
While we might not always realize it music and life have a lot in common and each can teach us a lot about the other. I was going through one of the most difficult times of my life, my responsibilities were overwhelming, I was extremely stressed, and I was getting nothing done, and my music and practice were suffering in all the same ways. I was reaching a breaking point when I found the answer to my problems through music. This solution changed both the way I learn difficult music, and the way I handle difficult everyday challenges. It comes in three steps.

Lesson 1: Slow It Down

Too often I catch myself jumping into a new piece of music with guns blazing. This can be from excitement, impatience, or a number of other reasons, however, it is important to remember that even though we may feel we are saving time at first if we don't take the time to learn something thoroughly from the beginning we will end up wasting time later down the road. In life we have this exact parallel, while it is easy to get caught in the race to the bottom remember that these feelings of urgency are just illusions we have created for ourselves. Take the time to do things right the first time, and don't forget to slow down to breathe.

- Value quality over quantity
- Do it right the first time
- Breathe!

Lesson 2: Break it down into smaller parts

A large part of my downfalls during this period of my life came through taking on more than I could handle. In music we need to take things one step at a time. To do this strip things down to the very basics and focus on one single thing, perhaps just the rhythm, just the pitches, or just the technique called for. Once and only once you have mastered your one thing try adding on a second element. Much like with speed if we don't take things step by step we will just end up wasting our time learning things incorrectly. In our lives while it is important

that we can handle multiple challenging elements simultaneously, unless we master these sequentially we don't stand a chance. Like with our music pick one thing to focus your energy on and you will notice the success from this mastery will spill over into your other responsibilities. This is known as a keystone habit.

- Focus on mastering one single thing
- "Set it and forget it"
- Break things down in multiple ways
- Layer sequentially

Lesson 3: Relax

This is probably the most overlooked yet vital life lesson you can learn. It is important to realize that sometimes the most productive thing you can do is relax! Burn out is never fun and can wreak havoc on your productivity. Remember that everything in life is a matter of balance so finding the right balance of work and play will not only make you happier and healthier, but you will find yourself getting much more done as well. In playing music we should never be stressed so by taking things slowly and in small pieces we can train our brains to be in the habit of relaxation from the beginning. When you practice try to keep a clear head, relax your muscles, and of course don't forget to breathe. Much like your all nighter history paper you can never force out your best work, so try to keep your practice sessions short yet efficient.

- Spend time doing non musical things!
- Don't get caught up worrying
- Make your practice sessions short and efficient
- Keep things fun!