

Hope you're doing well!

Acting is a really harsh industry BUT if you literally can't imagine doing anything else and are getting into it for the right reasons AND you have a thick skin, you can navigate your way around it!

My advice would mostly be to not believe all these 'how to get into acting' information pages because almost all of them are now out of date: it DID used to be the case that there were a few ways to get into acting and that was it, but we are living in a time where The Rock, an ex WWE wrestler, is the highest paid actor in the world. This proves that you do NOT have to have gone to a fancy and expensive drama school or have famous parents to make it but you do have to be willing to deal with a LOT of rejection, and you need to be sure enough in who you are and what you can offer to know that the rejection does not take anything away from this (even after the 100th rejection!). But the good news is that nowadays there are not *as* many 'gatekeepers' in the acting industry. Don't get me wrong, there are still people in those positions but with the invention of YouTube, Instagram and many other social media apps, people are much more able to build their own following and display their talents to the world *without* having to get past these gatekeepers. My most important piece of advice is BE YOURSELF. I spent FAR too many years trying to be what people wanted me to be and I had no idea what that was - most of the time they didn't either. If you go into an audition or in fact any situation and you are your authentic self, then the worst that can happen is that you get rejected, however if you go in and pretend to be something you're not and you *still* get rejected you will always wonder if maybe you would have got the job if you *had* been your authentic self, and that feeling is even **worse!**

You also need to find a way to make money on the side during your pursuit of an acting career (or any creative career for that matter!).

It takes a long time before acting will be paying all your bills (it still isn't for me!) so to stay sane during the years before acting is earning you a living, my best advice is to find something else you can do in the meantime that you enjoy (or at least that you don't hate) but that can also be a source of income when acting is not paying you. For example, I love doing things on social media and thinking of cool ways to market things, so I have just got a part-time job as a social media and sales/marketing manager at a very small chocolate company. I don't have a university degree or any 'official' experience in sales and marketing *but* I got the job by explaining **emphatically** in the interview how I have had to build *myself* and my creative career over the past ten years – which is essentially marketing *yourself!* I managed to convince my now manager that if I can build an audience for myself (something that is much harder to market than chocolate!) then I can definitely get people buying her chocolate!

I also love health and fitness and used to bodybuild so I did a course to become a personal trainer and that helps me to pay my bills too! Even if it's more of a regular job that you need to get to support yourself, it is important for your mental health that you don't HATE what you do every day - for example one of my many MANY previous jobs was a data entry admin at an office and I absolutely HATED every minute of it - it was SO boring and mind numbing! I lasted six months before I HAD to leave for my own sanity - I didn't even have a job lined up but I knew that if I stayed any longer in that office I would lose my mind! After that I found a job in a gin distillery as a tour guide, and even though this obviously isn't what I wanted to do forever, it was a great way to earn a living whilst also practicing talking to large groups of people and entertaining them - I am trying to get into stand-up comedy so I

thought it would be a great way to practice trying to get a room full of strangers to laugh and it really is good practice! (it's also great at learning how to bomb miserably and be ok with it; it's very humbling when you make a joke and 15 people are just staring blankly back at you! :D)

So I would advise you to find a bill-paying job that has at least one aspect that you enjoy or that could help you in the career that you *actually* want to do!

I would suggest writing three lists:

1) Your career and life goals.

- a. This list is what you are aiming for/absolutely want to become a reality – i.e. Be a successful, working actor/Be a successful screenwriter [meaning screenwriting is paying all my bills]/ Write my novel/ Be a successful working stand-up comedian etc.

2) Your skills/ things that you *can* do and don't *hate* doing but that aren't your ultimate goal in life.

- a. This list is how you can figure out what type of jobs you can do in the meantime to financially support your pursuit of the goals in list one. Write down your skills/things you've noticed about your personality and then work out what kinds of jobs would benefit from these interests/personality traits) These jobs *could* even help with your ultimate goals but don't *have* to. On my 2nd list for example, there are the following things:
 - i. Anything to do with fitness (**personal training**)
 - ii. Childcare (**nannying**)
 - iii. Animals/animal care (**dog/cat sitter/dog walker or any jobs taking care of animals**)
 - iv. Performing/public talking in any way (**tour guide jobs/children's disco entertainer – yes, I've done this!**)
 - v. Social media/marketing (**sales and marketing jobs etc**)
 - vi. Coffee/baking (**any jobs that involve these things/a combination of these things**).
 - vii. Being incredibly nosy and paranoid (**security work – these supposed 'personality flaws' can sometimes make for a great security operative!**)

3) Your monthly outgoings (i.e. what you absolutely *have* to make to pay all of your bills each month)

- a. To write this list I would suggest logging onto your online banking/getting out your bank statements and going through them with a **FINE. TOOTH. COMB!** Most people's main reason for not pursuing their ultimate creative goals (list 1) is because it 'won't pay their way'. While this is a valid point, most people allow the amount they 'have to make' each month creep up by not being mindful of what they really do and don't need; you *do* need to pay your rent, you *do* need to be able to afford to eat **but** you do *not* need to be

buying lunch out every day, you do *not* need to buy a new pair of shoes every month. You *can* do these things, but each unnecessary purchase is one less day/week/month that you'll be able to support yourself pursuing your creative career goals. For example, you could spend £70 a month on takeaways, but that is bringing you £70 closer to having to give up on your ultimate goals and get a regular job that you hate just to pay your rent. Yes, a takeaway once in a while is not the be all and end all but looking through your outgoing payments in this way will really highlight how much unnecessary spending you are doing. Alcohol is usually a HUGE one for people in this list. Going out drinking twice a week is *expensive* and every drink you buy is again bringing you closer to having to give up and get a boring job that you hate, just so that you can continue spending so much on drinking at the weekend.

Once you've gone through your outgoings and removed all the unnecessary spending, work out the amount of money you absolutely *need* each month to pay for rent, bills, food etc. The lower that number, the less time you'll need to spend doing your day job from list 2 and the more time you will have to create and pursue your goals from list 1. It's up to you, but if you decide you *need* to spend £100 on going out drinking each weekend, and your day job pays you £10 per hour, that's 10 more hours per week that you're going to have to spend doing that day job rather than working on your ultimate goals, and for what?

Writing lists feels a bit silly sometimes but with the general chaos of life and how hectic it can feel trying to balance day jobs with creative pursuits, having those three lists of clear goals, and realistic ways to achieve them can really help to make your creative goals feel realistic and more importantly, achievable 😊

In terms of agents, beware of scammers! Never EVER pay an agent to take you on! Agents make their money by commission on the jobs that *they* get *you*, so if any agent is asking for an upfront fee before signing you, it's not a good indication that they have any intention of actually getting you paid jobs! Avoid agents that ask for upfront fees at ALL COSTS, they are scammers!

Do you have a showreel? If not, no worries, it's not ridiculously hard to make one. Again, there will be companies that charge you a fortune to 'make your showreel for you' and whilst they can create great final products, I don't think it's absolutely necessary at this point to pay an arm and a leg for one. The reason you need one right now is to send to an agent to show them that you have talent. Even if you just record yourself doing a monologue on your phone and send that, it's at least something that the agent can watch to see your style. If you have a showcase/play that you are in, then invite them to that, and save yourself the cost of a showreel for a little while at least! (you will eventually need one, but at the beginning they can be very hard to finance!)

If you're actively trying to get an agent, now may be a great time because everyone is on lockdown and the acting industry has come pretty much to a standstill because almost ALL TV production has shut down as a result of Coronavirus. Whilst this isn't good for the industry, it DOES mean that agents will be less busy and therefore *may* be more inclined to read unsolicited emails and consider taking on new clients. So what I would do is make a short showreel, even if it is like I said, just a monologue recorded on your phone or you doing

a scene read in by your friend (no longer than 4/5 mins long), get some basic headshots taken by someone who can take a half decent photo (lots of photographers who are trying to move into the headshot world will have offers for headshot sessions at reduced rates), I'm sure it differs country to country, but for your very first basic headshots I wouldn't pay more than £100 (when you want real proper ones taken I would say more like don't pay more than £250 but it does vary a lot), and send these as well as a CV (making SURE you mention any special skills or qualifications you have!) and a short cover letter about why you want to join their particular agency.

Most importantly, I would say don't just carpet bomb as many agents as possible. Make sure you research each agency and their clients - firstly because at the end of the day, they will be working with you and if you don't feel that what they put their clients up for matches your career goals, then it would be a waste of everyone's time to send them a generic email. Another reason why it's important to look up their clients is because if they already have a client who looks very similar to you or would fit the same casting bracket, it is unlikely that they will have their main focus on you. Usually if they do have another client that looks like you they will reply to your email telling you this anyway and that it would be unfair of them on their existing client to take on another client that looks just like them! This is another reason why it's important to 'do you' and not try to be/try to look like someone you're not! Everyone thinks agents are looking for the prettiest, youngest looking actors, but that is often not the case - more often than not they want interesting, unique looking people - that way they have a roster of clients that all look very individual and so when any casting brief comes along, they will almost always know they have someone perfectly suited to it. If they had ninety 5'9, model-looking brunette women on their books they would be shooting themselves in the foot because they would only have clients suitable for the 'Brunette, 5'9, slim' casting breakdown.

Don't feel crappy if agents don't respond, or they say they're not taking on any new clients at the moment, I would say if you send out 50 email you might get 5-10 replies if that, but this is all part of the 'not taking rejection personally' part of this cut-throat industry!

Hope that all helps and I wish you all the best of luck!!

Meg xxx