



Episode 61: How to End Practice: A Conversation with Kathryn Drake

Christine Goodner:

Well, welcome everyone. I'm excited today to be talking to Kathryn Drake and I was hoping you could start by giving us a little window into who you are and what you do in the world of music.

Drake:

Yes, I'm so happy to be here. My name's Drake. I am a violinist and a violin teacher, but my primary obsession, my primary interest is human learning and how to develop the inner world of children, especially young children. I teach a studio of 35 in Ithaca, New York at Ithaca Suzuki Music Education, which was formally Ithaca Talent Education, a historic Suzuki school. I feel so lucky to be able to teach there and especially amongst a variety of colleagues who each bring their own skillset and expertise to the school. And I just in July, stepped into the co-director role of that school. So right now my growth edge learning curve is more of the administrative and leadership side.

Christine Goodner:

Well, that's exciting. Congratulations. (Drake: Thank you)

When did you start learning music? What age were you? And I don't know if you started on the violin or not. I would love to hear your sort of origin story with music.

Drake:

Yeah, of course. I'm a classic Suzuki kid in the sense that I started at age four. My mom was my primary practice partner. I do like to make sure people know that neither of my parents were string teachers, string educators. My mom sang in a choir and my dad's been a lifelong appreciator of music. Their primary excitement about Suzuki was actually the philosophy and the commitment to education. I come from a long line of educators. My great grandmother was a teacher, my grandmother, both of my parents. And I think that's what made learning Suzuki at the beginning feel so special with my family is that they really believed in it and they felt kind of excited to be part of something. And I don't think we can overlook how special that is. Is the core understanding, commitment, investment and how exciting it is to be part of this Suzuki philosophy

Christine Goodner:

That is really special. Yeah, I love that. I love that you had that passion. I think that probably comes through in what you do today, that legacy.

Drake:

I Think so too.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I love that. Do you remember anything about practice when you were growing up? It could be at any point in your journey, but do you remember liking it? Do you remember it being hard? What do you remember?

Drake:

Yeah, it's a great question. I think my mom was sort of accidentally an amazing practice partner, so we started it four. My sister also started when she turned four, and we had the classic practice spot in our house. We had routines for whether we practice before school with my mom in the library or if we'd come home after school and practice there. I started with this incredible Japanese American Suzuki teacher in San Marcos, Texas named Deanna Badgett. She was simply amazing. I remember going to her house, her husband, I believe cultivated bonsai trees, and so he would be tending to the plants and we would go into her house. It felt so calm, so stable, so serene. And I'd go into the lesson with her and everything had a place. And I just remember as a kid feeling safe. And still when I was with her, every motion had a purpose and attention.

And she brought in a lot of things like origami and storytelling into our lessons. So my primary signature feeling of when I was little is my parents are really excited for us to do this. I want to do it too. And when I hang out with my teacher, it's a really safe, calm environment. Later, when I was in seventh grade, we moved to a different part of Texas. I was becoming kind of self-conscious and I was in a school district that didn't have any strings programming, and I had another, and I switched teachers to Tim Waseca and Christie Meadow and Round Rock, Texas. They were also both extraordinary, a different flavor.

They pulled me into a much larger world of classical music. Tim performed with a lyric opera in Austin, and so I got exposed to their kind of world of classical music making. And I felt at that time I was a tiny little fish in a big huge pond, and I didn't always know what to, I didn't always know where my place was in that. And when I was going through practice in seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade, I had this core feeling that I wanted to be. I wanted to understand what I was doing. I wanted to understand what practice meant. I wanted to understand what playing an orchestra meant. I wanted to understand what the music I was playing, what era it came from, et cetera. And so slowly but surely through research working with Tim and Christie, I started pulling those threads. And probably the most, even more than any lesson probably the thing that helped me get into the world the most was that Tim had a book of CDs, hundreds, his music collection, hundreds of CDs, and any of his students could just literally pull a CD out and take it and borrow it for the week.

Something that feels really hard to do. Now, I've tried to recreate it with my students. So we had a booklet of CDs and we drove an hour to get to his house. And so my mom and I would just play that CD in the car and then I'd get home and I'd put it into my alarm clock radio and I could do with his CDs of the Tchaikovsky concerto and the Mendelson symphonies, what I had been taught to do with the Suzuki CDs or the Bach concertos or the partitas and sonatas, the solo repertoire. And I got to develop a relationship with that music and I got to come into the lesson each week and be like, oh my gosh, have you heard the third movement of Mendelssohn or something? And we could connect over that laugh

about that and get excited about that. So it was less for me what was happening inside of the lesson in particular, inside of my practice in particular. But what was expanding my mind about what was possible and for what it's worth, the same exact thing happened around sophomore year with teaching as well. He just happened to have a bookshelf of teacher books, and I started to pick them up. I read *Helping Parents Practice*, and I cried in Talent Point things and I was like, oh, there's this world I can explore. Oh, this is so much bigger than I realized.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, I love that. Because I think some people will identify with this or see their children in this, that some students, what motivates them is not what traditionally gets talked about as motivation strategies, but just understanding the why or just being sort of exposed to certain types of music or even ideas like you're saying, that's so powerful. And some students, if we don't offer them some way to do that, are really not going to get hooked in. I think it's so important to talk about.

Drake:

And he didn't need to tell me what to do or what to listen to. His book was just sitting there and I just picked it up and it got curious about it, and then it was mine and I owned it, and then I could bring it back to him and say, well, what about this? And then we could keep the conversation going.

Christine Goodner:

That is harder to do without physical CDs or cassette tapes or whatever it is. Yeah,

Drake:

Isn't it?

Christine Goodner:

Yeah.

Drake:

Isn't it? Yeah. I think that's one thing for us to really think about these days with the technology that we're using. Yeah,

Christine Goodner:

I think so too. This school year, we're doing an artist of the month. I always have a picture of somebody up on the studio wall that has good posture so that the students can kind of point their scroll there, but also model that. But then this year I was like, oh, I'm going to add a listening. I made a Google Doc with ways to listen, like this artist, YouTube, this artist Spotify and Apple Music in the hope that maybe some of that could happen each month. If there's a different artist to dip into that somewhere, someone will connect. So I am trying to think about that too. I think it's really important.

Drake:

Right now we're doing the parent education segment of our new incoming class for the school, and we're having to go through this listening literally down the line. If you're going to do Amazon this, if you're going to do Spotify, this. But one thing we said is if you want to buy all of this, literally get on and get yourself a CD player and get a CD and let your child press the play button. And it's almost like we're

recirculating back to an original. But I, yeah, I can't recommend that enough, is giving your own child a relationship with whatever single use technology.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I think that's really smart. Yeah, I'm not that old, but we had records when my Suzuki listening was on the record player in my parents' bedroom. Yeah. Times have changed, although vinyl's coming back too, so

Drake:

Exactly. Give it five years and maybe all Suzuki families will be doing records. I love it.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. Well, you talked a lot about what inspired you. Do you remember, it sounds like maybe that move, it took you a little time to find your footing again, but do you remember anything being challenging with practice or your identity as a musician?

Drake:

Yeah, I mean, I guess it went hand in hand with that time. That's such a hard time when you become a self-conscious middle schooler. I remember something that I didn't get for a while and I kept hearing from teachers is you need to play with more core sound. You need to play with more tone. And I didn't know how to find that, the classic tools of heavier, and it just didn't feel right or sound right to me. And one day my teacher handed me his viola and he said, just play my viola for a second. And because of the mechanics of the instrument, you have to lead with more weight and connection and friction with the string in order to produce sound. And the light bulb went off for me in that instance by changing a physical input. And then he helped me further down the road, get into different spaces.

So playing in much larger rooms, playing in different varieties of rooms, playing with different temperature sounds and different physical preparations, going and running around the house one time and getting my heart rate up and then playing and then learning how to use recordings. So all of that to say, and I wouldn't have put the words to this at the time, but I was relying too much on my own perception of the instrument to guide my practice rather than empathizing with an audience or having a larger sound world than just my own ears. That was a hard learned lesson, but oh my gosh, so valuable in the long term. And I think it's something that kids crave as well, is how to get their own instrument in a different zone, a different aural environment than just the four walls that they're used to practicing in.

Christine Goodner:

And that physical experience, it's one thing to intellectualize and talk about those things, and it's another thing to experience it in our body. And yeah, I think of the different spaces I tell students to go practice in an echoy bathroom where I have this really tall ceiling right outside my studio and we'd go out there before recitals. The sound in an echoy space is so different than in a carpeted space and just experiencing things is so important.

Drake: Exactly. Yeah.

Christine Goodner: Yeah. Thanks for sharing that. I think one thing we like to do on this podcast is just talk about the different experiences people have. And I like people to realize not everybody's path is the same or experience is the same, growing up with music and practice, and if your child looks different

than some other child, you see, that's totally normal. And we're just want to offer a lot of different ways for students to connect their music so they feel like they get what they need. Well, one thing we mentioned before this conversation was your background in Zen and mindfulness, and I would love to hear about how that informs the way you approach teaching specifically or working with young students and how that informs what you do.

Drake:

Yeah, Zen's been a really big part of my life. It's kind of a chicken or egg thing. I don't know if I was primed for Zen or if Zen has shaped me into a certain way to things, but my two passions when I was a kid were playing violin and running. And so both of those could be seen as kind of tedious internal introspective art forms. And what it really felt like when I was a kid was getting into the real stuff, getting into it. I loved getting on the inside of an experience. And when I was in undergrad, my first year of college, I think in passing, I listened to a Tim Ferris podcast where they said, you'd be more productive if you meditated. So I said, well, I'll give this a try. So I downloaded Headspace and I went to my dorm laundry room and sat in between a dryer and a sink or something, and I sat down and I meditated for five minutes and I distinctly remember it feeling like a really productive violin practice session. And later I found one of my favorite essays of all time written by a poet named Sparrow in the Sun Magazine. And he said, in writing about meditation, he said, meditation is practicing the guitar, but without the guitar. And I was like, oh, that's why I connect to it. It's like being with yourself, not having anything to do, just being here, just attending to yourself right now. So that's my favorite thing about meditating is that it's practicing the violin, but just without the violin. So I'm here with the practice orientation. I'm with the mindset of being with myself and attending to the moment, but I don't have anything to do or say or think. When I sort of discovered meditation and what was possible with it, then I started mean being the Suzuki kid, I started looking for an environment to help shape me. So I started checking out books in the library. It turned out that the Austin Zen Center was like two blocks away from my dorm where I was living. So I would ride my bike over there at six in the morning and break all the rules and do everything incorrectly and try to sit with the monastics there.

And then part of my decision to come to Ithaca was partly to do the graduate program in Suzuki pedagogy, but also to attend the Ithaca Zen Center that's been here and has a strong lineage to Zen. And a year into my graduate program actually moved to the Zen Center and became a resident there while I was wrapping up my studies. And it just taught me to the deepest level that the environment is the teacher being around people. There's no amount of reading in books that will inform the daily consistent practice and time contact with people who are doing what you're doing.

So that was really transformative. And I guess I could say just a few observations about how that connects to music and teaching. Well, what some people might not realize is that Suzuki was super impacted by Tolstoy and Bacon and Western philosophy and Christian mysticism of course, but also he studied Zen. His family was from the lineage of Samurai warriors, and he also had his mother's uncle, or his uncle was a zen priest. And he deeply studied the work of Dogan, who is a famous zen priest and writer thinker. So I think that was wrapped into his work. And there's some stories of him doing a lot of repetitive action and waking up early and being open to insight. That remind me a lot of my time with Zen. But the fundamental training that I received at least is there is only right now, there's no such thing as a future or a past.

I mean, there are conceptually, but we are right here right now. And it is often the fear of, or the anticipation of the future or the regret of the past that's getting in the way of right now being a special moment. And I love working with kids where we're not on a curriculum where they have to be someplace sometime I get to be completely with them right now. And the thing that they're learning

today is just as important and vital and precious as the thing that they're going to learn 10 years from now. And Mozart concerto is not more or less important than twinkle, but we have whichever one we have today, that's where we are today. And when you're sitting, so the practice often is just to sit yourself on a cushion and a comfortable posture and stay with yourself, stay with your breath for about 25 minutes.

And during that time, you completely dethroned the thinking. Conscious mind is being the most important part of yourself. And so you say, well, even if my mind tells me I'm thirsty, I'm not going to really get up and go to get a drink of water. I'm just going to stay here and experience that. Or even if I'm a little chillier, even if it would be preferable to close the window, I'm just going to sit with myself and experience that temperature. And the same being with in practice in time with students, even when we're getting to that edge of it might be a little uncomfortable right now, it's okay for things to feel uncomfortable or coaching parents on. Just because they feel upset about practicing doesn't necessarily mean that they can't bring that into practice. Do an upset version of twinkle, do an upset version of your bow hand.

That's all right. We're not going to require a certain feeling in order to be present to the practice or the process. And then one more that I'll say, people might know that in Zen, a lot of Buddhist traditions, they use the term sangha for the community who you practice with. And that could be the greatest Sangha all people who practice, or it could literally mean people who you live with, who you practice together with. It comes from the Sanskrit, I believe it's a Sanskrit term. And that was so powerful living at the Zen centers that we got up every day and we sat together, and that directly corresponds with our group class experience. But I think it also even corresponds with why it's so important to involve parents from the very beginning. So that just like I did with my family practice was a family unit thing. My sangha together, all of us are enacting on the same journey and you uphold each other in that you remind each other of certain things and you go through a challenging process together that brings you closer together. So Sangha is one of the vital elements of practice in Zen, and it's acknowledged in the tradition that if you try to practice without sangha, you're going to be facing an uphill battle. It's so much easier to gather together than it's to do it alone.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, definitely ties exactly into what we're doing. I love all of that, and we have different backgrounds from each other, but what you're saying there is just, so how I teach and how I believe in teaching is okay, you're allowed to not want to practice. I think sometimes students are more willing to do it if we just say it's okay to feel like I really would like to be doing anything else right now. I don't feel like that when I practice, sometimes I think giving people permission to feel what they feel is research. I've done some research on attachment parenting. I have a certification in circle of security parenting, and one of the things they talked about is if you try to talk someone out of an emotion or tell them it's bad or whatever, it takes them a lot longer to move out of it.

And if you just let a child feel their feelings, they're going to regulate, they're not having to fight that or shame themselves for it, it will last so much shorter. And I am coming from maybe a psychological research side of that, but I think it's so true to just say, okay, you don't have to like it. That's fair. We do have to get this in today or whatever. It doesn't mean we're never going to practice if we don't feel like it. But yeah, I so ascribe to that and then people feel heard and seen, and you could just be yourself, come to practice as yourself.

Drake:

Yeah. Again, how do we get closer to what is? And it reminds me a lot of those videos where people take a picture of themselves every day for three years and you see them bing along seeing a stream of change as we go. Another analogy that gets used often in Zen of course, is weather. And that we're not trying to capture only sunny days. We're not forcing it to be a gloomy day. Whatever weather is there is, okay. And it's the label of it that challenges us. And if we just take away that label and we just experience what is, and it is what is, and it's that beautiful change, it's precious and sweet. And I think there's a lot of desire when you're coming into practice as a new practice or a new family that you think that every practice should be perfect, but it's actually the fluctuation of years of doing it. Often I'll find myself telling parents, there's a reason we do this for 10 or 15 years. It's a long journey on purpose, and it's the changes that we see over time that are often the most satisfying,

Christine Goodner:

So true. And we can see as teachers who've been teaching a while, that we sort of have that mental picture of maybe week by week of the student and seeing we can trust, oh, people go through this process. It's not going to be like this forever. We know we are taking you on a path where you're going to come out the other side with more where we want to be. And so I think this is where it's good to have conversations with your teacher if you're a parent feeling those things that we're describing, because we can reassure you, we see this, or even if we're a new teacher, we have been through it ourselves and can tell you stories of people who have seen this, but it's a process, and I think it's a privilege as a teacher to take people on that journey and to know, even if they feel like it's hard at first, that we're going to help them find what they can do along the way and trust themselves and how they learn. And that's a special relationship.

Drake:

And honesty is so much more helpful than perfect, especially as a teacher, I'd so much rather know what happened

Than maybe what we wanted to happen, if there's even a desire there. I once had a teacher, a zen teacher, not a violin teacher, a zen teacher who I was in a slump. I felt really like I was doing things wrong, and I told him, I was honest with him. I was like, I think I'm doing this all wrong. I'm all backwards. I think I'm too busy. My mind is scattered. And he said, oh, it sounds like you're right on schedule. I was like, okay. It's like this is par for the course. This is on time. This is where we are.

Christine Goodner:

And then we can take a big breath and be like, oh, there's nothing wrong with me if we're a music parent or family member, there's nothing wrong with my child. Nobody's not cut out for anything. Everybody's expecting it to get hard in this way. It's really reassuring.

Drake: Right?

Christine Goodner: Yeah.

Drake: Let me say one more thing about that is that I've had some families who have gone through, even actually this happened yesterday, a family who's gone through a loss of a grandfather, and then they came into the lesson and they said, we still practiced every day. I don't know why this is feeling so hard. I was like, of course. It's feeling hard. No separation between your life and your life and violin is part of your life or whatever your musical instrument is. All of it's happening at once, and we're not

necessarily trying to make excuses for not following through with the agreements that we made for ourselves, but again, you can allow the snapshot to be whatever it is and still take the snapshot and let it be. But we have to expect that when anything that comes up in one part of life is also going to have an impact on our violin life together.

Christine Goodner:

Absolutely. And we're teaching human beings how to make music and experience music and not robots. There's going to be human feelings that come up or get in the way sometimes or make us have to adjust. I so agree that it's not making excuses or saying it's fine not to do ever practice or anything like that, but just real life happens and we're humans, and actually we want to put emotion into our plane, so of course it's going to all bleed together.

Drake:

Oh yeah. Something interesting to share about Zen for anybody who's not done it before, it's fascinating kind of the way things are structured in a monastery. So there's one person whose kind role is to set up the systems for how mealtime happens, how work gets done to make work assignments for when the sitting practice happens. And it's not a given that to live in residence means to meditate constantly. That's not necessarily the thing that will help you the most. And so they'll often set up a nice little schedule that you don't have to choose. It's set for you. And then you'll do patterns of 25 minutes of sitting and then an intentional 10 minute walk walking meditation, and then come back to 25 minutes of sitting. And if you are quite advanced, then you're allowed to do things like dishwashing while you meditate or perhaps even a sweeping of the zendo or cleaning of the zendo. And it's really special to me, and maybe we'll talk about this a little bit later, but how important it is that stopping meditating is just an important part of the practice is starting meditating. And that taking intentional breaks and moving your body and getting out of the space helps prop up your practice and support your practice.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah. Well, I think that segues nicely into what I wanted to talk about next, which is how do you stop practicing? That's one of the things that you suggested we talk about, and I would love to hear your thoughts on that.

Drake:

Yeah. I shared this idea at Suzuki Institute, the Ithaca Suzuki Institute with parents, and it was really moving. And then I had the opportunity to share it at the Suzuki conference this spring as well. The kernel of the idea, it came from listening to a Navy SEAL sharing a story. And this doesn't condone at all the military industrial complex necessarily, but I would say that Navy Seals really take their ability to perform very seriously, their ability to do things very seriously. So I thought this was fascinating. He said that they go through this training camp called Buds, and the day that most people quit the training camp, the one that they drop out and they can't become a Navy seal, was the day that they would be told to run on a beach for an indefinite amount of time. So their coaches would just say, or officers would just say, just go run and we'll tell you when to stop, or we're not going to tell you in advance. And people psychologically could not handle that uncertainty. And I kind of had this horrifying thought of reflecting on my own teaching and how many times I have students in the lesson. Just do it one more time. Okay. Just try it this way. Okay. What about that? Okay. Keep going on and on. And even I can remember when I was younger feeling like there was no end to music. And that is a really exciting feeling, but that's also a scary feeling when I felt like I could go forever and still not accomplish

something if you're thinking through that lens. So I started experimenting in my own teaching with saying things like, the lesson will end at three 30. We will be finished at three 30 and I need you to do it 10 times and I will not ask you to do it more than that.

Or You are going to play this two times and then you won't come back to it again until tomorrow. And I found that by defining the stop, it made starting so much easier. And the metaphor I use is how many people would feel safe traveling on a plane if they knew that it would always land safely if they knew that it would always come back down. If every single plane landed smoothly, would we still have a fear of flying? And I think a lot of kids are just terrified that it's not going to stop, and then that's why they resist the start at the beginning. And I also thought a little bit about why. Have you ever heard a parent say, wow, you make it look so easy in the lesson. I have such a harder time at home, and teachers can be both teacher and parent, but teachers are in a different role than the parent. So I've always, not taking that for granted, but I was thinking of what are the things in place in a lesson that aren't in place in home,

Including the child transitioning from one activity, getting in the car, having a whole transition time over. That transition time is almost always exactly the same. They're always riding in the same car or maybe listening to the same music with the same adult. They come in, they get unpacked with the parent. Both of them are in a completely new space, but a new space that's always the same, so it's outside of their own home in a different environment. Reminds me a lot of going to practice rooms in college and always picking the same practice room to practice in. And then they're with the teacher, and the teacher has a tight schedule, and the teacher will stop right on time because they have to serve the next student coming into them. And the student can trust that that will always happen. And practice at home could be really different where you do have a more natural unfolding schedule. You could go a little longer, a Lord of shorter on some, sometimes, et cetera. And the students don't always trust when they're finished.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, that's such a good point. And I hear because of the work I do, I talk to a lot of families supporting young musicians and especially I think musician parents because they feel like, oh, I can see they're so close to mastering the skill, and they tell me that I make them do it more times than they can really handle because I feel like they're so close to breaking through. And then it really backfires. I think if you're a musician parent listening, you're not alone. It's so much trickier, I think when we know more because we know, oh, they're so close and we maybe aren't thinking about how much they can handle in that moment. And so I think sticking, if you say, you're saying now, if you say, we're going to do it this many times, hold true to your word on that because your child will trust you the next time. And like you're saying, resist less to get started if they feel like I can trust what I'm being told about when this ends. I think what you're saying is so important.

Drake:

And so then you have to be strategic as a teacher or a parent of how am I going to communicate this stop to them. And there's the classics that we always talk about, like rolling the dice or pulling the card or asking Siri, that's one of my favorite new ones. Pick a random number between one and 10 and then, oh, I love it. And then there's the ones where you ask them, how do we know when to stop? And maybe we say, the stop is when it feels like this in my body, or the stop is when I can do it with my eyes closed. Or the stop is when I go back to put it in the piece and I can play it the same way as the way I practiced it. Things like that. So you can get more and more sophisticated with your stop. Something else I shared that I've thought a lot about is stopping at different levels. So there's the micro stop within the practice

and I've, it's been helpful to communicate this sort of definition that practice is defined by stopping and performance is defined by not stopping in performance. We play on purpose. We say, no matter what happens, you're going to get to the end.

And that's how we celebrate a good performance. And it's the opposite often in practice. So I don't want you to play it to the end if something came up so we stop on purpose. But then I have a lot of students who are accidentally performing in practice and practicing in performance. They're confused about those two. So doing a micro stop, so we're going to do it 10 times and only 10, and then we're done doing, how do I know that I'm done practicing for the day and defining that. Then seasonal undulation, how do I agree to what I'm going to do and intentionally say no to things during other seasons, something that I've seen that you've done with your podcast, it's a really beautiful stop, and I bet you've seen that your motivation or ability to do the work has actually increased. There's a wonderful quote from Matthew McConaughey, one of my favorite philosophers, who said, the target draws the arrow.

So when you have the finish line, and it's so almost antithetical to Suzuki and kind of zen too, where it's like, well, there's not supposed to be a finish line. We're not supposed to be rewarded for completing. But even in that objection reminding you that in Zen we stop on 25 minutes of the sit every time, and I trust it every time, and that's almost why you can make it through. So the target draws the arrow being seasonal with our work, which I think is really important, and this is maybe a little controversial, but has been really powerful for me in my studio, talking to parents as well as talking to other teachers is defining what it means to stop playing and that not being a taboo topic. I'll never forget talking with Bob Duke at University of Texas when I was there and he said, every kid needs a safe off-ramp for playing. It shouldn't be that you either die or quit. Those are not the only two options, and we need to make that safe for people. And it's sometimes by defining what the off-ramp is that actually gets the kids to feel safe staying on the highway.

Christine Goodner:

I think I heard him say that at a leadership, one of the Suki leadership retreats one time, and that struck me so much that that is true because I meet adults every day. They're like, what do you do for a job? And I tell them, they're like, oh, I quit and I still regret it, or why did I quit? Or why did my parents let me quit? And it's like people hold this regret for quitting because no, it doesn't feel like there's a healthy way to have closure and just say like, wow, I did this thing. I appreciate it. It was time to do something else. And holding onto that guilt forever is not what we want. I don't want to leave people like, oh, oh, I worked with this teacher and now I feel guilty my whole life. No, I don't want to do that.

Drake:

And quite honestly, for teachers, it's the same knowing in our career when to say no, when to keep going, and also what it means for down the road, knowing when you can retire, step away, do other things, set boundaries. I think this is a really powerful place to start, starting with stopping and defining what you're going to stop and then allowing that to create its own motivation for what actions you're going to take. There's a fabulous book 4,000 Weeks by Oliver Berkman, and he really changed my thinking around infinite time skills. The brain is capable of charting forward and planning 20 different mutually exclusive pathways, and you still get excited about all of them, and he helps you look at your limits.

Christine Goodner:

I think. I'm glad you're having conversations about that in your studio, and I think it's a conversation we want to have. If we don't want to decide it's all black and white or all it's good if we continue forever

and bad, if we stop just what's healthy and how do we think about that? And I do know some teachers will have a just defined procedure for here's how we stop working together in a healthy way. I think that's really important too. So that's a big topic. We could talk about a whole nother hour, but thanks for bringing that up, how to stop a good conversation. Well, I know we could just talk, I think all day about all the things, and I hope we get a chance to do this again, but how can people connect with you, especially if they're connecting to what you're saying today? And I want to follow more of your ideas about teaching. What are some ways that people can do that?

Drake:

I'm pretty active on Instagram, KB Drake, D-R-A-K-E-V-L-N, violin. And then I also have a website that I've been doing a blog post on for about 10 years, actually, which is kind of cool. I can go back to what I was thinking about in college. And that is Katherine, K-A-T-H-R-Y-N-B drake.com.

Christine Goodner:

Okay. We'll link to both of those in the show notes so people can connect with you and hear more of what you have to say. And then I always like to wrap up our conversations and have guests share a practice tip for the week. It can be something we've talked about related to something we've already said or just something totally unrelated, but let's give listeners an idea they can take into their practice week with them.

Drake:

Oh, exciting. So many come to mind, but maybe one sparked by this conversation, and that was actually an idea from a parent that I got was he would take a video in practice of a student doing a repetition, and then at the end of the child practice, take another video and then have the child sit next to him and they would watch the difference between the two and show just how different they became the snapshot of one to the next, where even though the child was doing the same, the better. Better happened on its own. And then he told me that he started experimenting now that he's done this for a while with going months in between. So taking a video of the famous noodle spot in gossip Ofat, for example, and then a few months later showing her the difference again, keeping record and acknowledging change over time, even though we're just doing the same old, same old.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, I love that. I love finding a practical way to do that. I think I just had a discussion online with some parents and asking how do they notice practice and celebrate it? And a few people said, well, we do book graduation celebrations, but I'm not a musician. I don't know what else to celebrate in between technically, and I think there's hundreds if not thousands of little moments to celebrate between book graduations are such a big project. There's so much time that goes from one to the other and looking for ways like a video record to look back on from however long your intervals are or a performance from a year ago versus now. Some way to see, oh, we see progress is happening. That's not just these huge milestones, but how many little ones can we celebrate?

Drake:

Yeah, and it's nice that the student gets to notice it themselves in the same way. There's millions of things in a recording that could communicated that we can't say with their own words. If you show that to them in their own practice, they're the ones who can find the change, and we all need an excuse to sit down for a second and practice next to each other.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. Thank you so much for speaking with me today, Drake. It's been a pleasure and I look forward to future times we get to connect. Thanks for sharing your words of wisdom with us.

Drake:

Likewise, I appreciate your work so much. Thank you for doing this.

Christine Goodner:

Thank you.

Transcript by Rev. com