

4 Being Present

There are days when, as I practice, I want to jump up and do something else. It's frustrating, since often when I'm *not* practicing, *I wish I had more time to practice.*

We all have the habit of doing one thing while thinking of something else. I might be eating the most delicious meal, one I've anticipated for weeks, and instead of enjoying it, I'm worrying about something I'm going to do tomorrow.

My time (and my life) are finite. I may be unusual, but I take very seriously the idea that I don't have time to waste. I need to get the most out of the hours I spend practicing. That's why, for me, ***developing a mental habit of being fully engaged in what I'm doing, or being "present," is as important as practicing the instrument itself.***

People sometimes talk about being "present" or, "in the moment" the way you might say, "I want to spend more time reading": as if it were an objective you could achieve if you only had more time. "Maybe next month, after I retire, I'll get the chance to be more in the moment."

Being present and engaged in your lived experience doesn't take time. *It gives you back time:* the time you already have, that you spend imagining you're somewhere else.

Put It into Practice

Whatever you're doing right now, pause for a few seconds and notice that. Say to yourself, "I am here, doing this, feeling this."

Taking this mindful pause feels good. Whenever I take a pause to be present, it feels like I'm living my life, instead of riding an express train to somewhere else.

It can be hard to be “in the moment” when the moment doesn't feel so good. But playing music? That is pure joy. I try to remind myself of that every time I sit down to play.

Today I will try to be present while I play. For a moment, I will get off the “train to somewhere else.” I'll look up and remember: “I'm here, doing this, hearing this, seeing this, feeling this!”

Excerpt from the book [Best Practice: Inspiration and Ideas for Traditional Musicians](#) by Judy Minot. More info at www.judyminot.com/bestpractice

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