

“The Harder I Practice, The Worse I Play”: Getting Control Under Control

W. Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Random House)

- This is the game that takes place in the mind of the player, and it is played against such obstacles as lapses in concentration, nervousness, self-doubt and self-condemnation. In short, it is played to overcome all habits of mind which inhibit excellence in performance.
- Achieve the art of concentration through learning internal skills (i.e., increased awareness without emotional response).
 - Learn to program your computer (Self 2) with images rather than instructing with words.
 - Learn to trust Self 2 to do what you (Self 1, the conscious ego-mind) ask of it. This means letting Self 2 hit the ball.
 - Learn to see “non-judgmentally”—that is, to see what is happening rather than merely noticing how well or how badly it is happening. This overcomes “trying too hard.”
- Achieve the art of concentration through learning internal skills (i.e., increased awareness without emotional response).
 - Step 1: Observe, non-judgmentally, existing behavior
 - Step 2: Ask yourself to change, programming with image and feel
 - Step 3: Let it happen!
 - Step 4: Non-judgmental, calm observation of the results, leading to continuing observation of process until behavior is automatic
- The time for change comes when we realize the same function could be served in a better way.
- By increasing the effective power of awareness, concentration allows us to throw more light on whatever we value knowing, and to that extent enables us to know and enjoy it more. This leads to continued learning.

Elaine Grover, *Keyboard Practice Skills* (Wayne Leupold)

- Warm-Up Exercises
- Creating a Practice Routine
- Learning the Basics
- Developing a Practice Mind
- Using Practice Skills
- Building Momentum
- Be aware of what facilitates concentration:
 - Calmness, Relaxation, Deadlines, Enthusiasm for your music, Newness of a piece, Ability to control thoughts
- Become aware of what hinders concentration:
 - Fatigue, Noise, Faulty practice, Worry
 - Recovery from illness, Overwork, Staleness, Lack of change
- Make every practice a success story! We usually feel good about that which we do well. Enjoyment often follows a sense of accomplishment, a job well done. Practice well every time, in order to leave with a feeling that your time and your mind were well spent. Two measures with fingering, rhythm, and a steady, even flow can be a success story. Set realistic expectations.
- If your practice feels like drudgery you will soon stop learning. The key is to practice with a purpose, to come to enjoy the art of practicing, and to always give yourself something to look forward to in your practice. This is important!

Richard Elliott, “Practice Techniques” in *OrganTutor Organ 101* (Ard)

Daniel Kohut, *Musical Performance: Learning Theory and Pedagogy* (Stipes)

- Plan Your Practice
 - Always have a plan for your practice periods; set long range, intermediate and immediate goals.
- Warm-Up Time
 - ... for activating and preparing the brain and the muscles for the intense concentration and efficient coordination that will be needed later ... in the practice session.
- Building Time
 - ... for the development of ... technique. It may include work on new scales, etudes, or other technical exercises. It can also include “working out” technical problems in music being prepared for performance.
- Interpreting Time
 - ... for the performer [to work] on performance literature that has been mastered technically but needs attention from an expressive standpoint.
- Performing Time
 - Playing the entire piece without stopping. ... The goal is to concentrate on the act of musical performance itself.

“I think of practicing like digging a ditch; every day I get out my shovel and remove a bit of dirt.”
—Rudolph Serkin, pianist

“A good practice day means you are one step closer to realizing a great performance but momentum must be constant. Just as a drop of water can erode great mountains, there is no technical or musical difficulty you cannot meet with constant dirt digging.”
—Jeanette Fishell, organist

“There’s nothing a pencil and metronome won’t fix.”
—Arthur Poister, organist

“There must be liberty with order. Where there is fantasy there must be logic and order.”
—Pablo Casals, cellist

“Try. Fail. Try again. Fail better.”
—Prunella Scales, actress