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Meet Jesse Daley | Actor and Writer

July 15, 2021 • Leave a reply

We had the good fortune of connecting with Jesse Daley and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Jesse, is there something that you feel is most responsible for your success?

Twelve years ago I moved to Hollywood, California to pursue a career as an actor. I spent most of my twenties living and working in this fascinating city, and the lessons I've learned about the entertainment industry and the craft of acting have been profound. Ironically, the most powerful lesson I've learned in my journey to becoming an actor is to never act at all.

When we think about acting, we think about "being someone else." To play another character, one would need to abandon him or herself and channel someone else. But I started to feel that when I was acting, it wasn't authentic or true, and consequently my acting career was dwindling.

MY LATEST VIDEOS

After several years navigating Hollywood, I concluded that is not necessary to “fit in” to anyone’s definition of success. Although I can portray different characters – I can never truly change who I am. There will always be elements of myself in every role I play, and that’s what makes every actor’s work unique. I let go of trying to change and focused on embracing who I am.

Living in an environment based on image can blind one from seeing just how special he or she is. I credit my Hollywood mentors with helping me to understand this. Acting coaches Billy Hufsey and Carlyne Barry pushed me to bring as much individuality as possible to every role. Billy Hufsey advises, “Be you,” and Carlyne often said, “You are enough.” Mark Teschner, casting director of American soap opera “General Hospital,” consistently encourages actors to “be” and not “act.” Talent agent Robin Nassif explained, “Jesse, you look like Zac Efron, but you’re never going to play the same macho type of roles that he does. That’s not who you are.”

Actress Meryl Streep said, “Acting is not about being someone different. It’s finding the similarity in what is apparently different, then finding myself in there.” After I accepted who I am, I began working. I wasn’t acting; I was being. It felt great to be myself in Hollywood, with my quirkiness, high energy and board shorts!

My first role in a national commercial was a character that was based around high energy and quirkiness, and in my second commercial, I was on the beach in board shorts, as I regularly am! One of my most memorable roles was a on the series, “Switched at Birth.” My character – based on a true story – was an LGBT student who wore high heels to accompany his boyfriend to the high school prom. It was incredibly rewarding to stand up for equality, and as an LGBT individual myself, this role was especially meaningful to me. I’ve planned to dedicate more work to promoting acceptance of LGBT and minority actors.

Even in Hollywood – a town where everyone tries to be someone else – it’s empowering to embrace who you are. I encourage all of you to proudly bring your true self – including all your awesome qualities and quirks – to everything that you do!



Let’s talk shop? Tell us more about your career, what can you share with our community?

I’m posting my piece again here, as I believe it also answers this question:

Twelve years ago I moved to Hollywood, California to pursue a career as an actor. I spent most of my twenties living and working in this fascinating city, and the lessons I’ve learned about the entertainment industry and the craft of acting have been profound. Ironically, the most powerful lesson I’ve learned in my journey to becoming an actor is to never act at all.

When we think about acting, we think about “being someone else.” To play another character, one would need to abandon him or herself and channel someone else. But I started to feel that when I was acting, it wasn’t authentic or true, and consequently my acting career was dwindling.

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A breakthrough came when I started studying the “Meisner technique” of acting. Legendary actor/teacher Sanford Meisner defined acting as “living truthfully under imaginary circumstances.” The first particularly helpful Meisner acting exercise I encountered was “repetition.” Facing another actor, we each repeated a short phrase over and over again. After several minutes, our facial expressions changed, as did the tones in our voices, and what my fellow actor was “really” communicating became clear. Rather than focusing on the words that he was speaking, I listened to what his body and voice were saying. I had to be fully engaged in the moment and wasn’t able to anticipate what was coming next. I was really hearing him.

Listening is a skill that I’ve sharpened through acting. The Meisner technique taught me to listen intently to others and to myself. My acting coaches often said, “Listen and react as you would in the situation. Don’t act, be.” This required me to learn more about myself, apart from who I believed I should be in Hollywood.

When I moved to L.A., I learned that “image” is a massive part of the Hollywood culture.

Hollywood projects an image to the world which is largely based on living a lavish lifestyle with money and fame. It seemed necessary to attain these things to be successful in entertainment.

Getting caught up in this lifestyle can become problematic. There are no rules on how to succeed in Hollywood; therefore, many actors simply follow the crowd, doing what everybody else is doing, hoping to be discovered. I thought that it might be helpful for my “image” to purchase a luxury car to appear more “successful.” I referred to the potential purchase as my “status car.” Fortunately, I didn’t buy it and never will! If you follow the crowd, you risk losing your individuality.

When I started out, I was bombarded with advice regarding the image I would need to cultivate to be successful. I received numerous comments from entertainment professionals about revising the image that I was projecting, including changing my hair, my wardrobe (I love wearing board shorts and sandals!) and aspects of my personality to appear more masculine.

One of my talent agents discussed sexual orientation. He believed an actor’s sexuality is related to obtaining work. He believed I “fit somewhere in-between on the scale of masculinity and femininity,” and this ambiguity could present difficulties with booking roles. I was left wondering how to change my essence. Another agent suggested I eliminate my quirkiness, calm my high energy and remove my stutter (which occurs when I’m excited). I wanted to be me and bring myself to every role.

But, as a struggling neophyte actor, I adhered to the advice. I began auditioning all over Los Angeles for everything—including roles which I was not suited for. Nothing worked!

After several years navigating Hollywood, I concluded that is not necessary to “fit in” to anyone’s definition of success. Although I can portray different characters – I can never truly change who I am. There will always be elements of myself in every role I play, and that’s what makes every actor’s work unique. I let go of trying to change and focused on embracing who I am.

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Let’s say your best friend was visiting the area and you wanted to show them the best time ever. Where would you take them? Give us a little itinerary – say it was a week long trip, where would you eat, drink, visit, hang out, etc.

If one of my best friends were visiting Hollywood, I would take them up to the iconic Hollywood sign hike. The hike provides inspiration, motivation, and a view of what is possible in the incredible city.

Shoutout is all about shouting out others who you feel deserve additional recognition and exposure. Who would you like to shoutout?

My shoutout goes to all of the incredible and kind men and women who I have had the pleasure of meeting in Hollywood and the entertainment business. There are so many kind individuals who have helped to make my experience as an actor one that has been an absolutely amazing journey!

Website: jessedaley.com (<http://jessedaley.com>)

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