**Connecting with Audiences Through Character Emotions**

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Moviegoers and readers identify with stories through the characters. The most powerful way to reach an audience is through the characters' emotions. For only when we connect with the characters on an emotional level, does the interaction become deep and meaningful. Well-written scenes that include characters' emotions allow the audience to viscerally take part in the story and bond with the characters.

Often, writers get stuck by staying in the character's head and "telling" what the character thinks. An emotion, on the other hand, has a strong physical component and is primarily felt in the body. The writer is able to "show" emotions through how the character relates or reacts to conflict.

**Definition of Emotion**

Emotion literally means "disturbance." The word comes from the Latin *emovere*, meaning "to disturb." Characters who reside more in the mind and their thoughts than in their body and their emotions put distance between the story and the audience. Thoughts can lie. Dialogue can lie, too. However, emotions are universal, relatable and humanizing. Emotions always tell the truth.

Most of us in real life are capable of handling ourselves when things are going well or working in our favor. Throw in some sort of disaster, conflict, roadblock and we find out who we truly are. This same principle applies in stories. Moviegoers and readers alike want to participate in dramatic stories to learn how characters respond emotionally when things turn messy, challenging, and stressful, when all is lost.

Storytelling involves more than lining up the action pieces, arranging them in a logical order and then drawing conclusions. Yes, dramatic action pulls moviegoers to the edge of their seats. And yes, conflict, tension, suspense and curiosity hook moviegoers. Yet, no matter how exciting the action, the character's emotional reactions and emotional development provide fascination. Any presentation with a strong human element increases the chances of audience identification.

In a compelling story line, the characters grow and change step-by-step because of the dramatic action. This growth is not meant to be merely on a physical level. Often, in their zeal of showing off high-tech special effects, moviemakers and writers forget the power of character emotional development. The challenges a character faces must effect the character emotionally, and the deeper the better.

**Character Emotional Development versus Emotional Change**

1) Character Emotional Development

Every story sends a character on an outer journey (dramatic action plot line) that ends up causing the character to undergo an inner transformation. This ultimate character transformation is shown step-by-step through their Character Emotional Development. Emotional development is cumulative, based on all of the scenes over time, and is long-term and transformative.

Emotional development implies long-term change or transformation in the character in reaction to the dramatic action scene-by-scene throughout the overall story. The transformation the character undergoes takes place step-by-step from the beginning and spans the entire story.

If conflict, tension and suspense drive the reader to turn the page or send the viewer to the edge of her seat, the character emotional development inspires and connects her to the story. Readers read stories and viewers go to the movies to learn about a character's emotional development. Therefore, character becomes a primary layer in the overall story.

2) Emotional Change

Just as the dramatic action affects the overall character emotional development, the action also affects your character's emotional state at the scene level. In other words, the character's mood changes within a scene in reaction to what is said or done in that specific scene. Characters can jump from one emotion to another within a particular scene, depending on the drama, but the character's emotion must remain consistent from one scene to the next scene.

The dramatic action that takes place in each particular scene causes an emotional effect(s) on the character. The emotional reaction(s) the character experiences or emotional change(s) the character undergoes within a specific scene is often fleeting and temporary. Emotional Change symbolizes the character's emotional reactions within the scene at the scene level only.