



Episode 25: 2021 Practice Tips - Part 2 with Christine Goodner

Welcome to Episode 25!

This episode is the second in a series wrapping up our amazing guests' practice tips from our 2021 podcast guests. If you missed last week's episode, and the first part of this series don't forget to go back and listen to Episode 24 so you hear them all - I found them so inspiring as I revisited them all to put together these two episodes for you.

This episode is airing for the first time during the last week of 2021 - my hope is that we can all head into the new year with some good reminders for our music practice. Whether you are a musician or a parent or both, I think everyone can take something away from these tips.

As I said last week:

We always wrap up our conversations on the Time to Practice podcast sharing one final tip for you to take with you and use. Before we hear from our first 10 guests on this week's episode a huge thank you to you for listening and making our first 20+ episodes such a success.

Thank you for listening, for sharing on social media, for recommending in your school and studio newsletters, and for sharing episodes that spoke to you to your friends and colleagues.

This is the best way you can support this project - spread the word and share episodes you love with someone in your life you think would appreciate them. I so appreciate you being here and being a part of this project.

If you want to go back and listen to an episode you missed, or relisten to the ones you loved you can find links to each of these episodes on SuzukiTriangle.com/TTPEpisode25/

The first tip we're going to hear today is from Ruth Meints. Ruth is the executive director of the Omaha Conservatory of Music, the creator of String Sprouts, a music educator, and the author of the book *The Music Teacher's Little Guide to Big Motivation*. Let's hear her practice tip

Ruth Meints

I think the most important thing is every little bit counts. I think a lot of times, we get caught up in this idea of perfectionism, and we've got to do all of the things that our practice session. And if we don't do all the things, then we, we didn't do it, or we failed or something like that. Every little bit counts. It's all important. Even getting that one little bow hold made or just that practice on that one tricky section is progress. You did it! That should be celebrated, right? Every small step counts. I think as a person who's very driven. I want to reach every single thing, goal, every single thing that I want to do. And I have to realize every little bit counts. So I'm telling myself that, you know, and I think that that was important with my own kids in practicing. We got something done, and that's what counts.

Next, we're hearing from violinist and violist, conductor, and parent from Minneapolis, Minnesota Tamara Gonzalez about the practice tip she wanted to share about taking something many of us learned to do during online learning and taking it forward with us.

Tamara Gonzalez:

As a teacher and even as a parent, too, I have found asynchronous learning to be incredibly helpful. And so I, I feel like one of my big things is I'm just trying to spread the word about keeping this asynchronous idea going past the pandemic. I've used asynchronous learning since way before the pandemic. I use an app called Seesaw, which is intended for classroom teachers actually, but it works just fine for how I use it, you could also use Flipgrid or Marco polo, which is a social media app, but it's a closed network app, which makes it much safer for younger kids to be on.

But basically just this idea of like, when your kid has hit that breakthrough in the lesson and learned something, ask your teacher permission to just record it again. And whether it's you recording your child, playing that thing correctly, or asking your teacher to demonstrate it one more time correctly so that when you're practicing, you're making sure that you're doing it the right way. Because again, that idea of that know bad practice makes bad habits. Good practice makes good habits. So I would say that that would be my biggest tip is to just embrace the smartphone that you have in your hand and videotape things are, you think will be good, supplements to your written notes so that you're making the most out of your practice time.

Dr. Quinton Morris is a violinist, professor, entrepreneur, the founder of Key to Change, and the host of Unmute the Voices on Classical KING FM. Here is his tip about practice and perseverance.

Dr. Quinton Morris

Be patient and keep going. Progress is like a valley. You have your good days and you have your bad days, but you gotta keep going and you can't give up. You just gotta power through and also be patient with yourself. Some days you might be in a cranky mood, but that doesn't mean you should quit. You should just be cranky for that moment. And then keep going. Some days you'll feel like you're on the moon and just so happy and excited and keep going. You know <pauses>understand success is a progress. And you gotta go with kind of the flow of life and you've gotta go with the flow of what is best for you.

Brittany Gardner and Kelly McConkie Stewart are cellists, teachers, parents, and collaborators on a cello choir in the Salt Lake City Utah area. They both share their tip for practice with you as well.

Kelly McConkie Stewart

I guess . . . Okay, maybe a practice tip since my head is in this, you know, cell choir that we run jointly. It is a really neat thing to make a child accompany their teacher. So if they're on an inner voice and so I play against them, the outer voice in order to pass things off, there is so much to be gained from learning your role as a musician, particularly as a cellist, we, you know, tend to play the baseline or the middle lines, but the practice tip would be to find a way that your, your child cannot be the only one supported and clapped for, but that they have to accompany as a younger sibling or, you know, play the secondary part or play the first part beautifully.

Brittany Gardner

Yeah, I think that's really good tip. I thought about this question a lot and I, because this year has been all about dismantling and looking at things differently and doing it differently and challenging myself and making myself it out of my habit, and we came out of it with growth and beauty and connections and surprisingly, a beautiful year that I'll never forget.

I guess the tip is it's okay to change the way you're doing things. As long as the change still supports your long-term goal. And my, my long-term goal as a teacher is one word it's connection.

I want to connect myself to students, students, to their parents, students, to each other students, to other studios, students, to community generations. I want connection. That's why I teach. And so if I can think, okay, is this I'm doing now creating connection, then it's good. But if it's not really, then maybe I need to change. So we get so stuck in, I think the tasks and the patterns and what's on the chart and that's important. I'm like a lover of charts. Anyone who knows me for five minutes knows I love charts, but they are not the end. All, they are a step to growth. And so have courage to dismantle the chart in favor of the growth that you're seeking.

Next, we're hearing a practice tip from violinist, music educator, author and parent Ashley Rescot. Ashley has a new fiction book for teens and pre-teens called A Change in Tune and I loved her tip about practice:

Ashley Rescot

As a parent and a teacher: I always think that at least a little bit is better than nothing. So on the days when you're like this isn't working or it's not perfect, which is also part of kind of my book theme (perfection, how to deal with that).

Something is better than nothing. So even if it's just, you know, 10 minutes or even it not perfect in your head, but working with students just that little bit is still beneficial. And it's all those times, you know, put together over the course of their, their practicing career. That adds up.

I had the pleasure of connecting with Chenoa Murphy in a number of ways this year and was thrilled to have her on as a guest. Chenoa Murphy is a violinist and the creator of great, and super popular, courses about Black Classical Composers and Musicians. Here is her tip about practice:

Chenoa Murphy:

What stands out to me is that I remember my undergraduate professor, Kurt Sassmannhaus [saying]: slow practice leads to the fastest way to learn a piece. And, oh my gosh, in our society of instant meals and instant weddings and instant this and instant that, that is the last thing that a child will probably want to hear, but it really is true that the slower you take a piece and really learn it, note by note, even dynamic by dynamic is the path to learning a piece the fastest. So that's what I would say because you have to give your brain a chance to catch up with the finger movement. And, you know, there's, there's a whole-body thing that's happening when you slow the practice down. So by the time you start to speed it up, muscle memory can kick in.

Emily Hawe is an executive functioning skills coach and her episode got such great feedback. As parents and music educators, I think we don't often hear about executive functioning skills but they are such a huge part of successful practice. This is a must-listen if you missed it:

Emily Hawe:

I think coming up with some way to visually track practice or performance. So what kind of chart or system can you make? You know, with young children, like I mentioned, maybe pompoms into a jar every time they practice. As children start to get older, you know, maybe each time they play a piece, they can rate their performance so that they start to really be able to provide that self-feedback, self-monitoring. You know, today I felt like my performance or my focus, maybe it's not even their actual performance maybe it's just their focus level was at a three. Tomorrow maybe my goal is to make it at a four or five. And so each day, they're actually tracking that. So we start to give them a real visual, tangible way of seeing how they improve over time. Like you were saying, it's a marathon for learning music. So how can we break it down and make their progress more visual, more tangible to them? Cause we as a teacher or a parent might say, be able to recognize that you're getting better, but for that child in the moment, it feels like they're never going to get it. So how can we help them celebrate those small successes along the way?

Claire Allen is a violinist, a music educator, and a writer for violinist.com. I really appreciated her behind-the-scenes look at developing self-awareness and supporting the whole student.

Claire Allen:

I would say kind of to go with, along with what I've said before, the secret to effective practice is understanding yourself. And I think that's a lifelong thing that we're all still trying to do. But I think if you're a parent practicing with a child, understanding how your child learns and what works for them, rather than trying to reach goalposts or external things is going to be more effective. And if you are someone like my past self was who just desperately wants to be good enough at the violin and is trying so hard and people keep telling you to loosen up and relax, first of all, ignore them because "just relax"

has never helped anyone in the history of anything and ask yourself what you need to understand more about yourself. And that's going to be the key to getting past whatever it is you're going through.

Finally, we're wrapping up this episode with a tip from music educator, curriculum developer, and teacher coach Jessica Peresta. I love this tip that focuses on meeting your child where they are and understanding their needs.

Jessica Peresta:

Oh man. Okay. So I actually am teaching one of my kiddos piano. He is actually six as well, ironically. So, my favorite tip for him is I notice that if he's not in the mood, <laugh>, I'm just not gonna force it. So it's finding time throughout the week that would work for your calendar for practice. And then also knowing, the personality of your child because he is a very sensitive kid. And so if he gets frustrated easily and if he does not get it, he will cry easily. So I know I've learned to use the phrase, "let's come back to this later and try again" Usually when we do that, he's fine. So I would say when it comes to practicing, don't get frustrated easily, whether it's for you or your child that you're listening for don't get frustrated easily. And if your child is getting frustrated, know that it's okay for them to come back to their instrument later and try again and that it's also okay if they're not understanding a piece, rely on their teacher for support. Ask them questions, you do not as the parent have to figure it all out on your own because I know that that can feel a little frustrating sometimes as well. With practice, just follow the instructions from your teacher from warming up to scales and to pieces and whatever that might be, and just don't give up, just keep going cause you'll get it.

Thank you so much for being a part of the first season of the Time to Practice podcast. A huge thank you to all our amazing guests and to you the listener for being a part of our community.

I'm looking forward to many more conversations in 2022 and would love to hear who you would like to hear from on the podcast! You can send me a DM on Instagram @Suzukitriangle. or send me an email at Timetopracticepodcast@gmail.com

Have a happy new year!

