



association of acting
coaches & educators



A Guide for Acting Coaches & Educators working with **Performers**

Authored by the Association of Acting Coaches and Educators (AAACE)

Introduction

What is this Guide?

It is a resource for Acting Coaches and Educators to set up and maintain a respectful learning environment that helps everyone – teachers, coaches, students and clients – to focus on their craft without fear of humiliation, harassment, discrimination and bullying. A respectful learning environment allows for positive and constructive feedback, providing support for the learner, and giving confidence to the educator or coach in their approach and methodology. It allows everyone to bring their best and be their best, to learn and to thrive.

This Guide is also designed to help Acting Coaches and Educators implement the goals and commitments set out in *The Code of Conduct for Acting Coaches and Educators*. Adherence to *The Code* represents a commitment to foster a respectful learning culture of consent-based interactions that prevent harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence. Acting Coaches and Educators who agree to the Code are expected to develop policies and practices in accordance with the Code.

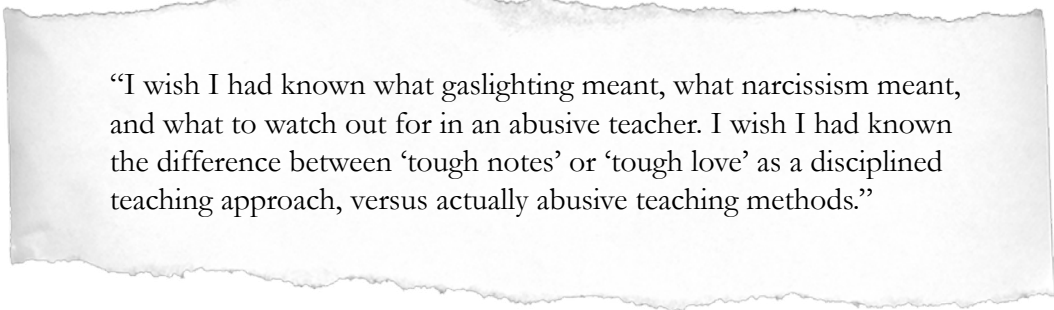
Why do we need this Guide?

In the last few years, #MeToo has allowed people to share their stories and experiences of harassment and bullying in the stage and screen industry. The silence was broken on what went on behind the casting doors without consent; in hotel rooms, backstage, in classrooms, studios and in one-on-one coaching sessions. The industry responded with a [Code of Conduct](#), workplace training, policies and procedures. Reporting mechanisms and counselling services were put in place. Remedial and discipline procedures revised. There is still much to do. For the acting schools, programs and coaches, putting in place the policies and support systems may be challenging, particularly outside of a larger institutional environment. That's where this Guide can help.

Who is the Guide for?

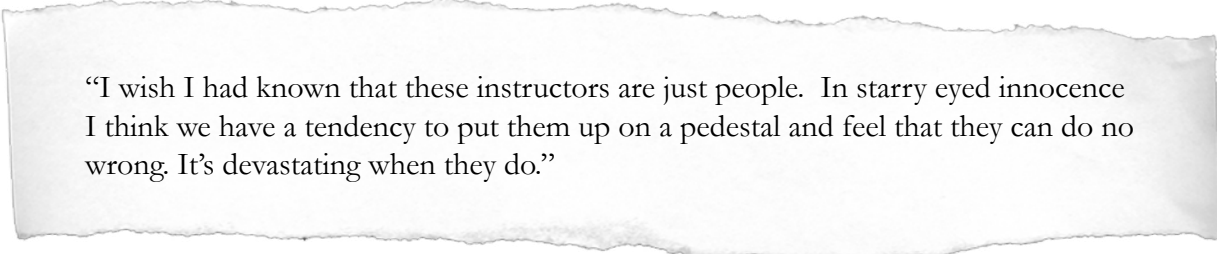
This is a Guide for Acting Coaches and Educators as well as a Guide for students and performers.

If you are an Acting Coach or Educator, there are tips and best practices in this Guide to help you set up a learning environment and guard against behaviour that can be a barrier to learning.



“I wish I had known what gaslighting meant, what narcissism meant, and what to watch out for in an abusive teacher. I wish I had known the difference between ‘tough notes’ or ‘tough love’ as a disciplined teaching approach, versus actually abusive teaching methods.”

If you are a student or performer looking for an Acting Coach or Educator, reading this Guide will help you to know what to expect, what is okay and what is not okay. It can help you make informed choices when seeking acting classes, coaching sessions or assistance with audition self-tapes, by giving you a better understanding of what is expected of a quality educator.



“I wish I had known that these instructors are just people. In starry eyed innocence I think we have a tendency to put them up on a pedestal and feel that they can do no wrong. It’s devastating when they do.”

There is a lot of information in this Guide. Information is power. Sharing the words and voices of the performers, coaches and educators who have contributed to this Guide is intended to help correct the imbalance, to share the “power” in a learning environment. Teachers and coaches have power, but so must the students and performers to speak up, to express what they need and how they feel. Both need trust and respect – power together - to achieve growth and learning.

When should this Guide be used?

Like all good resources, we hope you will refer to this Guide frequently.

Acting Coaches and Educators may want to read the Guide or refer to sections of it when setting up curriculum and communicating to students and clients what to expect from a course or through a coaching session. There are best practices and “red flags” that you may want to check regularly as you reflect on your own feelings and the feedback you receive from students and performers.

Students and performers, use this Guide when you are looking for an Acting Coach or Educator, or are currently taking a course or working with a coach. Check the references for the educator and coach against the expectations and experiences you will read in this Guide.

Where can we go for more information and support?

Whether you are an Acting Coach, Educator, student or performer in a coaching or audition environment, this Guide is a reminder that you are not alone. If something doesn’t feel right for you, it likely doesn’t feel right for others. If you feel you need more information, there are resources for you. Check out the Resource page and follow the links. And, if you find other sources and sites that you think would be helpful, let us know.

How was this Guide developed?

In the fall of 2020, a group of educators, coaches, performers, agents and casting directors met to discuss what could be done to establish clear expectations and accountability for Acting Educators and Coaches. It was not the first time for this conversation.

Since 2017, [Got Your Back \(GYB\)](#), has been leading efforts to establish standards and guidelines for acting teachers and coaches. **Got Your Back**, was an initiative started by Thalia Gonzalez Kane and Martha Burns to create opportunities for people in theatre, film and television to come together in a safe place to learn from each other. In 2018, GYB members Jennifer Wigmore and Neil Silcox along with Sarah Robbins conducted a [National Acting Training Survey](#) with over 500 educators and students. Their findings led to the first *Actors Educators Conference* in 2019, where participants engaged in discussions and workshops to gain practical skills, share experiences and insights. Recommendations from the conference included setting up an Association to provide oversight, guidance and resources for Acting Coaches and Educators.

The Association of Acting Coaches and Educators (AACE) is in its early stages of development. The Code of Conduct and Guide are living documents. We are deeply appreciative of the educators, coaches, performers, agents and casting directors who have worked on the Code and Guide and who will be taking the next steps to promote and distribute these resources.

To offer feedback on the Code and Guide please contact - aacesteemgcommittee@gmail.com
We encourage all Educators and Coaches who would like to become signatories to the Code of Conduct to contact aacesteeringcommoittee@gmail.com.

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What makes a great Acting Coach or Educator?

A great educator or coach can help an actor explore and improve their acting and voice technique by helping them:

- Work on a specific role or audition
- Hone their craft through scene study
- Challenge themselves to identify areas needing improvement
- Gain confidence and experience performing in front of others and/or in front of a camera
- Develop communication skills to work with other actors and directors
- Develop a specific skill related to voice work, dialects, singing, dancing, and movement work

We asked performers what they would say to someone looking for an Acting Coach or Educator.

Here is what they said:

- **“Look for someone who you can communicate with comfortably.** Just because somebody is known for training/coaching named actors - doesn't mean they are right for you. When you meet them, are they asking you questions or are they just talking about themselves? Are they interested in your development, or are they just teaching you their theories of acting? If you feel a hint of superiority or they are resistant to your questions - walk!”
- **“Look at how other actors behave around them or talk about them.** Red flags should be raised anytime it appears that the acting coach has collected a tribe of devotees to teach; meaning, actors who don't study anywhere else or who embrace the coach's pedagogy with unwavering commitment. I'm not suggesting actors have to study under a bevy of teachers to be a good actor— some actors don't train at all— but healthy skepticism about any coaching or teaching we receive is, well, healthy! Any teacher who refuses to allow some measure of criticism or skepticism is a no-go.”
- **“No one should have assumed credibility just because they put their name on letterhead or had enough money to bankroll a workspace and some camera equipment.** Being an acting coach means guiding people through vulnerability publicly at their pace. It requires patience and generosity, all of which students pay for when they pay for the acting coach's class/time. I want to know that my acting coach doesn't subscribe to potentially harmful ideologies like the idea that 'anything goes in art' or that 'personal boundaries are an affront to creativity.’
- **“Look for someone with plenty of experience as an actor themselves OR a teaching background (degree/diploma) and references.** Ask: What is their background or education? Who did they study with? Do they have testimonials from other students? Are their clients and students specific about how they worked and most importantly, did they inspire confidence? What do agents, managers, casting directors, etc... have to say about this person? What have they achieved themselves as an artist? What is their motivation for teaching? What's their philosophy on acting, for stage or screen? How do they feel about intimacy coordination or consent?”

The Code of Conduct for Acting Coaches and Educators

Signing on to *The Code of Conduct for Acting Coaches and Educators* is a commitment to building a safe and respectful learning environment, where interactions are consent-based, and free of harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence.

The principles espoused in this Code are applicable to all learning environments. These can include, but are not limited to, classroom settings, acting studios, auditions and self-tape sessions, performance venues, virtual online coaching and teaching sessions.

We believe that every performer and student should expect the following:

1. A safe learning environment where all students and performers can thrive;
2. To have the anti-harassment, discrimination and violence policies and procedures clearly communicated to them before or on the first day of classes, and followed for the duration of the course;
3. For Educators to have course curriculum that includes or incorporates aspects of anti-harassment training and education;
4. The ability to set personal boundaries and engage in consent-based interactions;
5. An educator that adheres to industry best practices when including content where physical contact or scenes of nudity, intimacy or violence may be included;
6. An educator who is mindful of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and builds this into their teaching;
7. Resources for counselling and support when needed.

In support of the above expectations, we as Acting Coaches and Educators commit to:

- Enacting policies, procedures and education programs to maintain zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence;
- Identifying a timely process to receive, respond and resolve complaints, and provide resources to counselling and support services where necessary;
- Being respectful, accountable and honest, and upholding this Code to the best of our ability.

The Code of Conduct is a set of voluntary commitments developed by the association for Acting Coaches and Educators representing performers and workers in the entertainment industry. Each Acting Coach or Educator who is signatory to this Code is solely responsible for upholding their commitments under the Code and their obligations under the law.

We are in the process of setting up an association for Acting Coaches and Educators (AACE). This association will help to develop templates and resources, particularly for independent coaches. Organizations or individuals interested should email their interest to AACEsteeringcommittee@gmail.com to be contacted at a later date.

Signatories, once approved, will be listed on the **Association for Acting Coaches and Educators** website (coming soon), along with partner organizations such as [ACTRA Toronto](#), [TAMAC](#), [CDSC](#), [CWB](#), [Got Your Back](#) etc.

How to Implement The Code

Step One: Enact Anti-Harassment Policies and Procedures

Under Human Rights legislation, individuals are protected from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of age, ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, record of offences, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

Harassment can take many forms including unwanted sexual attention, inappropriate jokes or texts, threats, and other unwelcome verbal, written, visual or physical communication or conduct. It can also involve unwelcome words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating or demeaning. It can also include behaviour that intimidates, isolates or even discriminates against the targeted individual(s).

Part of your responsibility as an Acting Coach or Educator is to enact Anti-Harassment Policies and Procedures to guide expectations and foster a safe and positive environment for all.

Regardless of if you are working for an institution or independently, your policy and procedures should include:

- Your commitment to the Code of Conduct and a respectful learning culture of consent-based interactions that prevent harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence.
- Your expectation that everyone in the learning environment is responsible for maintaining a respectful workplace where interactions must be consent-based and harassment, discrimination, bullying and violence will not be tolerated.

For Instructors working for an Institution or Studio:

- Familiarize yourself with the school's policies, student codes of conduct, and procedures:
 - [Canadian Training Institution Policies](#)
 - [Canadian Theatre and Union Harassment Policies & Codes of Conduct](#)
- There should be protections against discrimination and harassment, and a mechanism for bringing forward complaints.
- Know where to refer students when a problem arises

For Independent Acting Coaches or Educators:

- Work to develop your own policies and procedures for your individual practice.
- You may consider adapting an existing policy from a larger institution for your own practise.

“In the times that I have worked with various teachers and coaches over the years - if they behaved unprofessionally - there wasn't really anyone to report them to, and they seemingly had all the power.”

Step Two: Develop Clear and Accessible Reporting Protocols

The complaint process should be safe and impartial. It should include a process for reporting incidents when the problem is the owner of the studio or lead instructor. Remember to note applicable health, safety and human rights laws and their reporting mechanisms.

For Instructors working for an Institution or Studio:

- A good acting studio or school will have a clear and transparent reporting process.
- This process should be safe and impartial without fear of retaliation. This includes a clear process for the way student's complaints are addressed and dealt with.
- Counselling and support services or resources should be provided to students.

For Independent Acting Coaches or Educators:

- If you are working as an Acting Coach or Educator on your own, consider asking other coaches or educators, who have also adhered to the Code, to work with you in the event of a complaint.
- Make sure you note in the procedures who will receive the complaint and be involved in the resolution process.

Step Three: Protect Individuals

Your policy should clearly state that there is protection from reprisal. People should be able to raise concerns about coaches and educators without fear of retaliation. As Lisa Karen Cox wrote in her [open letter to the National Theatre School of Canada in response to their BLM statement](#), "students need to be heard: uncomfortable conversations encourage growth on both sides".

Be clear about the possible outcomes of a complaint against an educator or peer performer. If there is progressive discipline up to termination, or dismissal from class, identify the steps and escalating penalties. Consider a restorative justice approach to discipline – how can individuals be assisted and supported in learning from their mistakes and making better choices in the future.

Due to privacy requirements, procedures for investigating complaints of harassment are generally confidential. This means that the details of the complaint, results of the investigation, and penalties imposed will not be made public. Institutions, Studios or Independent Coaches will need to carefully consider what information can be shared so that those affected can feel confident that their complaints were properly considered and resolved.

It is of utmost importance that complaints are taken seriously, and handled through a trauma informed approach. When known or repeat offenders suffer no consequences for their actions, it is traumatizing and demoralizing for complainants, and can have a broader chilling effect on others who may consider reporting.

The policy should include a reminder that individuals have a right to pursue their claim through other legal options.

Delivering on the Expectations of The Code

1. Communicate Your Commitment

Communicate to prospective students the commitment to a respectful learning environment and ensure awareness of the anti-harassment, discrimination and violence policies and procedures. Remember, everyone – coaches, educators, participants - in classes, audition and coaching sessions all have the right to work in a harassment free, respectful environment.

Once you have the policy and procedures:

- ☑ Remind performers and students to read the policy once they have engaged you for your services, before starting to work together.
- ☑ Post the policy and procedures in your learning environment and on your website.
- ☑ Link to *The Code of Conduct for Acting Coaches and Educators* on your website.

On the first day of classes:

- Take a few minutes to read The Code out loud, and address any questions or concerns performers and students may have.
- Seek understanding and agreement on expectations of a respectful learning environment.

2. Education Matters

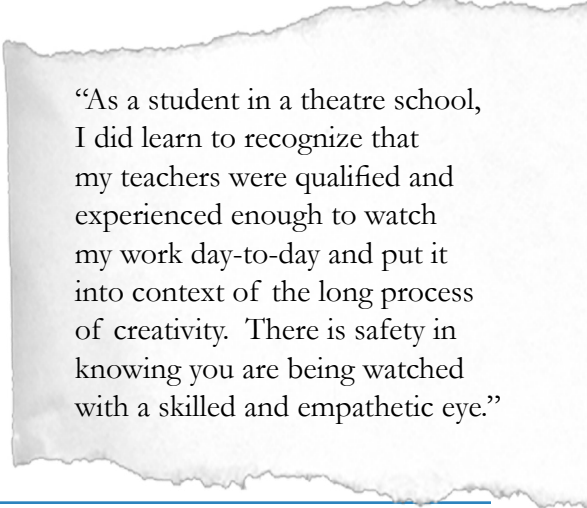
As an Acting Coach or Educator, you can find ways to introduce respectful workplace training and concepts in your work. If you are teaching a course or have multiple sessions with participants, include respectful workplace training in the course curriculum.

Anti-harassment and respectful workplace training programs help to raise awareness of what constitutes harassment or unwelcome behaviour, the impact of the offensive behaviour and the steps we all can take to help prevent and deal with harassment.

Students should have a clear understanding how harassment, discrimination, bullying and abuse of power manifests in the context of actor training, for example, demeaning or belittling students, sexual comments or inappropriate contact. Anti-harassment training will help students identify and report problematic conduct.

Students should be able to explore their craft without fear of criticism that is not constructive, which is why teaching students to provide respectful peer feedback can be instrumental in creating a positive learning environment. Consider providing feedback prompts focusing on *what worked* and *what needs work* to keep feedback positive and constructive, such as “I saw...”, “I liked...”, “I wish...”, and “I wonder...”.

If you are an Acting Coach or assisting someone with a self-tape for an audition, encourage the student or performer to access anti-harassment or respectful workplace training.



“As a student in a theatre school, I did learn to recognize that my teachers were qualified and experienced enough to watch my work day-to-day and put it into context of the long process of creativity. There is safety in knowing you are being watched with a skilled and empathetic eye.”

What about training for Acting Coaches and Educators?

A good school stands by their teachers and provides continuous learning opportunities for their instructors. Basic training should be provided in anti-harassment, anti-oppression, consent and accommodation, ensuring that all teachers are working from the same standards. Any courses taken for professional certifications achieved should be posted on your website.

Attending classes regularly will ensure you are familiar with available resources and any changes in laws. The class discussions are a great opportunity to learn from each other about best practices when it comes to dealing with inappropriate and unwanted behaviour.

You can take a course with Intimacy Coordinators on scenes that involve nudity, intimacy, simulated sex and sexual violence. You will learn about how intimate scenes are handled on a set, and why exploring these scenes in a class setting is not advised unless proper protections are in place.

There are also in-class and online courses on preventing and dealing with harassment, as well as courses available on Diversity & Inclusion, Anti-racism and Anti-oppression. Across the industry, organizations have made commitments to address systemic discrimination. As educators, you are helping to advance equality, diversity and inclusion through your teaching – the content you choose, and the learning atmosphere you nurture and protect.

You don't know the experiences all your students, performers and clients have lived, but an awareness of the traditional and systemic barriers will help you to understand the importance of consent-based interactions.

3. Consent-based Interactions

The Code of Conduct for Acting Coaches and Educators states that all interactions must be consent-based.

What does this mean?

Does consent-based mean that you should ask permission before touching someone? **Yes.**

Does consent-based mean that an instructor or coach should seek agreement between students who are required to have physical contact in a scene? **Yes.**

Does consent-based mean that all performers should be well-informed, and provided with all of the specific details for the scene before agreeing? **Yes.**

Does consent-based mean there should be no surprise moments of contact to get an “authentic” reaction? **Yes.**

Consent-based interactions will create and maintain a learning environment that is professional and respectful where work requires dealing with sensitive material and physical contact. Encouraging people to set and respect personal boundaries and engage in consent-based interactions creates a space where everyone can thrive. Inappropriate touching or contact that has not been agreed to distracts from the performance and disempowers the performer.

Performers have the right to say yes or no to any scene that is offered to them. If they are uncomfortable with the subject matter or the fellow actor assigned, changes should be accommodated. No performer should be required to share private information, experiences or personal history during their practice. Educators should model for performers the kind of consideration and care they should practice with one another—and that they should expect from all their coaches, teachers and cast members.

ACTRA developed the following definition of consent while working with Intimacy Co-ordinators on the [Best Practices in Scenes involving Nudity, Simulated Sex and Sexual Violence](#):

Consent: Permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. Consent is a key concept in the context of sexual activity. Permission should be freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic and specific (From Planned Parenthood: FRIES). In the context of performers, this can mean being fully informed about the requirements for a scene, not being touched without their permission, and not being pressured into nudity or actions not previously contracted.

Working with Minors

Age appropriate content and supervision from a parent is a right of all minors. Parents should be involved and part of the process, and allowed to review and question all material. Minors should never be asked to perform in intimate scenes without full consent and supervision from a parent or guardian.

4. Best Practices for Physical Interactions

When teaching or coaching involves content where physical contact or scenes of nudity, intimacy or violence may be included, ensure all interactions are consent-based, and adhere to industry best practices. Students should be able to opt out without feeling pressured or belittled. Performers need to be informed of content that might include intimacy or violence in advance, so that they have the opportunity to opt out or provide meaningful consent.

Scenes that require nudity, intimacy, simulated sexual activity or violence

Be especially conscientious and thoughtful when engaging in emotionally charged content. This can include intimacy such as kissing, hugging, or cuddling, sexual or physical violence, or content that is politically charged.

It is not always possible to anticipate what may be triggering for students or performers. Educators should make sure that students know when content about scenes requiring intimacy or violence will be taught and what to expect in the classroom. **Intimate apparel, removal of clothing, or partial nudity should be prohibited in all classroom settings.**

It is not necessary or appropriate to ask students or performers to engage in simulated sex or sexual violence. Portrayals of sexual violence, unless properly and specifically choreographed to be safe, can be extremely traumatic to the performers, and those watching it. Doing the scenes repeatedly can be additionally traumatic. Educators and coaches need to ensure they are creating a safe space before introducing or rehearsing the content, be prepared and skilled in handling the difficult and challenging interactions and discussions that may arise and be available to provide support, as necessary. Engage an intimacy director or co-ordinator to assist in teaching or coaching these kinds of scenes, unless you have taken specific intimacy training.

5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Code of Conduct for Acting Coaches and Educators is a commitment to a respectful learning environment - one which breaks down barriers traditionally faced by performers who are from historically marginalized communities, including those who are women, older performers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, two-spirit, non-binary, Indigenous, Black, Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Latinx and people living with physical and neurological disabilities.

Educators can ensure there is equal opportunity in the classroom by keeping in mind that members of historically marginalized communities continue to receive fewer opportunities to take on leading roles, and being tokenized in the roles they are offered. By including diverse content with stories and perspectives from these communities, you can help foster an inclusive learning environment for all of your students.

Acting Coaches and Educators can help to advance the principles of equality, inclusivity and diversity by:

- Taking anti-racism and anti-oppression training so you can better identify and break down barriers that traditionally disadvantaged and underrepresented performers face.
 - Take extra care to understand appropriate terms, to ensure that you do not use language that is offensive or outdated when speaking to your performers.
 - Include resources for anti-racism and anti-oppression training in your curriculum.
- Selecting content that is written by and for people who are under-represented on our screens and stages.
- Supporting the development of audition and demo reel content that demonstrates ability and experience with meaningful, leading roles, as opposed to smaller bit parts and background.
- Keeping an inventory of hair and make-up professionals who have experience with diverse performers.
 - Consider inviting hair, make-up and wardrobe professionals to classes to assist students in knowing what they can expect and request from productions.
- Being vigilant of how stereotypes play out in screen-based media, and use this awareness to ensure that performers who may typically play bit roles are not subject to the same treatment in your class.
- Doing your own research. It's okay to not know all the answers at first, and this is your opportunity to learn by doing your own due diligence.
- Sharing your knowledge and best practices with other acting coaches and educators who may be working towards the same equity-building goals as you.

6. Create a Respectful Learning Environment

Provide a respectful and safe learning space by creating an enriching environment where all can learn and thrive. This means setting up the physical or virtual space for success, facilitating respectful conversations regarding feedback and criticism, ensuring that the terms of your compensation are fair, and avoiding unethical work practices.

Whether you are an educator in a learning institution or coaching in a private studio, here are some best practices to follow:

Setup the physical or virtual space for success:

- Clearly indicate for students where your session will be taking place.
- Post your anti-harassment policy and procedures in an accessible location.
- If you are working in your home, create an office or space that is clearly a working space for coaching sessions.
- Recording sessions: Some coaches and educators have elected to record sessions to ensure the safety of themselves and their students. People can feel especially vulnerable when sessions take place in private residences, alone and behind closed doors. Online video conferencing platforms have also made it easier to record sessions.
 - Anyone being recorded should be notified in advance if they will be recorded, the purpose of the recording, how it will be stored and used, who will have access, and when it will be erased.
 - No one should be recorded if they do not consent. However, consider adopting other measures if you are concerned about safety (eg. bringing a friend).
- Normalize introductions that include personal pronouns whenever possible, to avoid misgendering any of your students.
 - For virtual sessions, encourage others to add pronouns beside their name. Set an example by including your pronouns beside your own name. i.e. *John Doe (he/him)*
 - For in person sessions, verbally introduce yourself along with your personal pronouns. i.e. *"My name is John and my pronouns are he and him."*

Focus on Constructive Criticism:

While being able to hear and learn from criticism is an important skill, harsh words from an admired teacher can be extremely hurtful and damaging to a student's confidence and self-esteem well beyond their time in a program. Here are some tips for providing constructive comments:

- Focus critiques on the action and not the person. Keep it professional - don't be cruel.
- Avoid comments about a student's physical appearance that are unrelated to their training. Avoid comments which body shame or reinforce stereotypes based in sexism, racism, ableism, etc.
- Don't berate or humiliate. Don't yell, scream, or "break" a student to solicit an emotional response. Don't encourage students to yell, scream, or berate another student to "break" them.
- Don't threaten your students (eg. "You will never work in this industry") or make statements to the effect that the student's future success is dependent on you (eg. learning from you, your contacts, or your approval). You should not be seen as the sole arbiter of who will succeed. Success can mean different things to different people.

What makes a great acting coach? "Someone who you feel you can trust in terms of their guidance and expertise, in terms of confidentiality of your work with them, and in relation to the environment you will be working with them in - it should be a professional setting and you should feel safe in it."

“Too often, an acting coach’s ‘tough attitude’ or ‘mannered personality’ is used as a means of validating their process as a coach or even reinforcing their credibility. For example, ‘she’s a difficult person but it’s because she’s so gifted’, or ‘he might say things that seem inappropriate or even cruel, but it’s only because he’s trying so hard to make you better.’”

Transparent Financial Transactions:

- Allow performers or students to audit a class before they make a commitment.
- Performers have full agency over their career. An instructor has no claim to monetary compensation from the performer, regardless of connections or job opportunities they may have provided or assisted with. Instructors may not request a percentage of an actor’s earnings, or a finder’s fee.
- Costs should be transparent and agreed upon before services are provided. Receipts should be issued
- Students should not be required or pressured to volunteer their time (ie. work for free) or leave positive reviews.
- Be transparent about referrals to agents or casting directors with whom you have relationships or financial arrangements.
- Do not offer coaching in exchange for favourable promotion. Advertising is not the responsibility of the performer or student.

As helpful as it is to know best practices, it can also be helpful to know what will set off red flags for students and performers. Here are some problems to avoid:

- Do not pressure students to take more lessons, volunteer their labour, donate, lend or invest money. Coaches should not engage in financial practices that take advantage of their students.
- Avoid hurtful and cruel comments about what parts a student can or cannot play based on their appearance, weight, race, ability, etc. These statements are sometimes presented as the realities of the industry – “realities” that we are trying to change.
- Keep it professional by avoiding blurring the boundaries between professional and personal relationships. It is inappropriate to have intimate relationships with students, or require students to attend social events. Avoid making derogatory statements about others in the industry.
- Be careful to not pressure or guilt students to ONLY learn from you - isolating themselves socially and professionally. Students need to develop other professional contacts.

“I stayed in a toxic environment much longer than I should have because I’d been convinced by the coach that if I didn’t stay in the class, my career would collapse, and I’d be submitting to my ego because I couldn’t ‘handle the tough notes’. That wasn’t true at all. I was being gaslit by this teacher because they didn’t want me to leave and I knew it was time to go, but they had enough control over my psychology to seed doubt for almost a year.”

We asked Acting Coaches and Educators what advice they would give to other Coaches and Educators setting up a respectful learning environment:

- **“Take the TIME to set up the room - Be clear about the tasks at hand, to create discussion about the work ahead and to give everyone a chance to speak and be heard.** Opening introductions, games, activities, circle sharing can make space for all participants. That is time and space for every student to get comfortable in the room and see each other AND time for you to see and hear everyone in a calm neutral way before the concentration moves on to the work.”
- **“Maintain a professional demeanor.** Educators should not drink or do drugs with students with whom they are currently teaching. A common complaint from students is favouritism and the negative feelings they have when teachers have an ‘inner circle’ of favoured students.”
- **“Educators should not engage in romantic or intimate relationships with students with whom they are currently teaching.** The power imbalance increases the vulnerability of the student and their ability to consent to a relationship outside of the teaching environment. In addition, these relationships create an uncomfortable environment for other students. Break ups and other interpersonal drama are not conducive to a productive and respectful learning environment.”
- **“Do not to take things personally.** You can’t control what someone is feeling or how they are reacting. When you receive negative feedback, listen without judgement - it’s natural to feel threatened. Try to push through to a place of understanding and resolution.”
- **“Get over yourselves. Be humbled by the fact people want to study with you.** Don’t get drunk on adulation. Be sobered by the trust being placed in you.”

7. Provide Access to Counselling and Support Resources

Whether you are dealing with incidents of harassment or are a victim of unwanted behaviour, there are counselling and support services available. Though performers can be victims, Acting Coaches and Educators can also be victims of incidents of harassment or unwanted behaviour.

Most universities and colleges will have on-site support services that are available to faculty and to students.

Acting Coaches, Educators and Performers may have access to services through their union agreements.

Find out what services exist for performers and students so you can refer people as needed. For example, the [HAVEN Helpline](#) is available to ACTRA, Equity and DGC members across Canada. You may want to include a link to the HAVEN Helpline on your website.

Take care of yourself and your students. Acting Coaches and Educators, set boundaries and know when and where to seek assistance for yourself and to help students and performers get the support they need. Identify what support and training you need too, to deal with difficult conversations and the conflict that can arise in a teaching environment.

References for Acting Coaches and Educators

Articles & Open Letters:

- [What to Consider When Choosing an Acting Class/Coach](#)
- [Acolytes Alleged a Hollywood Acting Coach Became a False Prophet](#)
- [Actors, Beware: You May be in a Cult](#)
- [Why do we excuse abuse when it's called 'method acting'?](#)
- [#MeToo and the Method](#)
- [Open letter from Lisa Karen Cox to National Theatre School of Canada regarding their BLM statement \(Jul. 7\)](#)
- [Actor Training in Canada: An Appeal for Change](#)

Counseling and Support Services:

- [HAVEN Helpline](#) - available to ACTRA, EQUITY and DGC members
- ACTRA Toronto, [Sexual Harassment Resources](#)
- ACTRA Toronto, [Mental Health Support](#)
- Open Counseling's List of [free telephone counseling hotlines available in Canada](#)

Educational Resources:

Anti-Harassment and Violence

- ACTRA Toronto, [Respect on Set Workshop \(open to all ACTRA Toronto members\)](#)
- Cultural Human Resources Council, [Respectful Workplaces in the Arts](#)

BIPOC Performers

- imagineNATIVE, [On Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide to working with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts & Stories](#)
- SAG-AFTRA, [Race & Storytelling](#)

LGBTQ2S+

- ACTRA Toronto, [Working with Queer Performers.](#)
- MyPronouns.org, [What are Personal Pronouns and why do they matter?](#)
- The 519, [Glossary of Terms](#)

Intimacy

- ACTRA Toronto, [Best Practices in Scenes involving Nudity, Simulated Sex and Sexual Violence](#)
- Intimacy Directors & Coordinators, [Webinar Series and Certifications](#)

Performers living with Disabilities

- Cahoots Theatre, [Deaf Artists & Theatres Toolkit](#)
- National Center on Disability and Journalism, [Disability Language Style Guide](#)

Policies & Codes of Conduct:

- Canadian Creative Industries Code of Conduct: [Read The Code \(EN\)](#), [Lire Le Code \(FR\)](#)
- Got Your Back, [Canadian Training Institution Policies](#)
- Got Your Back, [Canadian Theatre and Union Harassment Policies & Codes of Conduct](#)
- York University, [Student Rights & Responsibilities](#)

Templates, Research and other Resources:

- Got Your Back, [The State of Acting Training in Canada: A Summary of the Results from Got Your Back's 2018 National Survey](#)
- Cultural Human Resources Council, [HR Management Toolkit for Workplace Harassment and Violence](#)