

Managing Performance Anxiety

1. Meditation

Meditation is ideally practiced on a regular basis, building up a reservoir of calm that a musician can access during performances. I personally like and use [The Honest Guys](#) videos, found on YouTube. The guided imagery is imaginative, and they offer a variety of lengths, which makes it easy to fit into a busy schedule.

Taking 10 minutes to sit and take some deep breaths also works well. An easy breathing exercise is to breathe in for four beats, hold for two, and breathe out for six. Even if meditation doesn't become part of your regular routine, it will still be super helpful on performance days.

2. Self-Talk

Pay attention to your inner voice. Talk some sense into yourself with a reality check or two. You can do this. You will survive. Utilize affirmations (they work, I promise). Check out the affirmations I've created on the blog or create personalized ones. Write them out and stick them with your music so you can see them every time you practice. As a bonus, make some specific to playing, so your brain will automatically connect the two when you get up to perform.

3. Practice for Performance

Full credit goes to Bulletproof Musician, where I first came across this concept. His website (www.bulletproofmusician.com) is the best for performance psychology, full of great articles and encouragement. The basic idea is to spend some of your practice time performing your piece while imagining an audience being present. Play it with as much musicality as possible without stopping to critique or fix anything. Play through mistakes. Practice walking into the room, warming up, tuning etc. Think BIG picture, not the little details of the piece. Imagine others receiving what you are offering: a musical experience that both the performer and the audience can share in.

4. Think Beyond the Moment

If your performance is tomorrow, think about how you will feel the day after when all is said and done. Or more immediately, think of the moment you finish and the accomplishment that will be. Remind yourself that one performance does not make or break a musician, not even an "auditioning for my preferred college" performance. Go into the experience viewing it as just that - an experience that will help you as a musician, whether it goes the way you want it to or not. Create mid and long term goals that shift your focus from individual events to creating an overall musical journey.

5. Take Care of Yourself Physically

Sleep. Drink water. Lots of water. Stretch before every practice and especially before a performance. Take a walk the morning of performance day, if possible. Do some yoga or Tai Chi. Music is a whole body activity! Dr. Richard Norris - *richardnorrismd* on YouTube - outlines a specific exercise routine for musicians. (please note, my teenage readers, that his video is from the 90s so probably a little old school for you 😊)

6. Reflect on Your Accomplishments

Look at what you've done to get to this point: lessons, hours of practice, hard work. You now have the ability to make an inanimate object sing (thanks to my daughter's orchestra teacher for this concept), which is amazing when you think about it. And even if you're just squeaking out a few notes, playing through a couple of measures on the piano, or singing one line of a new melody you've composed, be thankful that you made the decision to put yourself on this creative journey. As you progress, keep a repertoire list so you have a visual record of all of the pieces you've played.

♪ *Whatever tricks and tips you decide to use, do just that: use them! Find what works for you and be mindful about incorporating them into your practice and performance preparation routines. Be proactive in addressing nerves so they don't get the best of you!*

Good luck! I'm rooting for you :)