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# let's get visceral

By [Andrew Wood](#) | December 12th, 2018 | Categories:

## rami malek on playing freddie mercury

NPR did a [nice interview](#) with Rami Malek about his work on the role of Freddie Mercury in Bohemian Rhapsody. I particularly like this bit:

*Malek speculates that the singer's showmanship sprung from a desire to find his place in the world. Born in Zanzibar as Farrokh Bulsara, Mercury had buck teeth and was called "Bucky" by most of the kids at the boarding school he attended in India. When Mercury returned to Zanzibar after boarding school, the country was in the midst of a revolution and his family had to immigrate to London. "At that point, trying to identify himself, [he] feels like a fish out of water," Malek says.*

*But in front of a crowd, it was a different story: "When [Mercury] gets out on the stage, he holds everyone's attention and says, 'Hey, I may have been an outcast and a misfit, and I may feel like I don't belong, but here on this stage, we belong together,'" Malek says. "It is the most beautiful thing to see realized."*

You see what he did there? He identified a couple of gaping wounds from Mercury's past (having buck teeth and being teased for it, having to immigrate to London as a young adult and feeling like a fish out of water) that produces a need (for belonging) that he as the actor can pursue throughout the film. This is exactly how we break things down in class: we look at the character's past to identify moments or periods of profound loss (which we call **gashes** or **tumors**, respectively), and also moments of triumph or completeness (which we call

trophy moments), and then try to articulate what the **need** is that arises from those past events. In this way, we find a need that can be pursued under all circumstances, which we call the **underlying objective**. Then the question arises, with regard to a particular scene: how can this underlying objective be productively **pursued** in the situation of the scene?

No wonder Malek was so good!

□

By [Andrew Wood](#) | December 3rd, 2018 | Categories: [Uncategorized](#) | [0 Comments](#)

**one of the most important things you can learn in an acting class**

By [Andrew Wood](#) | December 2nd, 2018 | Categories: [Uncategorized](#) | [0 Comments](#)

# even movie stars have to deal with anxiety

Came across [this piece](#) recently in the *Hollywood Reporter*, in which the remarkable Chloe Grace Moretz is profiled. She's had a big year: she starred in [The Miseducation of Cameron Post](#), which won the Grand Jury prize at Sundance, and also in the much anticipated [remake of Suspiria](#). She is a truly gifted actor; if you've never seen [Let Me In](#), the British remake of [Let the Right One In](#), do yourself a favor.

Anyway, one of the things I liked in the profile was her discussion of coping with anxiety:

*Do you still struggle with anxiety?*

*Meditation has really, really helped me, and just getting on a workout schedule. Working out is something that really*

helps with my anxiety.  
But I know that the  
minute I fall off of  
that, for sure.

But I think as a woman,  
it's very difficult to  
deal with the hormonal  
fluxes that we deal with  
monthly. I deal with so  
much anxiety hormonally  
from my cycle. Your cycle  
doesn't know when you are  
going to be on the red  
carpet for a gala. So  
partner that with a lack  
of sleep and jet lag, and  
it's like a total spiral.

So for me, I just make an  
effort to make sure that  
I give myself 30 minutes  
a day to walk away. That  
just means shutting a  
bathroom door and just  
standing there for a  
second and focusing on my  
breathing, and focusing  
on my brain, and  
reconnecting to my heart  
and understanding who I  
am. That gets rid of the  
anxiety for me. But I  
think that, yeah, as an  
adult, it's never not  
going to be a struggle.  
There's so much societal

*influx around you, and there are so many people who need something from you.*

Performing is a kind of test: we want to be found to be a good actor when we're done. In that sense, our identity as an actor is at stake every time we do it. This produced anxiety in many of us, and we each have to go on our own journey in learning to contend with that anxiety. A former student and working actor I know created a whole regimen that she does before every audition to help her with her anxiety, a regimen that involves yoga, eating bananas (for the tryptophan), and even medication.

What I liked about Moretz's comments is that they remind us that success doesn't mean the end of anxiety. In fact, it can often exacerbate it: if I screw up now, everything I've worked so hard to achieve will be taken away. So finding out how

to face down the demon of anxiety is something that most of us performers will have to contend with our whole lives long. It's not something that we graduate from. I remember hearing a story about Josh Brolin and George Clooney making plans to get together at Clooney's house to work on the Coen Brothers movie *Hail, Caesar!* together. Brolin, so the story goes, drove to Clooney's house, parked in his car, and then sat in the car for an hour trying to muster the courage to go in. When he finally did, he confessed his anxiety to Clooney, saying "I'm scared to work with you. You're George Clooney." To which Clooney replied, "I'm scared to work with you. You're Josh Brolin."

Moretz's open discussion of her struggles with anxiety is generous in that it makes room for the rest of us to feel ok about having similar struggles. If someone with her talent and skill still feels scared, then it's no wonder that we

sometimes do as well.

By [Andrew Wood](#) | November 29th, 2018 | Categories: [acting](#), [Uncategorized](#) | Tags: [anxiety](#), [Chloe Grace Moretz](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
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