



Episode 73: Music Practice from a Parent & Teacher Perspective: A Conversation with Violinist Andrew Miller

Christine Goodner:

All right. Well, welcome everyone. I'm excited today to be talking to Andrew Miller and Andrew, we're excited to have you here today. I'd love you to tell listeners a little bit about who you are and what you do in the world of music.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, sure. Thanks for having me, Christine. I feel like I'm on the late night show. My daughter was saying, oh, you're going to be on that podcast. You're going to be famous. So thanks again for inviting me.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, my pleasure.

Andrew Miller:

So my name is Andrew Miller. I'm a violin teacher and a violinist in Chicago, Illinois. I'm also the co-director of the Southside Suzuki Cooperative, which is in Hyde Park, which is in the south of the city, obviously Southside Suzuki and I have around 45 students that I'm teaching privately right now and on top of teaching group classes. And we were in group rehearsals and everything that comes along with running the school. And I have two kids of my own who are both budding musicians, a violinist and a cellist who are age nine and seven as we're speaking today.

Christine Goodner:

Busy musical life there in Chicago.

Andrew Miller:

It's always going.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. And we will definitely make time to talk about your school today and parenting young musicians and practicing with them and all of that. I always like to start by just hearing people's musical journey. Do you mind sharing with us just how old were you when you started studying music and what was that like for you when you began?

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, of course. So I feel like I have kind of an unusual journey and it actually doesn't make sense that I'm a violinist because it was never on the radar when I was young or anything. I mean, we sang and we had music around all the time, but I didn't start until I was 14 and I started when I was in the school orchestra. So my cousin kind of said, Hey, you should join orchestra. And I was like, okay, well, I won't be very good, but I'll try. And so it kind of stuck. And so even those first two years, he was kind of my first teacher. I remember him writing big numbers for M hat, little Lamb and twinkle and playing the theme to Titanic and things like that. And so then it wasn't until my junior year we had a new orchestra director by the name of Laura Hill, I think she's still a conductor down in Florida now.

And she kind of had a new level of expectation for us and was like, Hey, you should take private lessons. And I was like, oh, okay. That sounds kind of cool. So I found kind of the nearest local university professor and started lessons when I was 16. I remember playing Canon and D in my first lesson with my thumb far away from the violin, trying to do this wide vibrato, holding the violin with every muscle I could. And so it was a quick journey from there to college. I was a senior and I kind of thought, well, I guess I'm kind of okay at violin, so let's try this. And so I went to that college and had a great time there and then taught in the community a couple of neighborhoods over for a couple of years and then decided, okay, let's keep going to school. I've only played violin and studied for a few years, so I should know more of that, so I'm going to teach this to kids. So then I found myself in Chicago here at DePaul sitting with a terrific teacher, Olga Collar, who's now at Cleveland Institute, and I studied with her for four or five years here. And then my children were born and I kind of taught here and there and started at Southside Suzuki in 2017. And then here we are all those years later.

Christine Goodner:

I love that you share that part of your story because I think there is a misconception that you have to be three or four to start the violin or it's too late for you. And I love hearing stories from people that started later and it's still your career. We can start later and just enjoy it as part of our life. That's not our career, but hearing both is really, really great to hear.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, for sure.

Christine Goodner:

Love that. What do you remember about music practice? It seems like you went on a fast trajectory from starting to studying in college. Did you remember anything about that?

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, I was thinking about that. And in the early days, of course, it was just like my parents were never really that involved. They were supportive and they got me an instrument, which was kind of a big deal, but they never made me practice. I kind of wanted to do it, and I was always very curious about how I could get better. And I think that the thing that really drove me was is I was a little bit competitive, which I didn't know about myself until I played violin. And I remember my aunt and uncle being like, well, if you practice, you're going to get better than your cousin. And I was like, oh, that's possible. And so then I just remember really just repeating things over and over and over again, which of course is how we know we learn, which it was lucky that that's the route that I took.

And so in those early days, I was very much on my own. And then when I started with my teacher, I think I had figured out a pretty good routine for myself where I could figure things out. So he didn't really need to give me play by play, but then by the time I was in college, I felt like I needed that. And I had a teacher who did kind of tell me, okay, this is the amount of hours you have to practice. And I tried to do that, and I always felt like I was maybe missing some details in there. And I think it finally was when I got to DePaul and started starting with Mrs. Collar that I really realized all the things that I have to do, all the tiny details and how they add up and build into all the skills that are necessary to play the violin well. And so of course with kids, with working with my own kids now, it's very similar. I had to kind of rethink how that works because they're not 14 when they started. They're very little. And so it's a very different game, but we can talk about more of that later too.

Christine Goodner:

Sure. Yeah. It is a very different game, and I think if you're a parent or family member listening to this and you have a younger beginner, it can feel like, oh, I wish nobody had to tell my child to practice. I think that what I hear from a lot of people is when they get in a group setting, you had your cousin that sort of inspired you and you were in the school group. That causes a lot of motivation to happen. And a lot of people who tell me they start in school programs like that say that they didn't really have to be forced to practice. And so I think it's an argument as our kids get older to put them in social situations with their instrument because I think that's when that kind of magical piece happens and they just do it for their own reasons, even if it's competitive reasons, whatever the reasons are, being around other young musicians helps a lot. So as your child gets older, I would look for those opportunities. I think that there's some magic there.

Andrew Miller:

Absolutely. I mean, that's how you ask this question, what did I love about starting? And

That was one of the things that I remember is just all this group stuff. We went on trips in orchestra, we did all these concerts and all these things that I would've never done otherwise, and I wanted to be there and I wanted to improve because I wanted to get as good as the other kids or pass the other kids or that sort of thing. I mean, in the end, I actually even married someone that I was an orchestra with my first year of high school, and then I love it. So really that community aspect is so important for motivation, especially when you're in high school, middle school and high school especially.

Christine Goodner:

I agree with that. We just played, our group played at the lobby before an Oregon Symphony concert this past weekend, and I was just reflecting, we hadn't done it since 2020 because everything shut down for a while. And the amount of practice that happened for that, because we had this end goal and we wanted to be part of something together and part of something in the community was priceless. I had forgotten how magical that kind of thing is, but it reminded me all over again

Andrew Miller:

More than we can ever insist on as teachers.

Christine Goodner:

Yes, exactly. Exactly. Just the studio recital did not have the same kind of motivation for them. So it's a fun way to look for reason to look for those things as a parent or teacher is how do we get our child in those environments? It

Andrew Miller:

Sparks

Christine Goodner:

That for them. I love that.

Andrew Miller:

Even in that, I feel like bringing in my personal family to those concerts made a big impression on me because my aunts and my uncles and my grandparents would come, and some of those were the biggest moments that changed my life. I remember we played in this concert, it's called Quad State, and it's people from four different states come in and kind of put on an orchestra festival one day. And I remember sitting watching another group and my granddad says, well, if you think this group is good, listen to the group of teachers because they always played a special little thing too. I think that was a light bulb in my head that was like, oh, the teachers must be really good. I really think that was part of what, okay, I got to be a teacher the best.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, I love that. I love that they have such great experiences. Let's talk about your bing with your kids or parenting musical kids. I think that's a whole nother layer. And you just mentioned as we were preparing for this interview, how different your children are from each other. So I imagine that comes into play as you tell your story too. Would love to just hear anything you want to share about that.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, for sure. Yeah, I mean, I think I knew since I love violence so much, I always wanted to share that. And I feel like it's one of the things that I can really share completely to my kids that I can't give them anything else. If I can't give them anything else, I can share music with them. And so when my daughter was very little and my son was about to be born, we were kind of on pause as you kind are when baby's about to be born, but it's not quite time yet. And so one of my neighbors who happened to be also another violin teacher, she had some box violins. So we went and bought a little cardboard violin from her. And just as for fun, we had her play along because she would always, we had string quartet rehearsals when she was little, so she was always singing along and kind of beating on things.

So I got her that cardboard violin and she would kind of just beat on it while I practiced and that kind of thing. And so I thought, okay, well you know what? I think I know enough. I'm going to start her after my son is born. A couple months go by when things kind of get to routine. So then a couple months later, we got her a real violin, and of course she was so excited. And then I realized that I really don't know how to teach my own daughter. And it's very, very difficult when it's your own kid, especially as teachers. We're so used to seeing them every week. So we're just seeing those bookmarks in their

progress and we're not used to seeing the behind the scenes nitty gritty work that goes into it, even though I've done it myself. It's so different when you see a child working through that.

And so I've been thinking about three months went by and she could play her little twinkle rhythms on each string and she was doing pretty well, but practice was really tough. It was really tough. There was a lot of tears and a lot of me going, oh, I dunno what to do. So I kind of told my wife to do what to do and to have her practice with her and that worked better. But then I thought, okay, I better find a teacher. And so we found a wonderful teacher out in the suburbs here. She's kind of a local legend, maybe more than local Betty Hague, who's a wonderful, wonderful Suzuki teacher and somehow still teaching now even though she's retired I think maybe seven times now. And so she was just a wonderful starting teacher for my daughter. And I think that was so good for me as a teacher to see how another teacher, especially in a very established experienced teacher, brings up a student.

And so it's kind of cool to see the nuts and bolts of that program and see how I can support as a parent, but I'm not the teacher. And so things started to get much better then, especially when she was little and I was home and we had lots of time to practice. Of course, that's molded over the years as we've had the pandemic. So we were home and we had to change practice to fit around online lessons and online schools. And now she will be 10 this year. And so she thinks she's a teenager. And so we get a lot of teenage battles and responses and thank goodness for resources like your wonderful books that kind of give me some tools to handle those situations. So it's not always a willpower battle. And so yeah, it's been very interesting to see how I have to adapt over and over and over again as the years go on.

And so that's my daughter, and now I think she's doing very well. She's with another teacher now, he's wonderful. His name is Davis King, and he's just so into what makes that child work and what works for them and getting really behind the psychology behind of it, behind it and practice. And she's really just doing wonderful things. And so there's more of a support role where there's certain pieces I'm assigned to practice with her, and then other things I kind of sit on the sidelines and go, oh, hold that finger down from the corner. So we have a really good balance. Now, my son, however, is a completely different creature and he's wonderful and he's got so much energy, and of course he always has wanted to do whatever we're all doing. So he started violin, probably even younger. He was probably two kind of scratching along, and he did pretty well.

He's so strong. So it was really hard for him to actually find those fine motor skills for such a small instrument because he was just so strong and he couldn't open his elbow quite all the way. So he got to about Minette one or so in the Suzuki books. And then I thought, what if we try cello because he's so strong, he wants to move his feet all the time. He has to move his body, so let's put him in a chair and let's give him an instrument where you can be strong and it sounds good. And it was a total success.

So I think he's played for three years now and he's in Suzuki book four, and he loves ear is so good because he's been hearing me and my daughter all these years. And so he can just pick out anything. And he's a much different practicer because he loves games and he'll always play games and be able to be on track and kind of do the work that's necessary. And he's good with routine too. I think for my daughter, it was always coming up with something new. If games didn't work, then we could, I think I've let her put makeup on me one time and paint our nails, and it was just always figuring out what works for that kid that day. And so now of course, it's both of them at the same time, coming up with strategies for what might work for one day and not the other day. And of course now they want to practice at the same time, so I'm just kind of in the middle running back and forth. But we have a good routine and he's seven now, and he is very responsible about his homework. And so if he has his list, he's good to go.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. I like that you sort of noticed what might be a strength for him and he didn't have to follow, and his sister supposed have necessarily, even though he started it with the same instrument, I think that's smart.

Andrew Miller:

I was initially very worried that, oh no, we've spent these years and all these skills are going to be lost. But I mean, they transferred so well and the sound was so much better and he liked having his own thing.

Christine Goodner:

Sure. Yeah, there's a lot to be said for that. Even for me in my studio, sometimes there'll be siblings where I feel like they need their own thing. Maybe one will play viola, one will play violin because I can teach both. But then, yeah, some kids just really need to feel like they have their independent identity. So yeah, I like what you're saying about just working with a child in front of you and it's not like your daughter needed a lot of novelty, lots of new things all the time. And I think we can both acknowledge that's just a lot of mental emotional work as the parent supporting practice. It just feels like we're doing, pulling out all the stops all the time is a lot of work sometimes. So hats off to all of you out there doing this as well.

Andrew Miller:

And I think especially as a teacher, you're exhausted when you come home, especially mentally. And so it's hard to put that work together when you're home and you just want to let everything go. And to put that hat back on and to do it again, it's very hard work. So I think that's the trickiest part is to continue that work.

Christine Goodner:

Right. Do you have any advice for parents who might feel in that exhausted space?

Andrew Miller:

I was thinking about this too. If I could go back, I think I would tell myself, you have time. There's no need to rush. Enjoy what you can do. Know when to quit, have I quit? I mean, know when to, that's enough practice for the day. That's good. We don't have to repeat it one more time and just be invested. From the beginning, I kind of knew, okay, we're going to do this. We're going to see it through and we're going to have some hard days. And so some days I think we listened and maybe played one thing and that's all we could get that day. And other days we got a couple of good hours and of repetitions and things like that. So treat every day as a new day and do what you can on that day.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, I think that's really helpful advice. It can feel like when you're sent to plan home, practice this every day from your teacher, but you're failing somehow. If you have those days where you mostly listen and play one thing, I think it's really healthy to hear that that's just par for the course for a lot of families

Andrew Miller:

Mean, especially for myself starting and it was all my responsibility. I tried to do everything I could. And it's so different from them where they're just, this is normal for them. They've done this all their lives.

Why did they have to practice all this stuff? And so I think just in your mind, it's not going to be the same for them as it was for you. And that's been a kind of really difficult thing to get my head around, but I think it's been a much healthier head space to be in.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I hear a lot from musicians practicing with their own children. There's some unique challenges there. It's hard not to tell. List off all the flaws and what we see being played in front of us. And I always tell people, write it down or something if you have to get it out. But I think what it sounds like to me you did is really center your child and their experience versus that the practice need to look a certain way.

Andrew Miller:

For sure. Yeah. I always wondered why all these famous violinists didn't have also famous violinist children. And now I know.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah. And we want to protect a relationship with our children so that when we come out the other side of them learning their instrument that's really healthy along with their playing ability. So it's an art form in a way, I think.

Andrew Miller:

Of course. Yeah.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. Do you think, I don't know, maybe you'll have to remind me how much you were teaching before you started working with your kids. How do you think practicing with your own children has influenced your teaching, whether it's changed it or just sort of set the tone for it from the start?

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, I think it's totally changed my teaching. I think before I had kids, there was a certain energy and organization that I had that I don't have anymore. I definitely had more time to think about what I was teaching and kind of organize everything for that child. But now I am behind the curtain. I'm the wizard behind the illusion. And so when I see a child in front of me that's maybe not looking like they're struggling, I can know. I can see the signs that they've been struggling at home. And of course a lot of times the parents will confide in me privately that they've been struggling and this is an issue. And so we can talk about those things. We can talk about things that I wouldn't think of before, which are just emotional learning things, learning that if you have a feeling you can let it go, you can calm down that frustration. It's going to be there probably almost every practice, but we can just take a few minutes to let it go. And just a lot of strategies for organizing around the time that we have. I think that's the most common difficulty all of my students have is that we're also busy. The parents are so busy just with regular life that we have to figure out, okay, how are we going to make violin part of our lives? How are we going to have time for it and how are we going to maximize the time we have to really progress and learn this instrument and to the point where we can enjoy it?

Christine Goodner:

Right. Oh, I see that as well. That takes a lot of organization and ideas. And what would you say if somebody's listening and saying, yes, I need that. Do you have anything that comes to mind off the top of your head that you would say, if I came to you as a parent and said, oh, we don't know how to get all this done in the time we have, or we're at a loss for how to organize ourselves.

Andrew Miller:

So I think that's been kind of the big concept of the new year for my studio. And we actually started out with this semester with a parent class on setting goals and how to use the time that we have. And I think it's similar advice to what I said before is that you're not going to get everything done on the list every day. So what I have my students do is look at their schedule and see what times they have available, try if they can to practice after a certain event, so not necessarily at a certain time, so it needs to be attached to bedtime or after dinner or right after school. Because if they set it at a time, that's usually when the kids feel the most anxious because they're trying to finish something else up for that to happen, or if they miss it, oh, time's gone.

So after the activity has been so helpful, but then they look at their daily schedule and see when they're going to fit it in that day. And each week they'll see, okay, well, I have soccer this week, so I'm only going to be able to fit in 15 minutes. So then we come up with kind of a short plan of things to do. So this is your short practice plan, this is your medium practice plan, and this is if you have an hour, this is your long practice plan. And that seemed to be very helpful because then the kids know it's not all or nothing. They can do some of it and it's worthwhile.

Christine Goodner:

Absolutely. Yeah. I like that you're talking them through that too. I think if you're listening and you need that guidance from your teacher, I hope this conversation prompts you to reach out and ask, can you help us come up with a plan? I think sometimes it feels self-conscious to say, some days we're only going to have 15 minutes and feel like we might get scolded or something like you. I like to hear the real nitty gritty. What is life really like for you? Let's work together to make this as effective as possible.

Andrew Miller:

Exactly. Your teacher is there to support you and we can support you best if we kind of know exactly what's going on.

Christine Goodner:

Exactly. Exactly. And you're not the only one in the studio, for example, likely that is having these same issues. We're not surprised.

Andrew Miller:

It's everyone including us as teachers.

Christine Goodner:

Yes, yes. And I found for myself, even now, if I don't put a minimum time requirement on myself, I'm much more likely to actually get practice done. Otherwise I start to feel like, well, I don't actually have that chunk of time I said I needed, so maybe I won't start right now and do the five minutes I have between students or something. I think those little moments add up and just getting to your instrument.

Andrew Miller:

I think a minimum practice time is a great idea because I think we often present, okay, you have to do these things, but I think if you add that minimum that's kind of a game changer, then the stress comes off, okay, well of course I can do five, 10 minutes,

Christine Goodner:

And if we have a stretch of time, my students will often tell me once they do five or 10 minutes, if they're just resisting getting started that, then they're just in the flow and it's not a big deal to practice if they do have the stretch of time. And so that can also be a good piece of advice if it's just hard to get started. It's like, okay, at least five minutes. And then just like if you go to the gym for five minutes and you're like, oh, I don't feel like it. I feel tired. Then you've gone, you've made the hard of it happen, and some days that's good. Just getting you going.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah. And I think that's for a lot of kids, the hardest thing is getting started. I know for my kids, I mean, we practice before school, so they wake up, we eat breakfast, and then they practice. Of course, that's at different times, most mornings, depending on how tired we are. So some of those are good practice sessions, and some of those are still good, but much smaller practice sessions. But yeah.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, some helpful advice hopefully for people listening. Well, let's talk a little bit about your music school.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, sure. I'm happy to share. Southside Suzuki Cooperative started, I think in 2013. It started before I was on the faculty as kind of a means for private teachers to come together and have group classes if they wanted and put together big concerts and that kind of thing. When I joined in 2017, along with my other co-director, Hillary Butler, we started with very small studios. I was going door to door and I think I taught maybe four students and just went to their houses, and that was kind of it. And I taught group classes on Saturday, and that was one group class that had maybe 10 kids from four different teachers. And so as we kind of went along, we realized that this community, this neighborhood really needs a music school and needs an outlet for these kids in such a diverse neighborhood to learn music, especially violin of course.

And so after that, we kind of restructured things where we were really going to make it a music school. And so our studio started to build. And then I think of course then Covid happened and everything went online. And at that point, I think we had about 15, 20 students, and we still do group classes online. Eventually we had our group classes at the park, and believe it or not, that's kind of when our school started to pick up. People wanted something they could do in their house without having to go somewhere or they could go to the park for your group class on Saturdays. And so that's really kind of when we took off and started to bolster a lot of students and we added a cello studio. And then since we kind of came back from that pandemic and the lockdowns, we have really taken off, we've joined all in one location.

We used to kind of be here, one person was at this church, another person at this church. Now we're kind of in a community center called the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club, which is just such a wonderful community resource for so many different programs. So we're all in one place. And so now we have all of our lessons there. We have all of our group classes there. They have a big gym where we have our

kind of mass group rehearsals where a whole program meets and rehearses for concerts. And so that's kind of how we started. Where we are now, I think we serve almost 120 families now, starting from very humble roots. So we're very proud of the work that we've been doing. And this is from all over the city. We have people coming from the north side, we have people coming from out of the city and the suburbs south of the city.

And so we're very proud of what we represent there. And we're happy to service the families that we have too. We offer scholarships for all students based on merit and financial help. And this year we're really starting to go big on parent education. So we have this parent class for parents to come in to really chat with the teachers about what's going on at home. We don't always have time to talk about that in the lesson and especially in front of the student. So we kind of created this class that happens once a month with a topic in mind to really chat about things that we can hopefully help. And then we have so many community events and we play in the several concerts in the community and parades and fairs and so many events, and the families just love it.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, I bet you have a lot of that community peer social piece that sounds like meant so much to you growing up for these families, which is great.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, exactly. I think even for my own kids, they've met friends that they've known since they were little and they want to go to classes because they know so-and-so is going to be there, and they go over to their house and they all practice together sometimes. And so it's just been such a home for us.

Christine Goodner:

I love that Community piece was really important. And we talked about that. We wanted to mention what you're doing to build community. Is there anything else you want to say about that besides sharing some of these events? It sounds like you have a great thing going for families to connect with each other.

Andrew Miller:

So I think one of the big parts of building community has been time after concerts, just having, of course it was very difficult during the lockdowns, but now kind of back to normal. But we have those times where they're just eating snacks, they're just hanging out, the kids are running around going nuts. We try to have an annual picnic where the families can come. We have a very low key performance in the park. The kids can all play solos. The solo line is so long, there's like 40 kids who all want to share with everyone. And these kids, they go to each other's birthday parties, they see each other at school, so they're already in a community. And then they become our community, and it is so heartwarming to see them grow up together.

Christine Goodner:

Great. Priceless motivation, I think. And I think for the families and the parent classes you're doing, just knowing, I think it's just really helpful. I see people take a big exhale when they realize like, oh, this isn't just an US thing, so this part's hard for everybody, or lots of other people are going through the same thing we are. I think that's really, really important to help support the families you're working with.

Andrew Miller:

And I think the cool thing too is hearing a lot of what the parents are saying are things that I went through. I didn't really have that resource for myself, so I kind of was in my own echo chamber of despair. So I thought I was totally alone until I had resources like yours and so many other wonderful authors out there, and I wish I would've had somebody to talk to. And so, so again, it just melts your heart hearing all these things. And from my experience, I can share what helped, what didn't help, and I think it really makes a difference.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think if you're a newer teacher, you're not a parent yourself and a teacher, and you feel like, well, I don't have that experience to share. I think just reading things together and sharing stories of other people from this podcast, from either of our experiences, just being able to share, here's what other parents have said about what's helped them, is really valuable too. You don't have to feel like you can only do this with your program if you are a parent yourself. All perspectives are valuable and you can bring in outside resources if you can't share your personal story. But I think personal stories mean so much to families. It's not just some expert somewhere says blah, blah, blah, but someone's been living through this is really helpful to hear. And you can share other people's stories too.

Andrew Miller:

Absolutely.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah. And I just, I just wish I had had people to talk about this with. I think that's why I'm also so passionate about this kind of thing is that when I was first practicing with my kids, I just felt like, what are we doing wrong? And I feel shameful that I can't figure this out. I'm telling other people how to practice and I can't do it with my own child in an easy way.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, exactly. And just sharing the frustration that you have as a parent because you feel like you should be perfect and you should do everything the first time. And of course that's kind of being apparent in a nutshell. But then when it comes to a highly detailed instrument, I think it really comes out.

Christine Goodner:

And the thing I heard, I took a class called Circle of Security about attachment relationships for children during the pandemic when one of the things they said, and they were talking about teachers, but they were saying, whatever the child needs from the parent or caregiver, that parent also needs from us as their teacher. And I thought that's really helpful because our child in practice is going to deal with frustration and we have to coach them through, and then we need someone to help us with our own frustration that we're carrying from the experience and help us through. And we get to hold that role as teachers, and we probably have our teacher friends that we help do that for us as teachers. But I think thinking of that perspective really helped me think about what, I feel like the students need more help with their frustration or also getting pulled from me. And that circle helps a lot.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, absolutely. Totally agree.

Christine Goodner:

Before we go, I always like our guests to share a practice tip, something practical that listeners can use with them and take with them into the week and using their practice this week. What would you like to share about practice with everyone today?

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, sure. Over the holiday break, I was reading a lot of Molly Gebrian's wonderful book. And so I've been thinking a lot about the science of practice and kind of trying to keep it objective and just reminding the kids, my students and myself, that we learn by repetition. And as easy as and simple as that is, that means that whatever we repeat, we learn. So if we repeat something correct, we learn it. If we repeat something backwards, we learn it. If we repeat storming out every time we get frustrated, we learn it. And so really keeping in mind what are you repeating? And if you want to change it, turn it into something actionable instead of taking away. So we want to instead of saying, okay, well don't play it like this. Give yourself the positive instruction. Okay, well play it this way. So always thinking of how many times can I repeat it? What do I want to repeat? What do I want to learn from this repetition and how can I put this in a positive direction?

Christine Goodner:

I love that, love that. And as parents, we can't control our kids' emotional reactions or moods or focus level for a day, but I think it's really helpful to think about what can I influence? And I think that's a really good way to think about what's in our control and how do we make practice more effective.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah, absolutely. What can we do and what can we let go?

Christine Goodner:

Absolutely. Well, Andrew, thank you so much for being here today. We'll share a link in the show notes about your program if anybody's interested, if you're, they're near you and want to see what you're doing. And we really appreciate your time talking about practice today. I loved hearing about your journey from all sides of the Suzuki Triangle, as we call it, in the Suzuki world.

Andrew Miller:

Yeah. Thanks so much for having me.

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