

SENSITIVE CONTENT: COACH GUIDE

BEFORE YOUR SESSION:

We have put protocols into place which will, ideally, lead to the actors sharing their scripts and Sensitive Content warnings well in advance of your session.

1. We will forward the warning and the script to your email address once we receive it.
2. Ideally, you will have time to read through the entire script to yourself, before stepping into the taping room with the actor. The more prepared you are with the content, the easier it will be to navigate and work through together. (*Try to avoid cold reading the script in the room with the actor, even if it means asking the actor to hang tight while you briefly skim through the script so you can best be informed of how to guide the session.*)
3. All actors will review Sensitive Content Boundaries, Vocabulary, and Modifications in our [Sensitive Content Package](#).

GENERAL GOALS:

- Ask reflective, open-ended questions rather than questions that can be answered with a yes or a no.
- Use observations to guide the session: *“I am noticing that...”* or *“What if...”*
- Offer support and modifications and structures as you go “would it be helpful if I stepped out?” “Would you like some water?” “Let’s try using this fabric to hold”
- Stay transparent and model naming your own discomfort & offering your own boundaries as needed “To be honest, I might not be the best person to read this scene with you-- and I feel really uncomfortable acting this -- so I will keep my read ‘neutral’ and won’t be giving my usual ‘actor’ level read.”
- Model calling ‘hold’ as needed, and be sure to ask/take breaks if you need it on back-to-back sessions.
- Be open to the possibility that content that might be a boundary or cause discomfort for *you* might not be the case for *them*. If they say they are good, believe them. No need to create challenges where there aren’t any.

AT THE START OF YOUR SESSION:

CONFIRM CONSENT & NAME SUPPORT NEEDS:

- Verbally confirm with the Actor “I see you have SC in your script. How are you feeling about it?” (where on the Boundary vs Confidence zone are you?)
- Do you have any questions or concerns about anything that is scripted, implied, or asked of you in the breakdown?
- Is there anything you need modified?
- Is there anything you need from me to keep you feeling safe and supported during our session today?
- If booked, are you comfortable living in this content for days on set?
- Are you comfortable communicating your boundaries to your agent?

Otherwise, before taping, do the usual probing about the story, character, and scene. Also review **necessary vocabulary** before stepping into any kind of run or rehearsal of the scene. Get the set up framed up and, before hitting record, review the following vocabulary.

REVIEW VOCABULARY/ DISCLOSURES:

- If you need to stop the tape or the work at any time, please just call ‘**hold**’ or use *this gesture*.
- If you would like to go again, but don't want to ‘talk’ between takes please just say ‘**go again**’ or use *this gesture*.
- If you want me to step out please just say so, and give a knock on the door when you'd like me to come back in.
- I want you to know that while you can do whatever works for you as you step into this, please make sure you are safe and let me know if you need anything from me.
- Out of respect for the SC: Unless we absolutely need to, we won't plan to watch any playback during today's session.
- We might walk through some imagined circumstances as we step into this work, but please know we will also guide you through a *reset* before you leave the taping space.

NAME GENERAL BOUNDARIES, for you as a coach:

The following are types of language you might use to name boundaries for you as a coach. While many of these are grouped by genre and type of Sensitive Content, many of these sorts of boundaries might be interchangeable across all types of sensitive content. Please know you are free to name any of these boundaries as an example, or use this language as is useful. (and of course you are free to name your own) Please remember, you are not by any means required to use all of these kinds of boundaries/disclosures.

These are only here for you to give you structure and vocabulary as you prepare to step into a taping session. If you feel like a boundary does not apply, or if you feel like you don't need to use a substitution, you are free to move about the session as you normally would. So long as you've done your job navigating their boundaries and consent and vocabulary, you are good to go.

GENERAL BOUNDARIES

Here are some examples of general boundaries you might employ before starting to work on a scene with Sensitive Content.

- “Some general boundaries for today... Just so you know, I wont ever make any contact with you during this session”
- “For purposes of this tape, I will not be in your eye-line”
- I will be using word substitutions when we discuss these lines of dialogue.
- I will be using word substitutions when I read these lines of dialogue.

FOR GRIEF/DEATH/LOSS

Here is a coaching reminder that can be super helpful when navigating scenes that demand actors to step into a space of drastic distress and weeping. While this won't necessarily set a boundary, it's helpful for transparency and safety in the space to name that **tears are not the goal**. That the work of the scene isn't about getting ourselves to cry. And that we might find a valuable take where we dont cry.

Example Coach Language:

“I just want to remind you, we are more interested in seeing you fight for your deep need from your scene partner. If tears come, cool; if they don't, that is totally okay.

Remember, we would rather watch a character actively hold back from crying as they try to reach their scene partner and find connection, rather than watch someone who's worked themselves up to tears but isn't present in the scene and available to have new impulses and ideas strike them.”

FOR SEXUAL CONTENT

- “We won’t undress during this taping. If your character needs to indicate undressing, we can either explore that by layering clothes underneath, or we can indicate its happening with other suggested gestures that happen ‘off camera.”
- If the scene demands any sexual acts, they will always only be mimed / in the air, and no contact will happen during today’s session.
- If a character is discussing sexual acts and you want us to unpack that in our coaching, please let me know any substitutions or ways you’d discuss those terms. **For our purposes, I will be using anatomical / biological terms, not euphemisms or slurs.**

FOR RACIAL TRAUMA/ SLURS:

It’s important that you stay transparent and name the elephant in the room. Even if that means identifying that you might not be the best person to read this scene with them. Or by naming that you personally are not 100% comfortable stepping into this content.

Example Coach Language:

- ‘While normally I might want to work with you to improvise a moment before, for purposes of this tape I won’t do that and I will give you space to use your imagination. Between takes, I am happy to talk with you about potential scenarios of course, I just won’t personally engage with you as an actor in any ad libbed/improvised work because this content is so caustic.’
- For purposes of discussing the text or rehearsing not on tape, I will be using substitutions for these swear words.
- Normally, I would act and engage with you fully as a scene partner but, for purposes of this scene, I do not wish to be in your eye-line.
- I do not wish to be an actor and will deliver a more neutral ‘reader’ type performance and choose to distance myself from fully stepping in as a scene partner.
- I just want to name, in the room, that I know I am not the right person to be reading this content with you. And as an actor, I feel personally challenged by this content. So unless we are taping, I am going to limit my read/participation in how many times we ‘run’ the scene.

FOR ABUSE/VIOLENCE:

- Again, no contact will be made during this session, but if you need an object to grab onto or hit or use in your physical exploration we are happy to provide that.
- We also have mats that you can use if you need to get hyped up energetically. These are here if you need a safe object to press, punch, push while safely protecting yourself and the space.
- I ask that you keep your 6 feet distance from me at all times.
- For purposes of this, I will stand further away from the camera so that I can support you as a reader but not be a 'receiver' of this particular dialogue.
- We ask you to please respect the space and yourself as you explore this content. You are free to do push ups, jumping jacks, and get your heart rate up, but we expect that you don't engage in anything that could hurt yourself or the space.

PROP WEAPONS:

There may be instances when an instructor or actor decides that a prop weapon (*never* a real weapon, even if it is dulled, broken, out of commission, etc.) may offer an additional element to the scene. If all parties involved agree, the prop weapon may be introduced to the scene.

- **CONSENT:** Prop weapons may only be used in scene or audition taping when it is agreed upon by all parties. It should be treated like Sensitive Content.
- **INTRODUCTIONS:** The prop should be verbally and physically introduced to each of the actors involved in the scene. Never should a prop weapon appear without that consent and verbal introduction.
- **DEMONSTRATION:** The person providing the weapon should, without pointing the weapon at anyone else, demonstrate how the weapon is ineffective including:
 - Showing an empty magazine and empty barrel of the prop gun
 - Squeezing the trigger of the prop gun to show that it is not loaded
 - Pressing and/or running the blade of the prop knife against one's own skin to show that it will not damage the skin
 - Walk-through any buttons, tools, mechanisms or other devices that operate the prop (as in a retractable knife or working trigger)
- **INDEPENDENT EXPLORATION:** Each of the actors involved in the scene should be allowed to independently handle the prop weapon and examine it in their own time.
- **VOCABULARY:** If any actor or instructor determines they are not safe with introducing this prop weapon, they may call "*hold*" at any time and the prop weapon will be removed.
- **BOUNDARIES:** Each actor involved in the scene should offer permission to the other person as to how they feel comfortable interacting with the prop weapon ("You may point it at me," "You may physically touch me with it," etc.). These are allowed to shift, and should rehearsals or exploration with the prop continue over the course of multiple classes/ sessions, these boundaries should be re-confirmed verbally at the start of an exploration.

FOR DRUG USE/ABUSE

- We won't be using any real cigarettes/needles/alcohol but we are happy to provide empty glasses and/or bottles to use as props with water.
- We might research via Google on mannerisms or behaviours on withdrawal, high, or overdose but I want to make sure we honor those gestures and behaviours so when we do explore these, we promise not to 'joke' or make light of that while we are actively in the work trying to find choices for our tape.

DURING TAPING:

- **Continue to model the appropriate vocabulary.**
- **Continue to check in** with reflective questions and on-going consent
“How are you doing? Do you want a break or go again?” ‘Do you want to unpack that?’ ‘Or do you just want to go again?’

REDIRECTS:

- Follow the same ideas and concepts in our [BFT TAPING GUIDE](#)
- **Steer away from Personal Substitution:** Whenever possible, steer actors away from using personal substitution of actual past trauma. Not only are we not qualified to navigate what might be unlocked during that kind of exploration but active trauma isn’t safe to access consistently and won’t actually provide actional spaces to play.
- **Talk less:** Be mindful not to over talk out what is going on. We as coaches don’t *need* to know how an actor is finding the work or name their substitution or ‘as if’ scenario. Often times, not talking is actually more powerful the moment we name ‘oh this is like me imagining my mom just got diagnosed’-- it actually robs the actor of the impact of that imaginative exploration.
- **Ask Questions:** In the same vein, offer questions or paths of explorations without expecting the actor to actually verbally answer... sometimes just the kernel of the idea is enough. Don't let the popcorn pop until it's on tape, in the work.
- **Be mindful of not ‘overworking’ a scene.** There is a point of diminishing returns. If you aren't able to get it in 3-5 takes, it might not be available to them in that moment. It's not up to use to diagnose why that is or to judge what kind of emotional access is ‘required’ for a scene (even if it says, ‘tears rolling down’).
- **Move on and circle back:** If you hit a block, feel free to move on to another scene or film the slate or find an alternative way to ‘take a break’ from the current challenge. Sometimes the relief of setting it aside is enough to let things reshuffle in the brain. Also, sometimes we learn more about how to navigate the ‘hard scene’ by uncovering more in the ‘easy’ scene.
- **Let them be where they are.** Treat emotional range, like any stunt or dance move: it is where it is today. If an actor can’t hit a high note today, or can only do a single pirouette, or does not have the extension of the leg as high in a stunt or dance move, we can’t ‘get them there’ during a 60 minute coaching. The same applies to emotional range and access. Ultimately, we can coach as much as we can but they are responsible for finding what they need in the scene. If they can’t get there-- if they can’t find the urgency or stakes or range in the scene-- it’s not

our job to make them a better actor. It's our job to capture where they are in the scene on tape and to guide them towards the best versions of themselves.

POSSIBLE WORD SUBSTITUTIONS DURING TAPING:

The goal of our work as a reader is to keep the flow of the dialogue moving. So if we need to adjust language in order to respect our boundaries, it's important that our word substitutions still feel like they hold impact, and don't stick out or draw attention to themselves, and keep the flow and rhythm of the original text. Ultimately, you as a coach get to decide what is best for you but here is a list of potential word substitutions to use either as you are coaching the scene or reading during taping:

F*gott ----> Maggott

F*ck----->Frack / Freak / Frick

C*nt-----> Runt

Sh*t----->Shoot

A\$\$-----> Butt / A\$\$hole ---> Butthole

D*mn-----> Darn

Boobs----> Chest

D*ck-----> Jerk

AFTER TAPING:

CHECKING OUT WITH THE ACTOR:

Whenever possible, we want to allow the actor to check out, unpack, or emotionally reset themselves before leaving the taping room. We want to offer a transition to bridge the gap from getting that last lovely take on camera and stepping back into the real world.

Below are some guiding exercises that can help an actor regroup, and reset into the world outside. When possible, you can offer the actor a choice of what they need. "Do you need a physical body reset? A Breath reset? A Joy reset? Etc..."

BODY:

- Lead a full body shake out.
- Have the actor lay down, and do tension and release of each section of the body, starting with the toes and leading to the head. Finalize with a full body tension and release.
- Lead a sun salutation or other mindful stretch
- Get the heart rate back up! Jumping jacks, running, burpees.
- Go for a walk or run.

VOICE/BREATH:

- Try some gentle *sighs* on long breaths, try Groaning it out
- **Box breathing:** Inhale: 5 count | Hold: 5 count | Exhale: 5 count

OBSERVATIONS:

- Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can smell, 2 things you can touch, 1 thing you can taste.
- Count the ceiling tiles.

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES:

SIGHT:

- Complete a crossword puzzle, sudoku, word search, or other puzzle.
- Count all the pieces of furniture around you.
- Play a distracting game on your tablet, computer, or smartphone.
- Put on your favorite movie or TV show.
- Read a book or magazine.
- Take a mental inventory of everything around you, such as all the colors and patterns you see, the sounds you hear, and the scents you smell. Saying this out loud is helpful too.

SMELL

- Get some essential oils that remind you of good times (freshly cut grass, rain, clean laundry, or sugar cookies, for example) and smell one.
- Light a scented candle or melt scented wax.
- Sniff strong peppermint, which also has the benefit of having a soothing effect.

SOUND

- Call a loved one.
- Put on some nature sounds such as birds chirping or waves crashing.
- Read out loud, whether it's a favorite children's book, a blog post, or a novel.
- Turn up the radio or blast your favorite song

TASTE

- Bite into a lemon or lime.
- Let a piece of chocolate melt in your mouth, noticing how it tastes and feels as you roll it around with your tongue.
- Suck on a mint or chew peppermint or cinnamon gum.
- Take a bite of pepper or some hot salsa.

TOUCH

- Cuddle and pet your dog or cat if you have one.
- Drink a hot or cold beverage.
- Grab an article of clothing, a blanket, or a towel and knead it in your hands or hold it to your cheek. Concentrate on what it feels like. (Play dough)
- Hold an ice cube and let it melt in your hand.
- Massage your temples.
- Pop some bubble wrap.
- Put your hands under running water. Or splash your face with cold water.
- Rub your hand lightly over the carpet or a piece of furniture, noting the texture.

Other/ JOY RESET

- Dance it out with some music
- Send a letter or card to someone you care about.
- Sit in another room or area for a change of scenery.
- Stretch your arms, neck, and legs.
- Write in a journal about how you're feeling or keep a list of prompts handy that you can use to decide what to write about.
- Try on some affirmations while sitting in a comfortable stretch (" I am safe." "I am healthy." "I am well." "I am okay" . "I am enough." "I am in a good place"

CHECKING OUT FOR YOU AS A COACH:

Of course, you as a coach can use any of the above grounding techniques to reset yourself before your next session. You can step away from the building, get air, grab a snack, etc...

ALSO, if you wish, feel free to take it a step further:

- Journal or reflect about how that session went... if any boundaries were crossed or anything came up that you didn't feel prepared for. Please reach out to the Director of Education or plan to bring this up at the Coach Breakout Session
- Similarly, if you had any wins/breakthroughs, feel free to journal that out and share those resources with the team.
- Please use the CRP to navigate any concerns as they pop up.
- Feel free to update your boundaries on the [Coach Sensitive Content Form.](#)