

*Responding to the PERSON who walks into our studio and addressing both the musical and the emotional challenges that accompany them*

MTNA: 3/27/13 - Gail Berenson [berenson@ohio.edu](mailto:berenson@ohio.edu) and Linda Cockey [lecockey@salisbury.edu](mailto:lecockey@salisbury.edu)

### **Addressing the musical and emotional needs of our students: things to consider**

#### *1. The joy of learning:*

- Finding connections and meaning; creating a common support group in the teaching studio and building a network of fellow students working together while getting to know each of them can build a foundation for lifelong relationships.
- The brain wants to find pathways for social attachments.
- Mental health includes meaningful and close relationships.
- Students will feel a sense of accomplishment as they see themselves progress and learn new repertoire.

#### *2. The skill of learning:*

- Utilizing conceptual learning allows musical principles to transfer from one situation to another, making learning more efficient.
- Asking open-ended questions encourages the development of problem-solving skills, helping the student become more independent.
- Intrinsic learning instills the desire to learn from within and inspires students to learn and grow as musicians.
- When teachers ask students to experiment with new ideas within the lesson, it requires their trust in the safety of the learning environment.

#### *3. Learning for a lifetime:*

- Feelings of success promotes a desire to continue this activity - making music.
- The ability to share music with others promotes the desire to continue doing so.
- The physical and emotional process of learning music transfers positively to all other aspects of life.

### **Important questions to consider**

Q: How are you able to provide students an opportunity to share their feelings if you observe signs of anxiety or depression?

A: While recognizing there are boundaries that teachers must respect, encourage your student to share their feelings with you and suggest help as appropriate, including making referrals to medical professionals.

Q: How do your students feel about themselves and how does this impact their study and performance?

A: Teachers can play an important role in helping students develop self-esteem.

Q: How do we help students articulate their immediate and future goals?

A: Working on short-term goals and scheduling various kinds of performing opportunities provides avenues for growth by exploring a wider range of future activities.

Q: How do we motivate our students to develop a passion for learning and not be held back by the need to be perfect?

A: While perfectionism is a common trait amongst musicians, encourage students to focus on enjoyment rather than perfect playing.

“Put mental health first” – “It’s OK to not be OK and it’s OK to talk about it” - Simone Biles

### **Preparation tips for self-management:**

Notes from Simone Biles:

1. Try not to get too fixated on certain things that need to be there to perform well
2. Try to let go of as much pressure as you can during pre-performance warm-ups
3. Practice self-confidence and positive self-talk
4. Remember your training, you’re doing the same skills in front of others that you have been trained for
5. Stay focused, try to decrease negative talk and stay away from social media
6. Use adrenaline as your fuel
7. Work on deep breathing as this can help you “get into the zone.”

Notes from Musicians:

1. Mistakes are normal and can happen. Focus on sharing the music and its emotions with listeners
2. Try to relax as you play, which will help you achieve effortless playing
3. Take a deep breath and allow yourself to focus on the music and what you want to communicate to the audience
4. Practice playing in front of others—set up dry runs for pets, friends, family, and fellow students
5. Use Mental imagery to help release tension
6. Make good diet and exercise part of daily life
7. Utilize deep breathing to help maintain focus and help release tension

### **Concluding thoughts:**

- One size does not fit all as each student is unique: age, goals and learning styles.
- Navigate through student issues with sensitivity, care, and confidentiality.
- The ultimate role of the teacher is to eventually put ourselves “out of business,” creating independent, self-motivated students.
- How teachers word their feedback is critical and impacts the student either positively or negatively (this is also true for adjudicator’s feedback).

### *-Types of teacher influence:*

1. *Direct* (providing information)
  2. *Indirect* (asking open-ending questions and providing them with scenarios that will help them come up with their own answers for solving the problem)
  3. *Conceptual* (allows musical principles to be transferred from one situation to another)
- \*Balance is critical and shifts throughout the learning process is normal

### *-Feedback: Positively addressing issues:*

1. *Timely*: allow students to first comment on their work and incorporate peer comments in group settings
2. *Accurate*: manage when and how to best offer your own feedback in a constructive manner
3. *Actionable*: discuss solutions
4. *Supportive*: recognizing the student’s effort is critical
5. *Role reversal*—have the student take on the role of the teacher
6. Ask the student to *demonstrate* within the lesson how they would practice the composition at home. This can be an eye-opening experience for the teacher

*-Lifestyle*—home, school, work: including both musical and non-musical activities within the lesson, helps to inspire students to integrate healthy activities into their lives

### **Helpful Resources:**

Conway, Amy, editor. (2021) *Health: Understanding Mental Health: Recognizing the Challenge—Finding Support—Coping and Thriving*. Published by Meredith Corporation. Special Health Edition, BGH specials. *A helpful introductory resource that contains basic information about mental health. There are three chapters written by health professionals; “Decoding Mental Health,” “Finding Support,” and “Coping and Thriving.”*

Insel, Thomas, MD. (2022) *Healing: Our Path from Mental Illness to Mental Health*. New York: Penguin Press. Written by the former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Insel candidly discusses the mental health crisis and today’s problems. *“People, Place, Purpose, and the connections we make is crucial to recovery.”*

“National Alliance on Mental Illness” (NAMI): [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) This website has a vast amount of information on mental health issues with free courses and webinars for individuals and families working through mental illnesses. There is also information on the 600 affiliates across the nation. *“Mental health conditions are physical illnesses that result when one of the many mechanisms of the brain is not adequately doing its job.”* NAMI (Family to Family)

“Mental Health and Wellbeing” PSYCOM: <https://www.psycom.net/mental-health-wellbeing>

Information about mental health apps, newsletters, depression quizzes, support groups, resources and where to find help for depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders.

“Mental Health America” MHA: <https://mhanational.org/staying-mentally-healthy> This organization maintains a comprehensive list of virtual and in-person support groups across the United States for a variety of conditions and concerns.

*Simone Biles and anxiety:*

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/simone-biless-tips-for-overcoming-performance-anxiety-simone-biless-8-tips-for-overcoming-performance-anxiety-in-sports>

### **Useful Quotes:**

*“The approach has to be tuned not just to students’ accomplishment but also to their personalities”* – Dorothy Delay

*“Ask questions: by asking questions, the teacher invites the student to think about what they are doing and why. In time, they may begin to discover their own faults and find other ways to do things.”* - Dorothy Delay