

De-Role and De-Stress!

'De-roling' is simply how to get yourself out of character once you've finished performing. It's the process of drawing a line between your character's world and your everyday life. Often this process is quite simple; you leave work and get yourself home. If a role isn't particularly emotionally demanding or doesn't deal with traumatic themes, your de-roling process may not require specific attention at all. You may already be undertaking certain behavior and habits that allow you to de-role quite seamlessly. But occasionally, a role requires a fair bit of emotional labor, or a theme within the story you're telling is particularly dark, heavy, or even traumatic to address ([source](#)).

#1 Literally De-Role

The first thing you're going to want to do is to literally strip off your character. It may be tempting to walk home in your character shoes, especially when they're your own, but creating boundaries, even symbolic ones, can be very effective in separating yourself from your character.

If your character has physical markings such as scars or moulage, make sure that's something you remove too. The aim here is to look and feel like yourself, and to feel separate to the character you're leaving at the venue.

#2 Let's Get Physical

The next thing you can do is get moving! It may be too late in the day for intensive exercise, especially if you've just finished a late show and you're looking to wind down, but doing something physical can be a great way to get out of your character's mindset, and into your own body again.

This part of the ritual can be as simple as shaking out your body – your arms, legs, feet, hands – before leaving the venue. If you're so inclined, this can be returning home and doing a yoga routine to both wind down and reconnect with yourself – mind and body. If yoga's not your thing, you can try going on a walk. If you get home quite late, have a little dance in your living room when you get home.

#3 Play That Funky Music

Actors will often make a character playlist to get themselves into character, so why not create one for getting out of character? Make a playlist of all your favorite songs and play them as you leave the venue, on your way home, or when you get home. If your character is a particularly dark or emotionally demanding role, it can be nice to compile all of your favorite upbeat and gleeful tunes for this playlist. Likewise, if your character lives in a world of high-octane energy, make this a soothing, chill playlist for mellowing out.

#4 Get Comfy

When you do get home, get yourself as comfortable as possible. Performances can be very physically draining. If, on top of that, your role is also psychologically and emotionally demanding, you might be pretty wiped out by the time you get home. Strip off those jeans, and get yourself in your favorite, and most comfortable clothes. Think jammies, sweatshirts, and fluffy socks. All of this familiarity and comfort will help signal to your body that you're safe and that now is the time to relax and let your guard down. It might be nice to choose something to wear that makes you feel like yourself. This could be an old band shirt you sleep in, or your yoga pants; anything that makes you feel like you.

#5 A Scents of Self

Smells can be a very powerful way of shifting your emotional and psychological state. Our olfactory senses are closely related to our amygdala (our fear trigger center) and our hippocampus (our memory center). For this reason, smells can trigger emotional responses closely tied to memories, a phenomenon known as the Proust Effect. It can be useful to establish a distinction between the character and themselves by choosing a perfume, or deodorant to wear while in character, that can then be removed as they de-role. Likewise, you can utilize a scent that is personal and familiar when you get home to remind yourself of your life and memories outside of this particular project or role.

#6 Phone a Friend

If you can, and if you have the energy for this, it's a great idea to touch base with your family and friends after a particularly challenging portrayal. This can be incredibly important for your mental health. Speaking to a loved one and asking them to tell you about the details of their day, especially the tiny and insignificant ones, can be a great antidote to the likely dramatic or hard arc of your character and portrayal.

#7 Child's Play

There is so much play in the work we do that sometimes we forget to allocate ourselves time for leisure outside of performing. Across the board, people tend to get into this work because they love and enjoy it. To keep your life in balance, make sure you keep up other hobbies outside of your work here and use these to rejuvenate your mental health and sense of self. This can be anything – dancing, gardening, juggling, video games, reading, watching tv – but do be wary of activities that involve high amounts of screen time during the evening as they can negatively affect your sleep hygiene.

#8 Meditate

This is one of the most effective things you can do to de-role. Meditation has boomed in popularity in recent years, but there remains a lot of confusion about how to do it, and how it benefits your mental health. There are also so many different variations of meditation and slightly different schools of thought about how best to practice it. But broadly speaking, meditation is the practice of training your attention and awareness to achieve mental clarity and emotional stability. There are different techniques you can utilize to meditate: mindfulness, focusing on an object or sound, or even a mantra. The benefits of meditation are generous and infinite, and I would recommend it to everyone. If it's your first time meditating, an app can be very helpful in guiding you through your meditation.

There are a ton of different meditation apps out there, so try a few and find which one works for you. Even five minutes of meditation can change the way your mind is functioning, making it a super efficient way to start the day right!

Conclusion: Stay Safe Out There

Above are some great habits and rituals for checking in with your mental health while working as an actor in a challenging role. But none of them are a substitute for protecting your mental health in the throughout a portrayal. No one is allowed to make you feel unsafe, in any way, throughout the process. Your safety, both physically and mentally, should always be the top priority. Nothing is worthy of unsafe practices, and no person is allowed to demand anything of you that puts your mental health at risk. Respect yourself, and others, by setting high standards of self-care and by prioritizing safety above all.