



2025 Summer Practice Tip Episodes

Edmund Sprunger: Back to School Advice & The Value of Frustration

Edmund Sprunger ([00:00](#)):

If everything is easy all the time, then you never practice. You just play. Practice is work, and the work is about transforming what's hard into something that's doable, ideally easy. So when kids never get that frustration, they don't get to exercise that muscle.

Christine Goodner ([00:25](#)):

Welcome to the Time to Practice podcast. This is a space where we talk about music practice, the ups and downs that young musicians go through related to practice and learning music, and how we as parents, caregivers, and music educators can support the young musicians in our lives, support ourselves and support each other. My name is Christine Goodner. I'm a music educator, author and podcaster who's made it my mission to talk about music practice and supporting educators and families looking to make home practice more effective and to reduce conflict and frustration in the practice room. I'm so glad you're here. This episode is brought to you by my upcoming enrichment course for music teachers called Setting Families Up for Success, new Student Orientation and Ongoing Support Systems for the studio teacher. This is a 10 hour enrichment course through the Suzuki Association of the Americas, and it's offered through the Oregon Suzuki Institute. We will meet online for Fridays in October, and I'd love to have you join me. You can read more information about it and register in the show notes. There'll be some details how to do that, and also you can look up this course on the SAA website.

([01:37](#)):

Welcome to September. We are launching back into our regularly scheduled programming after a fun summer of music practice tips and a deep dive on the topic of perfectionism. You can always go back and catch up on any episodes you missed through anywhere you hear your podcasts. This season, I'm excited to be kicking things off with a guest. I was thrilled said yes to. Coming on the podcast, Suzuki violin teacher trainer, author of helping parents practice and building violin skills. Two books I personally love and recommend all the time, a frequent guest, speaker and clinician, and a psychotherapist in private practice. Edmund Sprunger holds a unique perspective having studied with Suzuki in Japan, decades of teaching experience and deeply caring about supporting the parents who are supporting their children in practice and all of that along with his perspective as a psychotherapist. Really, he gives him a unique perspective to speak into a lot of the issues we talk about all the time on this podcast.

[\(02:34\):](#)

We start off today talking about ways to support practice at the start of the school year, but then we get into a really great discussion on the importance of frustration and what kids gain from having experienced it, we know with a supportive adult involved and the complicated and important role that parents play in supporting their students in music practice. Enjoy. Welcome everyone. I'm excited to be here today with someone I'm always thrilled to speak with Edmund Springer, and we're going to talk a little bit about getting back into the school year routine among other topics. And you might be listening to this and where you live. It is not a back to school season or you're listening to this and it's from a year ago or something like that. But I think it's always good to talk about reestablishing our routines or looking at how do we get into our flow of practice and lessons and everything. So thanks for being here. Thanks for coming to just talk with us today and I'd love you to share whatever you'd like to do with our audience about who you are and what you do in the world of music.

Edmund Sprunger [\(03:32\):](#)

Well, first of all, thank you so much for having me. I was just thrilled to get the email in. I'm so happy to be able to do this. So who am I and what do I do in the world of music? Basically, if I'm just going to talk plainly, I'm a violin teacher, but I'm really very fond of something. Margaret Raul, who was a cello, said, she said, I don't teach the cello because the cello can't learn. I teach children, and if you lead with that, it sounds a little precious, but it's really pretty accurate. And I use the Suzuki approach as a teacher, so I work with parents. So maybe it's best to say I teach people what I do in the world of music is I teach people. And then even there where you think about what is teaching. I think too many people have this misconception that teaching is about imparting information, and that's certainly a component of it, but a big part of teaching is monitoring and observing how children are learning or how people are learning, how parents are learning is monitoring and observing. And I think a lot of times teachers get so busy trying to do an act of teaching that they get in the way of the learning.

[\(04:57\):](#)

So that's in a nutshell, probably more than most people might want, but that's how I think about what I do in the world of music.

Christine Goodner ([05:08](#)):

Yeah, thanks. And I would say you work with teachers a lot too. I'll add for those who are listening, who don't know you.

Edmund Sprunger ([05:16](#)):

I do, right? I work with teachers. That's right.

Christine Goodner ([05:20](#)):

And yes, we'll dig into more, I'm sure of part of what you just said, there's a lot there, but especially this is going to come out, this episode's coming out September new school year, at least where I live, and people are getting back into their routine. And I especially wanted to talk about, because I get a lot of questions this time of year, oh, in the summer we were more relaxed or how do we get back into our routine of weekly lessons and hopefully daily practice and how do we just go from whatever's been happening before this line in the sand when the new schedule starts, how do we go from that to a little more structured practice? And a lot of things come up that people tell me about, which is my child's kind of resistant of getting back in this routine. Not everybody, but some people maybe I as the grownup who's helping with practice and feeling overwhelmed and frazzled because of everything restarting again and just people are tired, things like this. And so I am sure you hear other concerns as well, and some people ease right back in. But we're kind of talking about how do we help people maybe who want a little extra support this time of year. I'd love to hear what is your advice to people who are getting back into this routine this time of year?

Edmund Sprunger ([06:28](#)):

Well, I am assuming that this podcast is not something that children will be listening to. So in terms of an adult audience that is hearing this, I'm thinking that probably the most important thing is that the adults, and I guess we're talking about parents are thinking about how they feel about getting back into the routine because so much of what happens in a child's world gets filtered through the mind of the parents. And the example I use all the time is that when an infant is crying, screaming, maybe the parent is going to think about why is my baby crying? And if they think the baby's hungry, they'll respond with food. If they think the child has a dirty diaper, they'll change the diaper. Whatever the parent's mind comes up with is how the parent is going to act. So in this hustle and bustle of the beginning of the year, I think it's really important for parents to be really in touch with how they're feeling about it because how their mind is processing what's going on is going to determine how they function with their kids.

([07:45](#)):

So a lot of times, let's say if a parent really understands, wow, this is hard for my kid, it's hard for me too because I'm giving up beach reading or whatever. I don't know who all goes to the beach these days, but if a parent sense is metaphorically, I'm having to give up beach reading, if that's their sense, then they're giving something up too. And they may want to think about what's it like for me to give up what we

have? And that may give them a kind of empathy about what it's like for the child, but also to think from the point of view of their child. What's it like for the child to be starting up again? And one of the things that I learned from a really important mentor of mine, his name was Moisy Shopper. He was a child psychoanalyst. He was my supervisor for a year about 20 years ago.

[\(08:39\):](#)

And then he retired and we ended up becoming good friends. But one of the things that Moisy said in the class he taught, actually I was teaching the class and he was a guest speaker. He said that when kids start school, they have to comply to a set of rules that they never agreed to. So they're entering this world that they didn't really sign up for. Now that doesn't mean those rules shouldn't be there, that doesn't mean that world shouldn't be there, but to understand that, especially depending on the age of the child, that's a lot for them to have those kinds of restrictions. So I think in terms of thinking about what's going on with the child in starting up and getting back into the school year routine and stuff, I think it's very helpful for the parents to think about themselves because the parent's mind is going to process that stuff, at least get that started for the child.

[\(09:39\):](#)

The other thing that I would say for parents and everybody, man, it's hard to overstate this slow down, just slow down. And I was recently reading a paper by the psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden, and he was talking about the story from the Bible, which he saw as a piece of literature. And this wasn't a religious paper. He saw this as a fascinating story and his fascination fascinated me. But he was basically saying in the story where Jesus is confronted by, I don't know, leaders in the church who say, we caught this woman in the very act of adultery, and the law says that the law of Moses says that she should be stoned and what do you say? And they're trying to put Jesus in this bind where he either disrespects and disobeys the law or incites violence. He's responsible for violence and gives this woman.

[\(10:51\):](#)

So Jesus's response is to just say nothing. And he starts writing in the sand, he starts writing in the dirt. It doesn't say anything about what he writes, but he just starts writing in the dirt. And that kind of the reason Thomas Ogden is writing about this, he says, this is an example of creating a space for thinking by doing nothing, you can create a space where a new idea could occur or a new thought could occur. And then the response from Jesus is let he among you who is without sin cast the first stone. Well, that's like, who would've thought of that?

[\(11:36\):](#)

That kind of stuff can come when you give yourself a pause and a moment to think. So when you're not, okay, so this is a challenge of working with kids when you're not sure what to do, have them do something they do well and enjoy. Because if you just stop kids like action, if you just stop and do nothing, they're going to be bored. They're going to freak out. But if you can give them something to do

that they like doing or that they do really easily, and you don't have to really think about them, that can create time for you to think and sort of plan, okay, now what do we do going forward? So those are some big pieces of advice I would give about starting the school year.

Christine Goodner ([12:24](#)):

I like that a lot. And sometimes I think along those same lines, even if we feel like we're doing a lot of review or things that feel easy to the child, but you're getting into a habit of this is when in the day we're going to practice, even if it feels like we're just doing a few moments, but you're establishing a routine that can be really helpful too. Right?

Edmund Sprunger ([12:45](#)):

Right. You're doing so much just by practicing, just by carving out the space and saying, okay, this is when we're practicing, because

Christine Goodner ([12:59](#)):

It can be, I like a lot what you're saying about the adults thinking about how's this affecting me or how can I see this is affecting my child? People can make meaning of, well, maybe this is too much, or maybe this is, can we do this this year? And I think it can be early, especially in the first transition period to actually have to decide that yet that might not be what's going on. It's there's a lot to process for our child and for us.

New Speaker ([13:24](#)):

Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([13:26](#)):

Yeah. I like that a lot. I think for teachers too, since we're my audience and we have listeners who are also teachers getting back into their own swing of back to school, I think your advice really applies because it can feel like a big transition for us as well.

Edmund Sprunger ([13:40](#)):

Oh, now that you mentioned teachers, I'm starting to think about myself. So what is hard for me about this part of the year, I think this is the part of the year where every teacher wants to quit and decides it's just not worth it. And why, because of the schedule. Trying to figure out the schedule is a nightmare. And as the mother of one of my students said decades ago, everybody's schedule is important to them. So not only are you trying to figure out your teaching schedule, all the parents are trying to figure out everything, schedule for all the children. So there's so much uncertainty and so much unknown. And as soon as you get a schedule set, then you find out somebody's got a new ice time for hockey. And so it's a really tough thing. I've got a very small studio right now, so the way I work it is in August, late August,

early September, we just go week to week. We just figure it out week to week as I'm collecting information, as they're getting information from their schools and everything, activities. And by the end of the month we have a schedule that's etched in stone. But this uncertainty for everybody is really tough this time of year.

Christine Goodner ([15:05](#)):

It is. And it can feel like everything else is more important than music when you're getting all the like, well, this activity conflicts so I can't do the lesson. And it can feel like you said just like, oh, why am I doing this? But

Edmund Sprunger ([15:19](#)):

You're really onto something there. As music teachers, we can really start to feel like, oh, everything is more important than music. I don't matter. I don't count. And that's possible for that to be true. But I think a lot of times it has more to do with the fact that their parents are just trying to juggle so many things. And there are teachers who say, I'm setting my schedule on May 15th, and that's going to be the schedule for the fall. And if they can do that, that's fine, if that works for everybody. But I've always tried to work with people, balance things out in a way that we can, I don't know. Scheduling has just been the bane of my existence, and I think it is for everybody.

Christine Goodner ([16:09](#)):

No, I agree. I agree. I have a lot of text exchanges with friends, colleagues right now about that,

Edmund Sprunger ([16:17](#)):

But it's really easy for teachers to go down this path that I don't matter. And I think maybe we might also want to consider that the fact that parents are trying to schedule this in the face of everything else going on is kind of an indication that you do matter.

Christine Goodner ([16:33](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Edmund Sprunger ([16:35](#)):

Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([16:35](#)):

And the reality, at least where I live, is a lot of sports teams, the parents are telling me they get together late August and they figure out what works for the coach, what works for the parents. And so actually a lot of families I work with wish the sports schedule was already nailed down and was not coming out. They don't have control over some of these things. And so

Edmund Sprunger ([16:56](#)):

Of course, what we'd love to say is just don't do sports, but pick. That's a tough one. That's a really tough one.

Christine Goodner ([17:06](#)):

That is a tough one. And I, as a parent myself, always wanted my kids to do something that was keeping their body healthy. And I also tried to figure that, how do I fit that into my own life? And so I can respect that this is how this is happening for these families, right?

New Speaker ([17:21](#)):

Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([17:22](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. So virtual coffee and support to all the teachers out there who are navigating through that, right?

Edmund Sprunger ([17:30](#)):

Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([17:30](#)):

And that's a big thing this time of year always feel so relieved when I feel like it does get etched in stone as you said, and we can move forward. Well, I know you had a topic that you were interested in discussing too today, which was about the topic. And this makes me very curious to hear where this is going to go, but misunderstandings about the importance of frustration, which very much ties into the beginning of the school year in many ways that I can see. But I'd love to hear your thoughts on this.

Edmund Sprunger ([17:57](#)):

Yeah, I think what I told you, I've been telling a couple of people this. I was scheduled to do a parent talk in May, and I just decided that I would just, for fun, I would type it to chat GPT. What would Ed Sprunger say to a group of parents who practice a musical instrument with their children in a one hour presentation? And what came back was really good. It sounded like everything I would say, and it pulled from my books, it pulled from art. It's a little spooky, but the one piece that was missing from that was there was no mention of the value of frustration. And frustration is a really important element. Boy, I terrified to say that, but it's true. Frustration is a really important element in the life of a child, but life is going to present enough frustrations. We don't have to add frustration to it.

([18:54](#)):

And I think about this story that Jack Novik, a child psychoanalyst who's now in New York, but used to be in Ann Arbor. Jack Novik talks about if you see a really young child, maybe practically not even walking yet, but is reaching for a pen and wants to get that pen, you see the child working to get that pen. And you can have a couple of responses. One is you see that if the child keeps at it, she's going to get it. So you do nothing. Another response could be you pick up the pen and you give it to the child, the child wants it, and you're just going to help them out. And a third response can be you take the pen and you move it a little bit farther away, so they have to work harder. So I think this picking it up and moving it farther away is what I would call sadistic.

[\(19:46\):](#)

That's just mean. It's not necessary. But the thing about picking up the pen and handing it to the baby or their really young child, picking it up and handing it to them means they don't get to exercise their own volition, their own ability, their own muscles for overcoming an obstacle. It's not easy for them to reach this pen, this marker, but with some effort they can get it. So you see the child's desire, you see them working to get the thing they want, and you stay out of the way and you let 'em do it. That to me is a wonderful metaphor for what needs to happen in lessons and practices. And I realize that when I say this, parents get terrified because that's basically the baseline for parents is to be worried all the time that they're doing something wrong. 'em wrong. But okay, so you hand the pen to the child, it's not the end of the world.

[\(20:46\):](#)

Next time, maybe you'll think in a different way and do it a different way. The problem is, if every time you do this, so frustration is where kids get the good stuff. I've done work with parents like parent groups where I ask them, why do you have your child enrolled in lessons? And they have all kinds of things they want to say to love music, and to have something I didn't, all these kinds of things. But there's a whole other category, which is I want them to develop discipline. I want them to develop executive skills. You don't develop discipline executive skills. You don't develop any of that stuff without frustration. Because if everything is easy all the time, then you never practice. You just play. Practice is work, and the work is about transforming what's hard into something that's doable, ideally easy. So when kids never get that frustration, they don't get to exercise that muscle speaking with sports.

[\(21:53\):](#)

They don't get to exercise that ability to take on a challenge. And when the pen gets moved away, when the frustration is too big, when it's too much, that's when kids shut down, they give up. So those are some initial thoughts about frustration, but I knew you were going to ask me about this, so I was thinking about something else I have. Well, during the pandemic, I had some students graduate. I had some students quit and leave. So my student load went way down. And the people that I'm seeing in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, that population increased. So I had plenty of work, but I've been missing teaching. I've had four students, and now there are a couple of teachers who have reduced their

loads and they're sending students to me. So I've been seeing a lot of students, oh, actually I've been feeling a lot of calls from parents.

(22:50):

And a parent asked me the other day, what kind of teacher are you? And it was a great question, and I have thought about it, and I realized I'm the kind of teacher who wants to give more yeses in a lesson than no, yeah, you got that. Yeah, that's it. You're doing it rather than, Nope, that's not it. No, you didn't get it. So I want to give as many yeses as possible in a lesson, which means I have to break the task down into really small pieces so that the child can do the small piece and get it. And I can say yes in a genuine way, not in a gritting through my teeth. Yeah, you got it. But where I really mean it, yeah, you got it. But that can only happen if things are broken down into small steps. And if those steps are practiced until they're easy, and then you add the next step onto that so that there's a lot of yes in a lesson. So that can eliminate a lot of frustration, but it also creates another kind of frustration. The other kind of frustration is the frustration that comes from the parent and the child, which is, we don't want to work this hard. We want to have this happen fast. You just skip these steps. We just do this. Somehow by magic, they don't say those words, but so even when you're trying to reduce frustration as much as possible, the frustration is there because playing doesn't happen by magic. It takes some work to get that going.

Christine Goodner (24:41):

Yeah, no, those are some really good thoughts. I hear a lot when I ask why, what are you hoping your child gets from this? Persistence comes up a lot, and it's a similar thing where we didn't have a discussion about, you don't get that if you don't come up against, there's something for me to, or grit is another one. If you don't have anything to push through that you wish you could get the easy way or the magic way out, you don't actually get to develop that muscle. And in that way, music gives us a real gift, and it's a really hard one gift sometimes because the process is not always fun to develop that, or it's hard to see our kid go through that as a parent, I will say, because hard to see. It was hard for me to see my kids struggle through something that I wish they didn't find so frustrating, or I see them overwhelmed by their emotions and how do I help them navigate through this? Those are big jobs as a parent.

Edmund Sprunger (25:34):

And what enters into a music lesson, this is a big reason of how I ended up as a psychoanalyst, but what enters into a music lesson is that when a child starts at four, which is my preferred age for starting kids, I don't like to start younger than four, a lot of reasons why. But by the time a child gets to you at four or even three or two, but they have had a lot of experiences already that have created a template for how they're going to deal with frustration. And there's a paper by DW Wincott, a famous child psychoanalyst who died around in the early seventies, and he was in his late eighties, I think Wincott wrote a paper called The World in Small Doses. And it's about the idea that when a child is born, the parents provide magic. A kid can go, a baby can go from being hungry, distressed, and uncomfortable to being satisfied and happy.

[\(26:44\):](#)

And that happens because the parent brings food. So that original connection with the parent is that the parent is the person who can convert distress, frustration, if you will convert all that into pleasure. So no wonder kids expect that their parents will make everything easy for them because that's the original template that's in there for them. They don't have that with teachers. They didn't have that relationship with them, with their teachers. If kids starts with me at four, that's when we're starting our journey together. So this distress that they have with their parents, some kids early on because of the environment, the world is too big. They don't get the world in small doses. They get a big chunk of reality way too soon. So early on when parents are really attuned to their kid, the kid is going to be hungry and in distress, and the parent will be right there.

[\(27:53\):](#)

And over time, the parent isn't quite so Johnny on the spot, and it takes a while, but that's manageable for the child. But if you have a child that is born into a really chaotic environment and for whatever reason they have to wait too long, it's more frustration than they can manage and they shut down in all kinds of ways. And so this idea of grit, you have to have grit that is developed by having someone help you develop it. And every so often you encounter a student who can't handle the frustration of the work because I don't know, let's say when they were too, one of their parents was killed in a car wreck and the family went into chaos. These are not bad parents. This is called life is hard. And the child didn't get what they needed to be able to manage and have an ally in battling some of these challenges. So they shut down and they'll shut down in lessons. And it can be really confusing for teachers because we've got the best games and the cutest animals, the stuffed animals. Anyway, those are some of my thoughts about frustration.

Christine Goodner [\(29:20\):](#)

And I think I encounter too students sometimes where violin, which is what I teach, is the first thing that they've done that has felt really hard to them and not easy. And in that way, they feel like they don't know how to manage this because other things did come to them quite easily. And this is the first thing that feels like, why can't I do this as easily as everything else?

Edmund Sprunger [\(29:40\):](#)

Exactly. And let's add to that, sometimes for the parents is the first time they've faced something hard.

[\(29:47\):](#)

As a child therapist, one of the first things I think about is when a child starts to walk, that is a new point in the parent-child relationship because prior to a child walking, the parent and child are kind of on the same page. But when a child can walk, they can walk away from the parent, they can get into all kinds of dangerous things for the child. The world has suddenly become a very interesting place for the parent. It's suddenly become a very dangerous place. So that's a real conflict for the two of them. And how they

work that out kind of helps set a template for how they're going to do other stuff. So maybe that worked really well for them. And sometimes people will get into taking lessons and this is the first time the parent has encountered something really hard or it's harder than the parent thought it was going to be. So the parent is disenchanted and has to figure out how to manage that.

Christine Goodner ([30:49](#)):

So if we have parents listening, who would think, yes, that's me right now in journey as a parent supporting my child in music, what do you think an approach would be to if one can realize like, oh, this is the problem. This is what's causing me some stress. What should I do?

Edmund Sprunger ([31:07](#)):

Okay, well, so I work in what we probably call the psychotherapy space. I'm a big proponent of therapy, but you've written books. I've written books. One of the things behind my books is that I've tried to write about the things parents have told me about in private and address those things so that a parent can take the book and go read in private and not have to raise their hand in a parent group, not have to talk to their teacher about it. But if they can read in private, maybe they can gradually start to process and think about what's giving them challenges, and then that might help them talk with their teacher. Or if it's too big for a lesson, talk with the therapist.

Christine Goodner ([31:54](#)):

Yeah, it does. People have told me Suzuki made them a better parent because they really had to in order to make this successful with their child, work on their own selves. So if you're listening to this and that's you, we acknowledge that's a big ask. It's a big task, and hats off to you for being willing to work through whatever you need to do this.

Edmund Sprunger ([32:17](#)):

Oh, yeah. I've heard that many times, as have you. And the most poignant for me was when a parent picked me up at the airport. I was doing a workshop. Parent picked me up at the airport and on the way to where, I guess where I was going, that probably the hotel. She said, yeah, I think of practicing as my spiritual practice, practicing with my child is my spiritual practice. It's where I face all kinds of things that I have to figure out what to do with. I thought, wow, that's wonderful and wonderful for the kid to have a parent who doesn't have it all together. Parents don't have to have it all together, but the fact that a parent is demonstrating that this stuff can be processed, and it's like the mama bird who chews the food first and then gives it to their child. Very nice metaphor.

Christine Goodner ([33:15](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I recently did a parent group, and the theme everybody came with was, I want to practice my child differently than I was practiced with because I had this certain, I want my kids to have music, but I

don't want them to have this other experience I have. And so I'm really working hard at how do I do that and still have them work hard, make progress.

Edmund Sprunger ([33:38](#)):

What were the things from their experience that they wanted to get rid of

Christine Goodner ([33:43](#)):

Feelings that the product was more important than them as the person, or that they could never measure up,

Edmund Sprunger ([33:52](#)):

That

Christine Goodner ([33:52](#)):

They were disappointing their parents in some profound way because of what was coming out in the instrument.

Edmund Sprunger ([33:57](#)):

Yeah, that's a really interesting one because I was just listening to a podcast interview with a psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips, who he talks a lot about frustration, but he was saying that frustration can serve as a clue to what you might want. And if the frustration is too big, then the child shuts down. But if it's manageable, it can serve as a clue to what you might want. And I thought about this and I thought it's like if you're trying to learn Becker Gava and you're frustrated with it, but you're working on it because you want to learn Becker, that's a really great experience. But if you're working on Becker and you're learning it so you don't disappoint your parent or your teacher, that's a different kind of wanting. That's one of the things that I really hope to do at lessons is to keep in touch with what it is that the child wants. I want plenty of things, but I ask, I check in with students, what do you want from this lesson? Or How does that sound to you? You've changed something. How does it feel to you to change it this way, to do it this way? And students that have been studied with me for a while, they have a sense students that are transferred in, they have no idea what the right answer is, and they're looking for the right answer. But I'm genuinely interested in what is the child's experience of playing with a bigger sound or playing in tune or whatever.

Christine Goodner ([35:49](#)):

And if they start thinking about their own experience on themselves, then it's less about my making my mom happy, my dad happy, my teacher happy.

Edmund Sprunger ([35:57](#)):

Exactly. Exactly. That's always going to be there.

Christine Goodner ([36:01](#)):

That's human nature, of course.

Edmund Sprunger ([36:04](#)):

Yeah, yeah,

Christine Goodner ([36:06](#)):

Yeah, yeah. Such interesting topics. And I guess I'll just cap off our frustration comment with, one of the things that I learned in my training, early childhood education and circle of security training is that one thing that really helps students navigate and tolerate frustration is having an adult who is attuned to and interested in what is your experience. Let me help you navigate these feelings so you don't feel alone in them. They're not too much for you because I'm here to walk through them with you. So

Edmund Sprunger ([36:34](#)):

Yeah, I realize our listeners can't see me nodding big time to every time everything you say it's so important is to not be alone with it.

Christine Goodner ([36:46](#)):

I think if we're the parents seeing our child in those big emotions, just knowing, sitting there with them and letting them know that their emotions aren't scaring you as the parents, like, I'm here with you. Let's take a breath. Let's break this down into a smaller chunk like you were saying earlier, ed, or let's ask the teacher how we can do that if we are not sure as the parent, but letting your child know, Hey, we're here together. This is manageable together. I'm here with you. That's one of the wonderful things I think about Suzuki teaching for me, is that the child gets to have a grownup, hopefully a supportive grownup there in the space with them helping them do this,

New Speaker ([37:19](#)):

How

Christine Goodner ([37:20](#)):

They gain all these character qualities or life skills or things that we're talking about.

Edmund Sprunger ([37:25](#)):

Exactly. And the parent gets that too. I really hope that what I do is support the parents as well. It is so not easy what we do. It's a lot to keep track of.

Christine Goodner ([37:43](#)):

I think in an ideal case, we see that, oh, my parent will help me navigate these things, and then when it's not violent, I have this huge life choice to make or something in my life that's really big, that's bigger than violin is coming up. Oh, my parent knows how to help me through these things. That's a gift. That's aside from what we do, but aside benefit in the best of cases, I would say.

Edmund Sprunger ([38:02](#)):

Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([38:03](#)):

Yeah.

Edmund Sprunger ([38:05](#)):

And my parent can help me with this, but also if they don't want to talk to their parent the idea there are other people in the world who can be helpful.

Christine Goodner ([38:16](#)):

Absolutely.

Edmund Sprunger ([38:17](#)):

Because they've had that experience with you.

Christine Goodner ([38:19](#)):

Right, right. No, very true. Very true. Well, such a great topic. I know we could both talk about this for a very long time, but I really appreciate you giving us

New Speaker ([38:29](#)):

Oh, we could, yeah.

Christine Goodner ([38:31](#)):

Enjoy it very much. So thanks for talking about all this. I know you have a unique perspective from teacher who works with parents and teachers and students, and then also your psychoanalyst training and work, because not everybody has all those sides that they can look at issues from. And so I always learn so much talking with you and hearing you speak. I know my colleagues do as well, because yeah, it's a perspective not everybody has, so it's good to see it from all sides.

Edmund Sprunger ([38:59](#)):

Well, I've really been reflecting on my life lately. I am in my sixties now, so I think about the past decades, and I realized, I studied with Suzuki in my early twenties, and it really set a course for my life about changing the world, not in a beat my chest, and I'm going to do it all, but in wanting to be a positive force and realizing, wanting to help teachers be able to do this really hard work. And of course by teachers, I mean me, I was trying to figure out how to make this work. And then social work and psychoanalytic training ended up being really helpful. But really in my heart, Kate Collier McLaughlin and I have talked about this too, she has had a sort of similar path, but in our hearts, we're still Suzuki teachers. It's changing the world, being a force for good.

Christine Goodner ([40:11](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I know I got that growing up as a Suzuki kid, I just feel like that was sort of, I don't know . . . I soaked that up around me, and I know your work has definitely influenced me to do the work I do now. I encountered your work when I was a parent with my own kids, and because of my early childhood background, a lot of things you were saying really clicked with other training I had. And I was like, oh, okay. Now I can see how all this dovetails. And it helped me make sense of different parts of my training too. So I really appreciate it.

Edmund Sprunger ([40:40](#)):

Great. It's always a pleasure to hear that stuff.

Christine Goodner ([40:44](#)):

Sure. Well, it's why we do what we do. We know we hope we're making a difference.

Edmund Sprunger ([40:48](#)):

Yeah.

Christine Goodner ([40:49](#)):

Alright, well, I always like to wrap up our conversations and leave listeners with an idea about practice to take into their week. And we've talked about a lot of ideas in this conversation, so we could recap something we've already said, or if you have a different practice idea you'd like to leave people with Ed, I'd love to hear what you'd like to share with people as we go Today.

Edmund Sprunger ([41:08](#)):

I got three.

Christine Goodner ([41:08](#)):

Oh, great.

Edmund Sprunger ([41:09](#)):

One is slow it down. We talked about that before. The second thing is it's probably not worth fighting with your child about it. Whatever it is that you're struggling with in practice, don't do it. Skip it, give it up, come to the next lesson and let the teacher know that you couldn't work on that. And I encourage the parents of my students all the time in this because I can work with them on it. They're not worried about disappointing me, as we were talking about earlier. Just same for the teacher. And after we've done that 1, 2, 3, 4 weeks, then they can practice it at home, but it's not worth your relationship with your child. So number one, a slow it down. Number two is just don't do it. Save it for the teacher. And then the third one is, well, if we don't work on it, what are we going to work on?

([42:02](#)):

There's always review and especially as you're thinking about starting the school year out, do easy review just do and what makes review hard? A couple of things make review hard, but one thing that really makes review hard is that was pretty good, but I think you could do it a little bit better if you think about No, just play it. They're moving, they're playing, they're doing stuff. I found myself practicing piano more lately because last fall I was supposed to get together with my family on the coast of Oregon, and as soon as we all got there, I came down with COVID. So I spent the weekend, my brother's condo, while they were all on the coast of Oregon. And I didn't have much to do, but I did have a piano and I started playing scales every day, scales because I didn't have any music. And just the act of moving, just the act of doing it really started transforming my playing just because I'm doing it. So there's review and you've always got review, and it doesn't have to be at the highest level. Just get them playing. Just get moving, just get going.

Christine Goodner ([43:19](#)):

Well, those are all great advice, and I always say there's many ways to practice. You have one relationship with your child.

New Speaker ([43:27](#)):

Oh yeah.

Christine Goodner ([43:28](#)):

And I just love what you said because it's not worth ruining the relationship with your child over a practice task. Like, please come to us as teachers, we want to help you.

Edmund Sprunger ([43:38](#)):

Yeah. Well, what you were just saying about working with these next generation Suzuki parents who grew up as Suzuki kids who want their kids to have a different experience. So informative.

Christine Goodner ([43:49](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. We can look back and say like, oh, that's not, I hear stories about people whose relationships were ruined with their own parents. It's like it isn't over C natural versus C sharp. It's just not worth it. It just let your teacher help you, like you said. So such great advice to end on.

Edmund Sprunger ([44:03](#)):

Yeah. On the violin finger, but it's a quarter of an inch, right? Not worth it.

Christine Goodner ([44:09](#)):

No. No. Alright, well thank you so much for your time and your insights. It was great to speak with you today.

Edmund Sprunger ([44:16](#)):

This was great, Christine. Thank you so much for having me.

Christine Goodner ([44:21](#)):

Before we go today, here are a few of my takeaways from today's conversation On the topic of getting back to school or back to a routine, I really liked what Ed had to say about taking a moment to consider how all this affects us as the practice support grownup at home and how we can approach this season that can really set the tone. I think it's absolutely valid to think about what you need to show up and support your child in practice at this busy time of year. I know I would often make a big mug of tea for myself when practicing with my kids. Some parents tell me they put a cozy blanket on their lap or the pet comes in, their favorite pet comes in and sits at their feet. Other people tell me they focus on quality time they get with their child when they're attempted to skip because they are exhausted or short on patients on any given day.

([45:09](#)):

So I do think it's really important to take care of ourselves in little ways so that we can show up and be ready to support our child. I also really loved what Ed had to say about the importance of frustration and his quote, frustration is where the kids get the good stuff. I think that's so true and many of us want our kids to learn to work hard and build persistence or grit through their experience in music lessons. And it's easy to forget, at least for me, that sometimes those life lessons and skills are built through things that sort of test our patience and persistence and we learn to navigate through and that's how we flex that muscle and learn to use it. I also think the advice to slow down and even hit pause when something is overwhelming or causing too much frustration in home practice is a really important one.

([46:00](#)):

If you're a parent helping your child navigate home practice, it can be a great life skill to teach our kids also to hit pause when we're overwhelmed and to decide something is too much right now, but how could we simplify it so we can keep going? Or how can we get someone else involved who can help us? In this case, our teacher, I a hundred percent hope families I work with, do this and come ask me when something isn't manageable about practice. And my guess is your teacher hopes that you will do this too. Alright, time to practice community. I hope you enjoyed this conversation as much as I did. This season will have one long format interview like this a month. And then we will also have shorter episodes where I bring you practice ideas and tips, frequently asked questions, and we'll also have our wonderful frequent guest Barbie Wong come on and talk with us about music practice often as well. So I will look forward to being back with you next week. If you can think of someone who would benefit from listening to this episode, you can support the work that we do here on this podcast by sharing this episode with your music community, with a friend, with a colleague, and help spread the word of what we're doing here so that more people can get the benefit of hearing Ed Spunger's wise words he shared with us today. All right, everyone. I wish you a very happy week of practicing. Take very good care.

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