the chance to discover a way to get to the next tier that's unlike the way anyone else ever got there. Just like when a hero in a story gets in a bind and sees no way out, and then comes up with the brilliant, never-before-attempted angle, causing the audience to cheer, start approaching your career blocks from a space of appreciation for the discovery you're about to make about HOW to make that block your bitch.

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## Good News

One of the things we do in all of our *Self-Management for Actors* classes is celebrate **Good News**. We go around the room, or post on the private forums, to share our latest accomplishments—I got put on avail; I worked through an amazing scene in class; I got great feedback at a CD workshop; I updated my reel; I designed a postcard for a mailing; I spent ten hours down the rabbit hole at IMDb-Pro researching my targets and updating my Show Bible with info flowing in from my Google Alerts; I attended a networking event and it didn't feel skeevy; I submitted on three really great projects at Actors Access; I shot a student film; I got an agent meeting—and celebrate with one another.

Wait.

Yeah, if you're not already down with this, you may go through that list and give me reasons these items don't qualify as **Good News**: "but you didn't book; so what, it's just class; but did you get called in; no one watches reels anyway; mailings don't work; how does all that research GET you anything; what results are coming from having spent those hours trying to find anyone worth talking to; submitting isn't the same as getting called in; it's just a stupid student film; they didn't offer to sign you." And to that, I'll say, sure. If you want to find a way to "but" your way out of your next tier, you're an expert, with that kind of thinking.

And if you haven't already realized that this is a mindset module, let's make it über clear now. :) Getting put on avail is a huge win. Thousands of others weren't put on avail. Doing hours of research on your targets WILL pay off when you have that amazing meeting you've been strategizing for months. That stupid student film could have tomorrow's Oscar-winning DP, who would love to work with you on his next big project. Moving your career forward is always a good thing. Someone else out there isn't. Good. Let the *slactors* have their free time. You've got a business to run. And that's not glamorous... but getting on set sooner, and at a higher pay rate, IS. If you fail to celebrate the **Good News** that \*is\* every step in the right direction, that's like saying the gals who didn't win the Emmy that year should give up.

What's your **Good News**? What \*is\* working? Let's look at how far you're getting, not how you fell short of the finish line. Speed-write through this exercise, so that your inner critic doesn't have time to join in the fun. The finish line comes faster when you celebrate making it closer every race. Go!

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Make it a daily practice to celebrate **Good News**. Do it with others. Use **Good News** as the "stopper" for your negative self-talk (should you still have any, at this point). Instead of counting sheep when you can't fall asleep, list **Good News**. List what's working. Make it a ritual to think about things you rock, stuff you're great at, anything you nail in a way that no one else ever could. Whatever you do, do NOT use this as a launching point for a shame spiral of "then *whyyyyyyyyy* won't anyone \*cast\* me?????????" or any other such bullshit. (Use your UNTIL NOW tool to fight it, if you can't help yourself.)

### Why I Can't Reach the Next Tier

Yup. I'm gonna let you wallow. After all that, I'm gonna give you space to lay it all out. How is it that "they" are keeping you from having the career of your dreams? What is it you've tried (remember, you're sure you've tried EVERYTHING) and why hasn't it worked? Let's get very specific about all you find \*wrong\* with this business and all its rules and exceptions and lack of fairness. Getting this out of the way is going to be huge!

<u>What I've Tried</u>	<u>Why It Won't Work</u>

I've only provided eight blanks because I want you to go with the biggies... and you can always print out this page again, if you need more.

I hope doing this task filled you with some anxiety, and I hope you hated that feeling. I hope that because I want you to have a buttload of joy when you start to feel a sense of ease about any of these—even just one of 'em—when we do this next bit of work.

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This time, lovelies, I want you to consider what—in that second column—might actually be the case. Here's one. Let's say you've tried creating your own content, and in the first table, you said it won't work because no one picked it up for distribution. In the second table, let's try, "I uploaded it to YouTube, thinking exposure would be good, when exclusivity would've given me the opportunity to submit it to a high-end festival or sell it to Netflix or Virgin Originals."

Do you see the difference? Here's another one. You've submitted on hundreds of projects, and in the first table, you said no one will call you in. In the second table, let's try, "By submitting on everything, I've not defined a brand, but instead taught the buyers I want to be in something—anything—without any sort of discrimination or selectivity involved."

Hopefully, that second pass—even though still focused on what's NOT working—begins to give you space for considering there's another approach for even the exact same things you've already tried. "CD workshops don't work." Okay. Um, sure they do. For somebody! A smart actor who is targeting workshops rather than hitting all of them, who is only going in on ones where their bullseye lines up perfectly and their copious research on the buyer has shown they *\*will\** be intersecting with someone who needs to know they exist *\*will\** begin a relationship at a workshop... and there WILL be a payoff to that, down the line.

Okay, now you. Go!

What I've Tried	Why "It Won't Work" Might Be Bullshit

Now, I'm not expecting you to come up with your own ninja strategy on every single item, all at once! What I am expecting you to do is start the process of considering the *possibility* that there is another

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way to look at the work you've already done and that there may be another approach in your future. And with different results. How 'bout that?!?

Don't start with the grisliest, grossest, most painful of your items FIRST. That's just crazymaking. Start building your muscle for success with this stuff by beginning with an "easier" one. "I submitted to all the agents in my market and didn't get a single meeting." Great. The bullshit line may have been, "mailings don't work." The new story becomes, "a targeted mailing to select representatives who—research shows—line up with my next booking helps those folks get me as a brand, helps those folks understand what I bullseye, and even if I don't get a meeting right away, their awareness of who I am and what I do will pay off when we \*do\* connect down the line." If that feels easier than tackling one of the other items on your list, start there. Give yourself a chance to succeed at this by building up your strength for the paradigm shift.

And every time you feel yourself heading back into the world of that overdeveloped, Popeye-sized muscle for how it won't work, it never works, and all that mess, tack on "UNTIL NOW." If \*that\* doesn't do it for you, you've gotta decide:

### **Do I want to be RIGHT or do I want to be CAST?**

Because unless you're psychic (And if you are, what the heck are you doing, here?), you can't possibly know that a paradigm shift on all this \*isn't\* the difference between you feeling powerless and you hitting that next tier.

No more layering on "stories" that are only true in your mind. There's no such thing as, "It's slow." Nope. Someone is getting cast every day. Might as well be you. There's no such thing as, "They hate me in that office." Nope. If they see dollar signs, they're bringing you in. It's time to get very specific about what's within your control, what's worth celebrating about what \*is\* happening in your career, and why coming at the same issues differently may be the only thing standing in your way.

I don't wanna see frustrated, burned out, bitter actors who feel this business has done 'em wrong. This business is exactly as advertised—it doesn't owe any of us anything. It's tough, it's not based in fairness, and it's ridiculously rewarding for those with the talent, stamina, patience, and attitude to outlast the rest.

No matter how good you get at working through all of this, there will be days when you're sure it's all just too hard. The sacrifices you've made will feel just too massive, and your heart will tell you it's time to call it DONE, rather than soldiering on. Hey... that's okay! Better to choose happiness than heartbreak, always! And once this business starts to break you, please leave it behind, so that you can reflect on your time engaged in the pursuit with fondness for having had a go at it.

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As I always say, "get down with the pursuit." In this business, you're going to be pursuing work a hell of a lot more than being paid to be on set, engaged in blissful storytelling. Can you love this business—even with all its flaws? If the answer is no, and if you will always hate some aspects of this business, please consider whether you find it worth staying in a relationship with a partner (this business) that you detest. Worth it? Hell. Is it even remotely healthy to do such a thing to yourself? Absolutely not.

So, let's get healthy. Let's stay healthy. Let's start with our language about this business and all its mysteries. And let's detach from any story that isn't serving us. Let's start right now!

All right, beautiful ones, that's it for this awesome PDF. As always, please submit your questions for our follow-up MP3 immediately, so we can get you covered before we wrap up this month's interactive module! We're excited to hear what questions you may have about what you've tried that simply hasn't worked, so we can suggest a new perspective that will give you an edge. Send your email to: [ninjaassistant@cricketfeet.com](mailto:ninjaassistant@cricketfeet.com) with the subject line: **SMFA Essentials Question**, so we can easily get you in the queue to help out with your questions, before we head into next month's awesome interactive *SMFA Essentials* module. Yay!

I really hope you're feeling stronger and more badass every day, my ninjas! Next month's interactive module is called **Financial Freedom**, and it's filled with badassery. Is your relationship with money one of torture or one of ease? Does the very TOPIC of money make your skin crawl? Oy, is this the module for you! Creatives have the edge when it comes to leveraging the most audacious and FUN "survival jobs" out there. Flip your relationship with the almighty dollar, so you're free to create without anxiety! Freedom is power. Let's do this, beautiful people. :)

We are ridiculously lucky to have a life in which we get to live our dreams, every day. Being blissed out, confident, and absolutely capable of achieving your every goal along the way is totally do-able. Unless you're SURE it's impossible, folks, every little dream you hear whispering to you is absolutely, totally attainable. The *Self-Management for Actors* principles **work**. Ninja badassery abounds. **Bonnie Gillespie is living her dreams by helping others figure out how to live theirs.** She casts SAG-AFTRA indie feature films and series such as the zombie smash hit *BITE ME*, which made the leap from web to TV with **Lionsgate** in 2012. Bonnie is founder and producer of Hollywood Happy Hour, Somebody's Basement, and Get A-Listed. Her weekly column, **The Actors Voice**, runs at Actors Access and her podcast, **The Work**, is available on iTunes. Her books include *Casting Qs: A Collection of Casting Director Interviews*, *Acting Qs: Conversations with Working Actors*, *SMFA: The Ninja Within*, and *Self-Management for Actors: Getting Down to (Show) Business*, which has been named one of **The Top Ten Best Books on Acting Ever Written** and featured at the Tom Cruise actor resource blog. Bonnie regularly facilitates seminars based on this top-selling book and has traveled internationally—to demystify the casting process and the business side of pursuing an artistic career—as a guest instructor at colleges, universities, actors' unions, and private acting studios. Bonnie has been interviewed on *Good Morning America*, *BBC Breakfast*, UTV-Ireland, ARD-1 Germany, *Sunrise* Australia, CBC Radio One, BBC Radio 5, E! Online, and in the *LA Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. To hop on Bonnie's mailing list, please visit [BonnieGillespie.com](#).



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