

Performance Script Example

Walk the walk

Many musicians develop the ability to tune in to their ideal performance state by associating concentration with certain performance rituals. These, should be established during warm-ups, practice and the actual performance and should be designed to cue both the body and mind. It takes time identify your own ideal pre-performance concentration routine. Also, once you have defined your routine, it should be practiced consistently. Over time, these protocols will help you to automatically trigger the focused concentration state of mind that you need for a good performance.

Use this script to help you identify what works for you and develop your own performance ritual.

Imagine yourself the day of the performance,

- How do you usually feel in the morning?
 - Thoughts:
 - Positive: I have done my work, now it's time to let go and enjoy.
 - Negative: I don't feel prepared for today, I am worried about that passage in the piece.
 - Physiological reaction:
 - Positive: I feel a little bit nervous and my hands are sweating already, but I feel I have the right amount of energy to play.
 - Negative: I feel a not in the stomach and a little bit anxious, my energy levels are really low.
- How would you like to be feeling?
 - I would like to feel more calm, or more energized.
 - What could you do to achieve that feeling?
 - Focus on positive self-talk: I have done my best, I have worked as much as I could, given the situation.

- If you feel low on energy level: do some rapid breathing to activate your cardio-respiratory system. If you feel you are too aroused, focus on your breathing and make exhalations longer.
- What do you think is best to focus on?
 - Focus on what is best for you and what you want to achieve, not on the negative things that could happen. For example, a four year old carries a glass of juice across the carpet to her mother. Her mother says, "Don't spill it". In almost all cases, the child will now spill the juice. It would be much better if the mother had said, "Look how easily you are carrying the glass". **These examples illustrate that what we see and say to ourselves provides direction to how we think and feel.**

Then in the venue,

- How do you feel?
- What are your thoughts?
 - Are they realistic?
 - Are they helpful or detrimental?
- What are you going to focus on?
- What are you going to do to stay calm and focused?
- Are you going to be alone or with people?
 - Think about what is best for you in term of staying focused and in a positive state of mind for performance

It is the same process, identify and be aware of your thoughts, feelings and physiological reactions. Then, work on the strategies that help you being in control of them. Being in control doesn't mean forcing them, but being selective in the things you want to put your attention on. For example, if a negative thought or feeling comes up, you can either choose to react to it and put your attention on the negative thought or feeling, or on the other hand, identify it and let it go, either by using breathing, mindfulness techniques or by transforming those signs into signals that your body is preparing for what is to come, which doesn't need to be a negative thing.

During the performance,

- Establish cues during the time of the performance, that will remind you to get centered, stay calm and refocus in something specific if your mind wanders. Examples include focusing in musical aspects such as phrasing, articulation, dynamics, or on physical aspects such as your breathing or the body. An important principle is that relaxation of the body is necessary in order to direct and maintain the flow of energy.
 - Tip: use breathing and centering techniques to stay in the moment.
- Define in practice which are those cues.