



What you Practice Today is Not Important

BUT WHO YOU BECOME ALONG THE WAY IS!

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Preface

Lately I have been on a mission. A mission to help parents coach their children through practice with less conflict, better results and with the big picture in mind.

As a music teacher, I see this lack of big-picture thinking as a common theme when students and families are struggling with daily music practice.

It's so easy to get stuck in the day to day details and to forget why we are learning music in the first place.

When I ask readers of my blog about their biggest struggle, most often they say it is practice with their own children or getting the students and parents in their studio to practice effectively or consistently.

When I was a parent practicing with my own children, I struggled with the same thing. Usually it isn't the lessons, recitals or expense that is the biggest stumbling block to continuing with lessons long term. *It's the daily grind of practicing.*

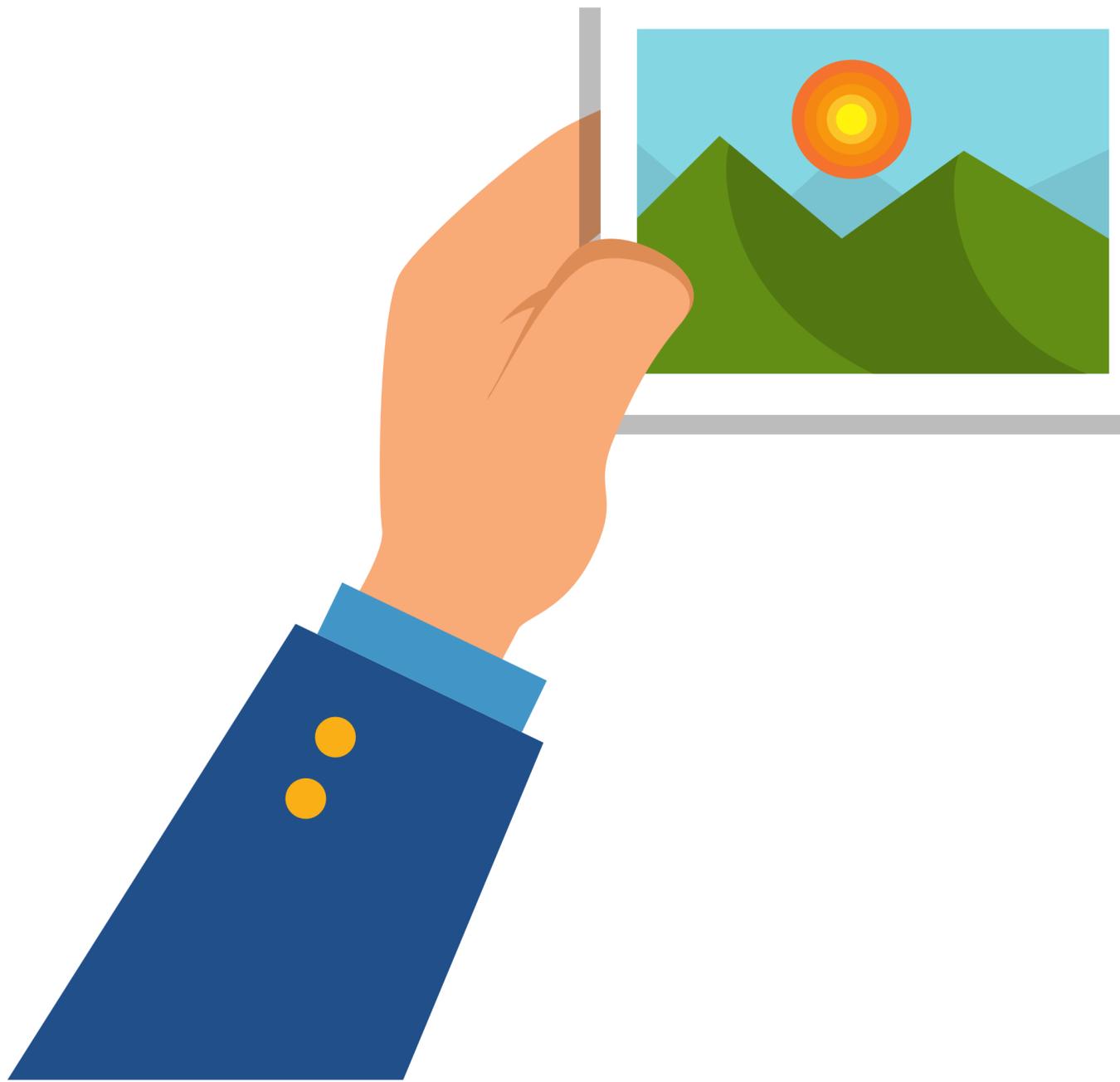
Stepping back and looking at things with a new perspective can solve a lot of this struggle. Focusing on the big picture helps us do that. It is a simple answer, but it's certainly not an easy one.

I have seen families completely turn around their practices in a week or two of implementing the ideas in this ebook. If you are willing to give this a try I am confident that you'll be able to do so too!

This is meant to be a quick read.

Something you can use to change your mindset about practice and that you can come back to and read again and again.

I'd love to hear what you think about it and hope you'll share your thoughts by email (Christine@SuzukiTriangle.com) or by joining the conversation at the Suzuki Triangle Facebook group.



THE BIG PICTURE

WHY WHAT YOU PRACTICE TODAY
REALLY DOESN'T MATTER

The Big Picture

Practicing can feel like it's all about the little details.

It can feel like it's about perfection and doing everything right.

Sometimes practice feels like a list you can never accomplish. It feels like there's not enough time to do all of our assignments from our teacher each week. It can be a challenge to get everything done.

But it's not really about all that—it's not about what your child does today that is most important. It's not about doing all the tasks perfectly, all of the time.

Practice INVOLVES a lot of little details and trying to get things right for your next lesson.

But practice is not ABOUT all of that.

It's about who we are raising children to be.

It's about who your child becomes in the process of practicing.

It's about who we as parents become because we have learned to work with, and respect, who our children really are and how they learn best.

It's about learning how to achieve goals and also about being patient with ourselves as we give our best to something new.

It's about encountering obstacles and huge dreams and knowing (because we've learned how to do this through music) that we are capable of meeting the challenge if we break things into small pieces and work on them one at a time.

Adults who are former music students often list character qualities as the thing they gained from music lessons. Things like discipline, persistence, sensitivity and appreciation for music top the list.

This is the life-changing work we are doing we when come to the practice room each day.

Developing as musicians, yes. But even more than that, developing as people.

I hope that idea inspires you as much as it inspires me as a musician, teacher and a mom.

How do we keep this big picture perspective in mind during the daily practice sessions? How do we keep it in mind during the busy seasons of life when we seem to be holding on for dear life until our schedules slow down enough to take a deep breath?

We need to remind ourselves of our destination.

We need a Daily Pre-Practice Process that helps us focus on the big picture before each practice session.

We need to keep reminding ourselves why we are learning music in the first place.

So let's get practical . . . how do we structure a daily practice routine that keeps the big picture in mind?



**3-MINUTE DAILY
PRE-PLANNING SESSION
OR
DAILY NAVIGATION PLAN**



*Keeping the final destination in mind
during daily practice*

3-Minute Daily Pre-Planning Session

I suggest a 3-minute routine (as the parent) before each practice session. Alternately, you could do this at the end of the last practice and just review it before starting the next day.

Ask Yourself the Following Questions

(and actually write them down):

In Today's Practice I Will Focus on Being _____

(What does your child need from you? Patience?
Encouragement? Calm?)

Our Main Goal in Practice Today is _____.

(What has your teacher asked you to work on this week? Tone, posture, a specific technique? I try to outline what the focus for the week is with my students and am very open to them asking if I am not clear about it).

Top 3 Things to Accomplish in Today's Practice:

Top 3 Big-Picture Goals I Have for My Child (Through Music):

You may also want to add the following:

Events in the next month(s) to prep for:

This might be recitals, institutes, or group music etc.

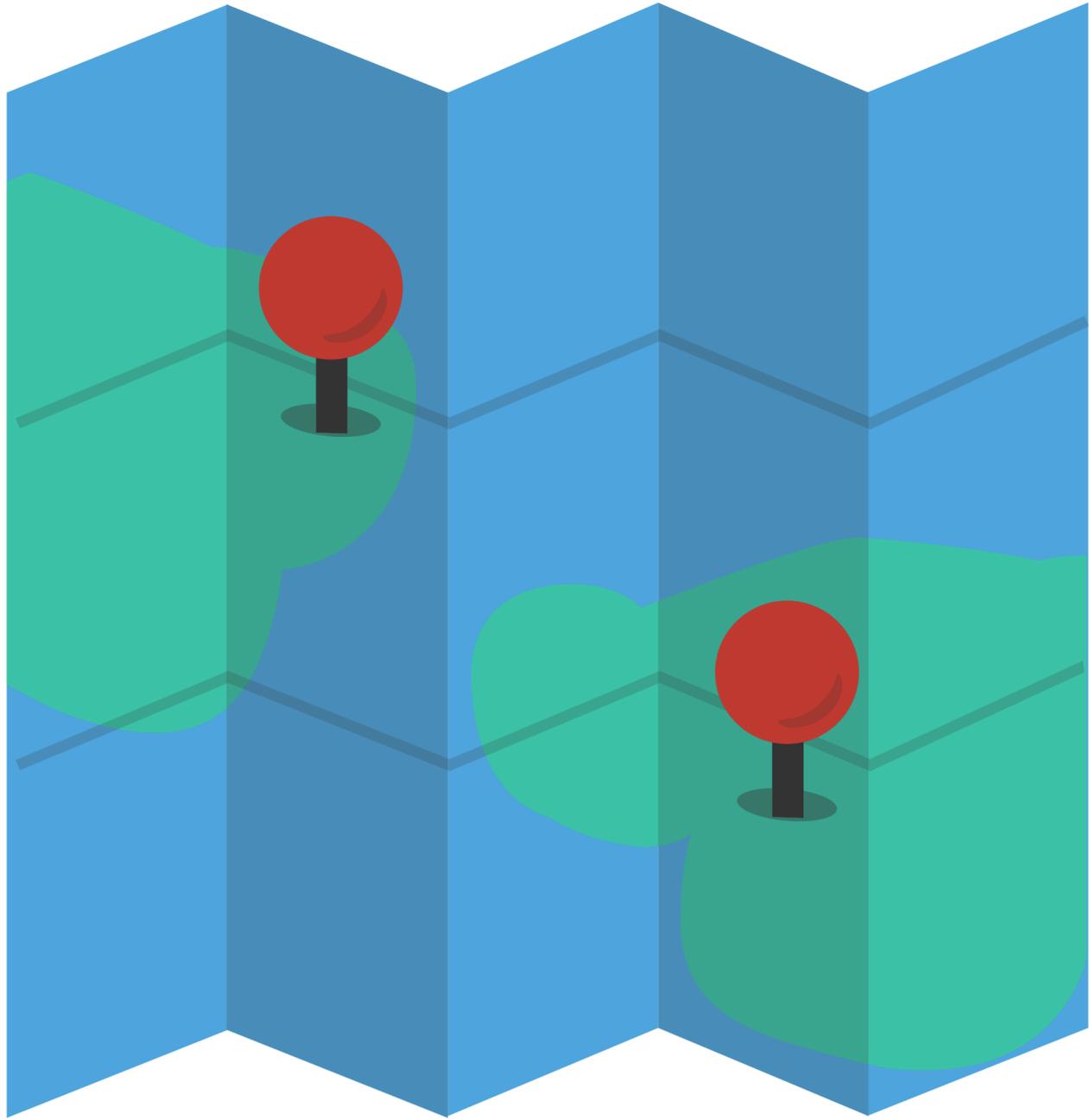
That's it!

It just takes a couple of minutes . . . but when you take the time before practice to set these specific goals for practice, this helps cut through all the "we should" and "why can't we"-type thoughts.

If you can get to everything that's great - please do.

If you can't, then set your priority list and make sure you do that first.

As students get older, they can fill out their own set of questions too. This is a great way to model setting goals and breaking them down in order to reach them.



REMINDE YOURSELF OF THE DESTINATION

Otherwise you may head in the
wrong direction.

If we want to drive somewhere we've never been, we usually look up directions. Or maybe we plug the destination into an app that tells us step-by-step directions.

When you go to your lesson each week, your teacher is like that app giving you turn by turn directions to your destination.

It's easy to get super focused on a left turn coming up or something that is happening as we turn the corner, but *that frustrating thing*, the one you keep practicing and getting assigned to practice again or in a new way . . .

That is not the main point.

It's something that is helping you get to your final destination: playing with ease, playing with a beautiful tone, learning your first concerto, and reaching a level of mastery on your instrument.

When it feels overwhelming or like you're stuck - stop and remind yourself of where you are going and why.



WHY WE NEED GOALS

& HOW THEY GUIDE OUR
DAILY PRACTICE

When I first started parent-teacher conferences in my studio, it was hard for the parents I work with to come up with goals for their children for the upcoming year.

Now that we have talked about it for a few years, the goals are easier to pinpoint.

Goals keep us motivated.

They remind us of those stopping points along the way where we can celebrate our progress so far.

Take the time to ask yourself:

(literally write it down)

What is your goal for your child(ren) or students over the next year?

What is their goal for themselves?

Picture your child ten years from now . . .

How old will they be? Whether or not they still play their instrument (I hope they do!) what do you want them to have learned from their time as a music student that still sticks with them? Likely it will stick with them for the rest of their lives.

What do you want your teen or young adult to have developed in themselves from studying music?

Make a list.

Put it in your practice notebook or practice space at home.

Pull it out when you wonder if it is worth it.

Look at it when you feel too busy, too stressed, too impatient or too tired. (Let's face it, we all feel like this sometimes!)

This list is our WHY.

This list is our DESTINATION.

All the twists and turns along the way . . .

All the potholes and bumpy conditions . . .

All the hanging on for dear life and hoping the wheels stay on the road. They are worth it on the way to reaching *this* destination.

And it won't all be tough going.

There will be wonderful moments, and times when it all goes smoothly, and times when it's fun and rewarding and easy to keep at it.

In times like those it is easy to remember why we keep practicing and keep working towards our goals.

I'm always thankful when they happen!

Keeping the big picture in mind gives us perspective.

Daily pre-planning sessions together with focusing on one and ten year goals will help you keep this mindset all along the way.

Final Thoughts

There you have it! The details of what you practice today are not important. Please don't let all of the details stress you out or derail your progress.

Do keep your final destination and goals in mind. That is the thing that keeps us headed in the right direction. Take a few minutes before each practice session and remind yourself of what to focus on based on your goals and final destination.

Remember the big picture.

Remember WHY your family is committed to music.

This makes all the difference!