



Time to Practice Podcast

Interview Transcript for Episode 6 with Laura Sinclair

This episode is brought to you by the Time to Practice Pep Talk series. You can find more information on the events tab of my website ChristineGoodner.com.

Laura Sinclair is an active performer and Suzuki teacher in the South Florida area. She can be found on the concert stage with ensembles like the Atlantic Classical Orchestra, Boca Symphonia, Symphony of the Americas and the Kravis Center Pops Orchestra, in the pit with visiting National Broadway tours and the Miami City Ballet, and at private events with Elan Artists. A former public school strings director, Laura is the curriculum consultant and music coordinator for the Volta Foundation, providing educational training and support to their teachers and a diverse repertoire sequence. Laura firmly believes that music can be a powerful tool for breaking down barriers, building good citizens of the world.

As a self proclaimed Suzuki fanatic, Laura is registered through Book 10, in addition to many supplemental courses in Pre-Twinkle, Group Class, Suzuki in the Schools, Spiccato, Priority Teaching, and Energy work. She blends high level teaching with her interest in neuroscience and attachment parenting. She shares this with her vibrant home studio, and parents and teachers worldwide. Learn more at <https://linktr.ee/lauraksinclair>.

Christine Goodner:

Welcome everyone today. I'm excited to be talking to Laura Sinclair and Laura I was hoping we could start by you just telling listeners a bit about who you are and what you do.

Laura Sinclair: So I am a Suzuki violin and Viola teacher based in south Florida. I have a thriving Suzuki studio. And I am also a public school strings teacher part-time as well as an active performer in South Florida freelancing and right now my current obsession is figuring out how to integrate neuroscience and emotions into the Suzuki Triangle.

Christine Goodner: we met through some online groups, I think. And I've been seeing that you're doing some work and research on the idea of young musicians and brains and emotions. Use that to make practice easier. And so I'm really excited to be talking to you about that today.

I wonder if we could just start - since we are recording this in the summer of 2021 - and if you could share anything about what the last year or so has been like for you, as far as music and teaching goes.

Laura Sinclair: so the last year has been Completely online as of March 13th, 2020. I am very thankful to have had a studio that continued with me 100%. Anything that I threw at them more group class, online group class. We haven't seen each other collectively as a group, at all. And they've said yes to all of it.

So I've really been thankful to have families who have been willing to experiment and turn the studio into a laboratory of what does work online, What doesn't work online and how we can still create community in an online sense, which has been interesting to experiment with. I think that there have been many positive things that have come out from it.

I've noticed a change in parent child dynamics because we've spent so much time together. Both positive and negative. And I've also noticed a change in my approach as a teacher, because we're not in the same room because

we are exploring things online. I've noticed things, probably teaching points that I never would have noticed if I were in the space with the student and Probably ignored teaching points that I would never have ignored other wise. So it's been a real to say that 2020 and 2021 is a laboratory of experimentation is probably how I would sum that up.

Christine Goodner: I think that was very well said. I can relate to all of that. And I've been so. Proud of all my students and families for, like you said, just going with the flow and trying whatever we can to keep our music going. Well, zooming back a bit in time. I was curious if you could start by telling us about when did you start playing a musical instrument and what got you into music in the first place?

Laura Sinclair: I grew up in a fishing village of 300 in the east coast, Canada. My mom. Is an amateur pianist and loves classical music and has it on constantly throughout her day. So, I like to say that I was raised on Tchaikovsky because we often had ballet music on, in the background.

There was always like classical talk radio, the Canadian and BBC on all the time. So it was really an aesthetic that I was raised in. And then I Begged for piano lessons from her when I was five and then the neighbors down the street, us very sweet New Zealand transplant to east coast of Canada had a daughter and she wanted to start teaching her violin. She'd grown up as a Suzuki child herself and knew that she needed company in order to make that happen. So my first violin lessons at seven were \$5. And we just went and hung out on Saturdays. And somehow there was a lesson in there and some group class, and I was hooked.

That was the beginning of the end of it for me. I also had the connection that my maternal grandfather also played the violin. So knowing that that was something that was also in his life, was also really appealing to me as a kid.

Christine Goodner: Wow. It sounds like a very rich musical home environment.

Laura Sinclair: yes, without even realizing it, which is really funny because my dad's side of the family, their joke is that the only thing they can play is the radio. Like they don't sing. They're not musical, that's just not a house that they grew up in. So it's funny that they have this professional musician daughter was such different backgrounds to coming from the parents.

Christine Goodner: I think it's interesting. Sometimes people will say to me, well, who in your family plays music, or you inherited the ability to play music, maybe from someone in your family. And I think what you're saying points out, maybe, but I think whether or not you're successful as a musician has very little to do with that. It's really about the environment and the work.

Laura Sinclair: exactly.

Christine Goodner: sounds like you loved playing music. So I think that part is clear. Do you remember always loving to practice? Is that something that came easy for you?

Laura Sinclair: I don't think so. I think that I, even to this day, struggle, if I don't have a system in place to make practicing happen, it's not going to. What I did take from my mom is an extremely organized person. So she always used to help me plan when the practicing would happen. At one point. I remember that I would get up and do scales after my brothers had gotten on the early bus and I would do my technique in the morning and then do more When I got off the bus later in the day. If I had a lot of repertoire I was running through, I was playing it for her while she was making dinner.

And as a high schooler, I knowing I needed to practice and not wanting to was a big struggle. So I would have moms screen my phone calls because I didn't have a cell phone, but friends who had finished their homework are likely to call you. I would say just don't let me take a phone call until I'm finished with my practicing.

Christine Goodner: the original airplane mode,

Laura Sinclair: the original airplane mode. Gosh, I wish she could still do that for me.

Christine Goodner: right? That's really interesting. She had a really good instinct maybe for what would help structure practice for a young person.

Laura Sinclair: I think so. And it's funny I know you and I are both fans of James clears, atomic habits. I think about how he talks about linking habits to an activity . . . it was never time-based in our house. It was definitely after you do this is when practicing will happen.

And just some days I'm like, oh, that's what I need to get back to. And then some days I'm like, okay, it just has to happen at 7:30.

Christine Goodner: Right. Reality might be, we have to do some of both, even if one makes it easier.

Laura Sinclair: Exactly.

Christine Goodner: So interesting. I do think as you're talking about that, that's exactly what I tell parents, who aren't sure where to start, or are having to help their child get in the practice. That's exactly the kind of thing I asked them to do: pair it up with something else, break it up throughout the day. Maybe your child can practice alone, but you as the parent or practice partner need to help them figure out when and how, even if they're doing the, what of it on their own.

Laura Sinclair: exactly. And maybe also addressing the expectation I, you said it well the other day, the expectation that like a child is going to want to practice and, and is ask to practice that may never happen. I don't think I was ever there.

Christine Goodner: Right. I'm not always that adult right now.

Laura Sinclair: I'm not that adult right now (laughs) I definitely notice a change in my own practice habits, not having the external forces of gigs to prepare as much. And what does that leave you with?

Christine Goodner: Right. in my studio and there's a lot of swimmers and part of the training as a swimmer where they're doing sit ups and you know, dry land workouts and things like this that are just really hard work. They may love to be in the water swimming. There's a piece of the training that is just discipline and you just know you're going to benefit, but you may not want to get started on it. I think practice often feels like that and it's not everybody understands that

Laura Sinclair: Yeah, I agree. I think a lot of parents perhaps go into it thinking that and oh, well, my child has parent who came to me and said, they'd been asking to play the violin since they were two. Yes. They love it. They love it so much, but I two year old does not understand that it going to be work. In their mind, of unconscious incompetence. They don't know what they don't know.

Christine Goodner: Right. even myself, as a musician, helping my own kids practice many years ago, I had that same thing. I didn't know what I didn't know when it was time to practice with them. Like we're really learning along with our children often, even if we're musicians about what does it mean to practice with young kids? And it's not delightful for everyone at all moments, even though it's worth it and we can make it positive.

Laura Sinclair: Right.

Christine Goodner: Great. Thanks for talking about all that. I think it's good to demystify practice and just what goes into it and how it feels.

Laura Sinclair: It gets uncomfortable for everyone at, at certain points. It's not going to always be, you know, roses and smiles and but it's important work that being a connection to deeper work outside of the violin, think that the violin is a metaphor for life in our relationships.

Christine Goodner: Yes. And I think parents who might be athletes might relate to the fact that you don't always want to get a workout in or go for a run, but you really like that you've done it. And you feel amazing afterwards. I think that's a similar feeling.

Laura Sinclair: Yes,

Christine Goodner: Well I like thinking about the question of, if we could go back and talk to our young beginner selves, what is something you wish you could go back and tell yourself? Or what would you tell yourself if you had the chance?

Laura Sinclair: I, you know I thought about this question a lot after you sent it to me. And I talk to my former self, my earlier musician self, I would tell myself. Build a better system at getting to practice reliably to make less excuses for why I couldn't

Christine Goodner: Yeah. And I think at a young age, maybe our brains, aren't ready to really think about that. So another way to say it is like, listen to mom.

Laura Sinclair: listen to mom. Yeah, she was right. Actually, as I'm journeying down this like more parental exploration, she starts to read what I'm writing and she starts to listen She's like, oh, You were listening.

Christine Goodner: I can relate to that as a parent. Sometimes it doesn't seem like anything's getting in when you say it to your kids, but then you hear them say it later and yeah, that's a gratifying feeling. That's great. Great. I had a parent once in one of my workshops say. You know, the prefrontal cortex of our brain, where we control all these things is not developed. (We were talking about that topic) and he said, well, I've just decided I'm going to be my daughter's prefrontal cortex until hers develops. And I really loved that way of thinking about it. It's just like, okay, this part of the brain is still developing. So as parents or practice partners of any kind, we're just standing in to help with that. And I think that's a nice way to frame it.

Laura Sinclair: that's a perfect way to frame it. And that's actually exactly why I started doing the research that I'm doing is because. I was noticing it both in my public school environment and in the private studio, I was just noticing, well, you know, there are so many big feelings that that are brought up by practice by learning a new skill by an interaction with a parent.

And I was curious both about the emotional triggers that happen within the parent child relationship. And then also just what's happening in the lesson that can help learning happen. And what are the roadblocks that get in the way. And that the first piece for me was, and why I talk about Terry Durbin and his teaching and his like obsession with neuroscience as a because fundamentally finding out about the structure of the brain and exactly what's happening.

If you don't really understand what a prefrontal cortex is or how it controls things for your child that can really make a child's behavior seem completely irrational, really hard to deal with. Very easy to take personally, very easy to misinterpret. and maybe like not developmentally appropriate either. Um, for me, what really flipped, was knowing the neuroscience and to thinking these soft skills as exactly that skills and muscles that we build, just like we're a personal, we're a trainer in the gym and we have to choose like the appropriate weight and the appropriate amount of rest.

In order to be able to practice that skill. And so that kind of reframed my teaching and my interactions with parents. Just not getting frustrated with like a lack of focus or a lack of desire to do the hard work. It's just something it's just work and it depersonalizes it for also helps me help parents understand it a little bit better.

Christine Goodner: I think that's really important. And I think. You know, we've learned so much about when I was a child, it really seemed like some of these things were considered character I talk about this a lot, but it was just like, "what's wrong with you? why can't you do this? Or like, get yourself together, you need to focus" or that kind of thing. And realizing this is just a skill the brain needs to develop or a structure the brain needs to develop or a connection. And there's no amount of you know, shaming or. Discipline, that's going to magically make our brain change.

Laura Sinclair: and, that's like the, what we're coming with as women. Like our skills were associated with our character. And now here we are, I enjoy working with the parents who are flip that model on themselves and dig into, "oh, I can help my child develop the characteristics that I would like to have." I can have an active role in helping them not only be their authentic selves, but also practice the skills that they need. In order to like regulate their emotions and think critically and develop, self critical skills and self-assessment skills actually going to help them, not just play the world's most, best Mississippi hotdog, but you know, assess whether they're happy with the work and see the value in effort.

Christine Goodner: I like that it around because I read something. I can't recently about whatever we're raised to think like, oh, this is a quote, unquote bad behavior tends to be what we get most frustrated with about in our own children. And so, as you're saying that, like those same parents were raised with that, like, this is about your character.

We really have to understand things differently. Or we put that back on our children instead of like, okay, it's going to make it harder to practice if there's also the shame and this what's with me feeling in the practice room rather than I'm here to help you as the parent, this is.

Laura Sinclair: I, really like to help parents kind of demystify this idea that the behavior a child is exhibiting is like a personal attack to them. they're just the closest to the bomb, You're going to get the most shrapnel. You're going to notice. I love that. You're going to notice exactly, probably the characteristic that your parents pointed out on you.

I think instead of Seeing yourself as a less than parent. I think it's better to frame it as a, it's an opportunity to change and maybe assess and make it better and make your child more comfortable and make yourself more comfortable because no one's going to want to practice the violin if it's uncomfortable for everyone.

Christine Goodner: Right and not to put blame on any parent because we're all parenting, probably how were parented. I mean, it goes back - infinity. That's not anybody's fault. Can we take some of that out of the way? So we can just focus on learning our instrument.

Laura Sinclair: Yes, exactly. And I think the more that we can be just reflective and more conscious of our own practices. I parent, which puts me in a very unique position of, I call myself the violin mom of mine.

So it puts me in the unique position that I've seen. I get to witness I'm witness and very up close and personal families. And from or your socioeconomic status or, um, or anything single parent divorced like multiple It doesn't matter. We all go through those same struggles, which really just means that your kid's normal and we're normal and

we're human.

Christine Goodner: Right.

Laura Sinclair: I think we need to give ourselves more permission to be human and open up to that struggle. And so feeling the shame of, “I don't know what I'm doing” it's better to embrace curiosity and better.

Christine Goodner: Yeah, I think most parents don't really know what they're doing. If someone tells you they do, they probably, maybe they have a blind spot.

Laura Sinclair It's an Instagram filter.

Science backs it up. You don't need to be the perfect parent. You need to be the good enough parents. Which is something that I really like love because it gives permission for mistake, which is exactly what we want to see in our students that we want to give them lots of permission for mistakes, so that they can feel empowered to make mistakes and learn from it rather than associating shame with it.

Christine Goodner: I did a certification in circle of security parenting and last summer, which I just, there's so many tie ins for Practice, relationships, but they were talking about just the biggest thing is that we can think “I'm not perfect,” but the biggest thing is that you repair things afterwards.

So if you have, you know, somebody their temper or, you know, we yell in the practice room, that's going to happen. You know, sometimes. There's going to be big feelings from every side of the triangle but we need to repair afterwards. They're like, let's talk or, wow. You know, we didn't get along so well today, . . . fixing that, repairing that relationship. So it's clear that we're all human. I think that's the piece that's important. It's not I'm not perfect. I'm not going to try to be, but the relationship is what we're holding as really important. And we repaired that even if the practice isn't perfect.

Laura Sinclair: Right. I love that, it circles back to understanding how children process, or how people in general process stress if they have a secure attachment to someone who helps afterwards.

And really the, tipping point is that processing afterwards. That ties in exactly what biologically we need. We need someone who's going to get on our level. We need about our emotions. Who's going to talk about what happened and help us remember to remember.

That takes all of those stress hormones in the brain down that helps us access our long-term memory. And that gives your brain that kind of helps build that skill of allowing your brain to be in that stressful situation. And, to recognize the duality of, I can have a stressed out parent who isn't wasn't the greatest practice partner today, but they are also loving person. And that, and that helps unite that, it can be the same person.

Christine Goodner: Right. And I think as parents, sometimes we just really want our child to calm down and be able to get to work in the practice. And I'm like “okay. We only have so much time”, “let's calm down” But acknowledging all those feelings rather than trying to get them like put away out of sight somewhere that, research says helps kids move through them quicker.

So even just like, “oh, I see you're really frustrated.” Or “I see you're annoyed with me right now “ or whatever it is, but naming those (feelings) is helping them process and actually moves them through faster. I think I had to learn that the hard way. I think at first it was just like “stop being angry” or “there's no reason to be sad about XYZ”, just because that's the way just acknowledging often it's like, oh, someone's listening to me. It's okay to feel that. And then move on.

Laura Sinclair: Right. I like that. We're seeing the emotion.

Christine Goodner: Right. And I think I've heard the argument that, well, our kids are going to be in the real world and it's going to be stressful. And I just think of any stressful situation as an adult. I really need to know how to calm

myself down or do those deep breaths or get my brain from a stressed out state calm state. So this is really giving you. Almost you work with yourself and keep calm and actually be able to make reasoned logical decisions in stressful situations? I think it's helping not, you putting them in a bubble where they can't cope.

Laura Sinclair: right. And we're using the violin is like this perfect example of actually choosing to be in a stressful situation and learning how to work through those difficult things. With something that really, you know, at the end of the day, all of their basic needs are going to be met either way. The violin is a bonus, but a great opportunity for long-term practice of these skills.

And you get to develop, an ear and an eye and an appreciation of beauty, all in one it's so much bigger. I think the longer I teach, the more I realize it's not about, the violin in some ways,

Christine Goodner: So true. I'd love to pivot a bit and talk more about your work. I'm sure we've been discussing it around the edges already, but I'd love if you could tell listeners what you've been working on lately. I know you've been doing research and putting together your own resources. So I'd love to hear more about that.

Laura Sinclair: So, what I've developed so far is I have been deeply interested in both neuroscience and emotional regulation (and how they) apply that to this as Suzuki triangle. So I am in the midst of A three series talking about the learning child's mind, where we dig into the structure of the brain. Exactly What's happening in the brain while a child's trying to learn, what's happening That keeps us from learning ,and how as parents and as teachers, we can use that knowledge to empower ourselves, to keep learning on track.

Some strategies that we can use. Like you name you already named a perfect one where we talk about the emotions and we name it. And we say, I see you're feeling frustrated. Another great strategy that I talk about remembering to remember . Where are we today? Talk about something that happened that was stressful that perhaps they're carrying. Name it. We're talking about it. We talk about exactly what happened.

We talked about the emotions associated with it. And you're right by doing that that not only acknowledges them as a human, it also allows them to move through that emotion faster. So my first talk, we talk about everything that's happening in of a child while they're learning and why violin lessons are so scary . . . because it ticks all the boxes for stress: it's novel, Unpredictable. they quite often don't feel like they have a sense of control. So if we can address all four of those things, when we're thinking about planning of the practice or planning the planning of the lesson, we can really take care of a lot and put the child at ease and really allow learning to happen.

The second talk that I about the structure of the lesson and how we can use that neuroscience and then emotional regulation to understand the work of what your teacher's trying to achieve. I base it on Suzuki teaching, but I think that it's applicable in lots of different scenarios. So we just talk about what the purpose of re review is and what's a developmentally appropriate approach while they're doing review, what's an appropriate expectation for while on their working piece.

I can't tell you how many times I a parent, either practicing lesson or when I'm trying to teach. And you get the "pinky, elbow, (indistinguishable)

everything I've talked about in other parts of the lesson, the working the working piece is really not the moment for me. Their brain is busy doing other learning.

Christine Goodner: Yes. I always say if you're trying to do long division and it's using all your brain power and then someone just comes near you and goes "2, 8, 6, " You cannot do it anymore.

Laura Sinclair: Yes, So let's, stop derailing that. And then my final talk we're going to dig into how we take everything that we've learned about learning and how a child learns. (For example,) an independent learner . . . we can support teenagers . The neuroscience research on teenagers is so new. I had no idea until I fell down the rabbit hole, 10 years maybe. And before then, we were just assuming that you know, you became a teenager and your brain was just like an adult's

Christine Goodner: Like an irresponsible adult, I feel like.

Laura Sinclair: A really irresponsible adult. Well, was all based on (the idea) that the brain itself is growing, but then the network that's being built inside is what gets more complicated. So, I find that really fascinating and it, lines up with how . . .

I've been in south Florida for about 10 and now I just have this gaggle of (teens in the studio) and they all come with their own baggage and I had to figure them out. So I've been thankful that my life is influencing research in my own interest, in figuring them out, has led me down this path.

Christine Goodner: Yeah. You have your own laboratory there

Laura Sinclair: Yes, I'm doing those talks. And then what I've also added is that a component of my studio is parent support, built into tuition, where I spend time with the parents outside of the lesson, talking not only about. "Okay, this is happening in the lesson and this is a behavior that we want to address" but also just talking about how can we build better practices and more conscious parenting into your everyday life too. And use the violin as a mirror for everything else that you want to see from your child.

Christine Goodner: Right. Exactly. What a great benefit to the parents. And I try to do the same. And I think if somebody is listening as a teacher and thinks, well, don't know how to do that. Maybe (they can) connect with you and your resources and just, you know, find a way to incorporate what they learned from you. Or have the parents all sign up as well. And talk about it as a studio. There's a lot of ways you don't have to be the one creating these (yourself).

Laura Sinclair: No we don't. What I'm building towards is that I will be doing a lot of my parent offerings. I'll be opening beyond my studio so that might be a monthly parent class and then the opportunity to work with me, even if you're not a member of my studio. So that's the long-term vision is that I can extend my reach to beyond just the parents in my studio.

If you happen to be in my studio. Then you get to see me from all angles. But I think that I am passionate about finding parents who are curious, just like I am about how best to work with our students and how we can make that a cooperative.

Christine Goodner: Exactly - I like to say there's so many ways we can practice things, but we have one relationship with our kids. And as a that needs to come first for you as the teacher, I can put music first and, you know, emphasize certain things about that, but I really want them yes, help your child with practice, but they have one relationship with you. So that's got to come first.

Laura Sinclair: and they also have to make sure that they are not associating (pause) Alfie Kohn 's *Unconditional Parenting* - with the love that they're offering as a parent. So very important in our practicing, too. are, that your child feels secure and loved regardless of their effort and

Christine Goodner: Yes. I think that's really important. I think most parents would say, of course, I don't think that, but it doesn't mean it doesn't come across to our children like that accidentally. I don't think most parents do think,

well, I only love you if you play well on the instrument or, you know, have a good lesson. But I think what I'd love you to share more if you could, is how do we make sure we're not doing that by accident.

Laura Sinclair: oh, it's never an intentional thing. Gosh, no, it's certainly not. I think that some reflection exercises before and after the lesson where we're talking about making sure that they feel like their emotional needs are met before they walk into the lesson, which I we're kind of missing that because zoom, you turned on the camera and boom, we've started the lesson.

So the opportunity for an expectation. So you make sure that you've put fuel in that, like you filled that glass first and then Depersonalized feedback where we removed the language of "you" from it. We talk about the finger or, and also just flipping it a little bit on the student of instead of saying, "oh, well, your second finger was too low "or, well, one already you've used the word "you", If they hear the word you, they are going to just associate it with their whole being.

As an adult, you might go, okay. So my finger landed in the wrong place, but it's a long stretch for a child to be able to hear that - all they do is hear all of you. And when you're in a lesson and you see your child not focus and you can't help it and you tell them to focus, you've now directed their brain to "I've made mom or dad unhappy."

So we have to, it's not a conscious thing at all, but I think we can be really conscientious about depersonalizing, how we do that. (Also) dispassionate is a great word about, about what's happening in the practice and also just flipping and allowing the child to assess whether they've done. If you help explain. Very clearly.

I actually have another practice tactic that I use called teaching through auditory guidance where, because even voice is an emotional trigger to a child where you actually can use anything like a pin click is a great I've used dog clickers, but they honestly they're a little loud. So a pen click is great and the pin click just. time you see, you have to be as a very careful watcher as the parent, but every time you see the skill happen, means yes to the activates the dopamine gets the learning happening, makes it more playful. And when they don't hear it, They're not going to get (the "you" message) it's dissociated from you. It's just a pen click. And then it just reminds them to be more mindful. I that's of my favorite little things to do.

Christine Goodner: I'd have to find it, but there was an NPR story about surgeons learning to tie sutures, and they found that they successful and motivated. I am, maybe I'm not quoting the exact findings perfectly, but they had better results with like a clicker type training than with their Boss or coach or mentor giving them auditory feedback. And that's not even a parent,(which is a) whole other layer of "I really care how you feel about me" in the mix.

Laura Sinclair: right. That's a whole layer of the biological response that's baked in there. We are, our children are designed to care about your voice more than anything to parents all the time. When you (interrupt the flow) you better make sure that those words are something you really needed to say, because now I have to start my lesson.

Christine Goodner: And I, as a parent, I had to think just "how can I help this child" because even my two children were different, but what's going to help this child today. And that helps me as a parent take the emotion out of, well, "I should be able to tell them this", or "they should . . ." "You know, there's so many should that come from our upbringing but just "okay, today, what does this child need?"

And if it's to not be interrupted by my voice, Yeah, I hope, I hopefully over time, got to the point where I could see the benefit of that. I guess I want to say this is really hard work as a parent. We're asking for a lot of what they call emotional labor or work on ourselves as parents, in order to do all that.

Laura Sinclair: Yes. And I think that if anything, 2020 and 2021 have really forced the mirror in front of all of us and made us have to really realize how much work is ahead of us. But it's really, I think, comforting and exciting to know that as a collective. As a Suzuki Community parents in general, we're all more interested in being able to do this and

create conscious change and become more interested in the world and truly understanding why we do the things that we do.

Christine Goodner: Right I feel like I'm doing that that again? Or why was I doing this in the first place Yeah, it's a good time to just reinvent. I think there's also a lot of grace from everyone else right now to do things like that because we're all being introspective and thinking about all this.

Laura Sinclair: Right. It goes back to that laboratory. we're all back in the laboratory.

Christine Goodner: Exactly. Well, I feel like we could talk for days and maybe we'll do this again in the future because it's been such a pleasure, but I like to end with just asking tip. If you could kind of tie things up with a bow today and share a tip for listeners that they could use in their practice right away, what would you like to share?

Laura Sinclair: I would say my suggestion for parents and practices would be to put your own mask on first. So make sure that your biological needs are met. Assess yourself, sit for a second. Am I hungry? I use the word halt, hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. If you have addressed all of those things and then see that all of those needs also met for my child.

And maybe also assess, is there anything missing. Especially with the hungry thing, do I think that they're not hungry or are they actually not hungry? I'm going to throw that in there because sometimes you just need a little something.

Laura Sinclair: And that can like dopamine response and we're more receptive to doing things. I would say, put your mask on first, make sure that the mask is on your child. That seems a very 2020 thing to say. Meet the child that you have in front of you today. Not the one you had yesterday, not the one you had last week, the one that's in front of you and make them a partner in and executing the practice so that way they feel like they're in control. If you've taken away the unpredictability. And because you're there with them, there's less threat to the ego.

Christine Goodner: I think, I want to add to what you were saying . . . with this past year plus . . . sometimes we can't get rid of those things, but maybe we can put them aside or I've even visualized, packing something I don't want to think about, or can't think about right now into a box and taping it shut and okay, I'm going to deal with that later.

Or one of my teaching mentors, Yuko Honda would say she would tell a student "I see you're carrying something really big in with you to the studio. Can you go hang it on the tree outside and come back in?" So I think there's also a way to just think about "okay, I feel all these things, but for this point in time, this timeframe I'm setting it aside to work with my child." I'm going to put that aside and not bring it in the practice room with me.

Laura Sinclair: yes. I love that. Even just the process of recognizing it and helping your child recognize when they have something that they really need to process, but maybe it's not the right moment or it's going to, it's something that really needs unpacking to write, to give them a vehicle to just being heard, to recognize that they can't solve it right now and to help them find a place to put it so that they can to it later. I think secure attachment to me right there, knowing that you will be able to come back to it and process it with your person.

Christine Goodner: Right. And as a parent, I can just jot down. Okay. I'm worried about this, this thing. Here it is on this piece of paper. I'm not going to forget about it, but I can come back to it in 30 minutes when I'm done practicing with my child. I think it's important to acknowledge, you know, we don't all live in the perfect world where we can get rid of those things, and you're not saying that but I think it's important to but can we put them somewhere else and just be there with our child for that moment and then we can pick them back up again?

Laura Sinclair: Yeah. our problems will always find us again right?

Christine Goodner: It's just that they're not taking up space or all the space in our brain during that practice.

Laura Sinclair: Exactly. I have notebooks everywhere around my house where I can jot those things down. I call it my pre-practice brain dump. I can't play until the life made the to-do list and everything that I'm worried about piece of paper.

Christine Goodner: Right or it shows up for me, you know, like a bee buzzing around. I need to write it (and remember) okay, it's not going anywhere. I'm not going to forget. just let it go for, you know, until the end of the day.

Laura Sinclair: Exactly

Christine Goodner: Thank you so much. I wonder if there's any resources, but we'll definitely can I'll connect with you and make sure we can share where parents can and connect with you Um, if you have a like parents to find you That'd be great.

Laura Sinclair: So I've actually put up a freebie for your listeners. on understanding how the brain works and how we can use that in practice and some skills, some strategies that we can use. And that's a great way to get me. If you have any practice questions, you can follow me on Instagram. also a great way to see what I'm offering in terms of parent education and what's happening in my studio.

Christine Goodner: Great. We'll make sure everyone can find that. Well, it was a pleasure to speak with you today and thanks so much for your time and all your great information.

Christine's top 3 takeaways:

- 1. Young children may ask, or even beg, to play an instrument but they don't always know what the process involves when they get started.**
- 2. Big feelings come up during practice and that is very normal for adults and students alike. It something that we can seek to understand better and work through together.**
- 3. When we understand how the brain and learning works it helps us to understand the behavior we're seeing in the practice room and take it less personally.**

We hope you enjoyed this conversation! Subscribe to the Time to Practice podcast on your favorite podcast platform and follow on social media so you're sure to see future episodes. We can't wait to share them with you!