

Lecture 10 Performance Readiness

Performing is an extraordinary action. When we perform, we take our audience on a journey.

When we experience live performance, we do not simply view— we co-create.

Why do you perform? What led you to doing this? What do you love about it? What makes a good or great performance; for you, for others?

Everything we have done to this point has been in service of a holistic Performance Readiness process.

About Pre- Performance Energy

Performing is skilled excitation, used to communicate intentionally with an audience.

Skill

the ability to do something well; expertise.

a particular ability.

Synonyms:

expertise, skillfulness, expertness, adeptness, adroitness, deftness, dexterity, ability, prowess, mastery, competence, capability, aptitude, artistry, virtuosity, talent

Excitement

a feeling of great enthusiasm and eagerness.

something that arouses enthusiasm and eagerness

Synonyms: exhilaration, elation, animation, enthusiasm, eagerness, anticipation, thrill, pleasure, delight, joy; arousal, passion, stimulation

The key hormone in excitement is adrenaline. Adrenaline is a quick -on, quick -off hormone which gives you the energy you need to do what you're doing; primes muscles for action, speeds up biological processes, increases focus- all of which gets you ready to do something extraordinary.

Excitation gives us what we need for meeting and embracing the challenges of life and performance in a sustainable, constructive way. It is present when we are engaged in something we care about.

What a good idea!

Pre- performance energy is appropriate and useful.

Welcome it, and use it!

Flow/ Challenge State

1. There are clear goals every step of the way
2. There is immediate feedback to one's actions
3. There is a balance between challenge and skills
4. Action and awareness are merged
5. Distractions are excluded from consciousness
6. There is no worry of failure
7. Self-consciousness disappears
8. Sense of time becomes distorted
9. The activity becomes autotelic (enjoyable for its own sake)

The condition and quality of your flow state can be improved as your skills and coordination improves. This is why my mission is stated as helping you increase quality and satisfaction in your performing and your life.

Criteria for Constructive Thinking

1. Yes that is a verb
2. Cooperates with design and is possible
3. Within my control
4. Ecological; not harmful to the whole, or others

Your performance plans will work best if they have the characteristics of flow, and of constructive thinking.

About Stress

If you learned to associate performing with stress, here's some information about that.

Stress

pressure or tension exerted on a material object, a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

This does not describe performing.

The key class of hormones involved in stress is glucocorticoids, most notably cortisol, which take longer to go out of your system. They are helpful and appropriate in emergencies. They can cause damage over time if you decide for psychological reasons that everyday is an emergency.

Good things to know

We are designed to handle stress. It's called resiliency.

Stress is harmful if you define it as such.

If you remind yourself this energy is helpful, you can use it in a constructive way.

Stress gives us clues about what we care about.

People who worry more tend to have more meaning in their lives.

Chasing meaning is far better for you than avoiding discomfort.

Discomfort, negative emotions and disappointment are part of life, and they are particularly part of a meaningful life.

Heightened states ask you what's needed or wanted- they are helpful and useful.

Antidotes to stress and shame are compassion and curiosity.

Key questions for stage

Am I in danger?

Do I choose to go on? Why?

What is the nature of my response, physiological or psychological?

How do I address each?

(Do I need to eat? Do a threshold exercise?)

Key factors in how you fare with stress:

Do you know the duration and/or predictability of the situation?

Do you have a choice?

Do you interpret your situation as improving?

Do you know when you've won?

In almost all cases, “ stress” around performance (performance anxiety, stage fright etc.) is a learned behavior that is based on a mislabeling, and misinterpretation of appropriate and helpful pre-performance energy. People have learned to call excitement stress- this is inaccurate, and can be transformed.

When we call appropriate excitement fear or stress, we call up the wrong response.

"Stage fright", which is a learned mislabelling of pre-performance energy is asked to be solved with relaxation, which is impossible and inappropriate. It punishes the artist for not being able to get rid of the excitement, thus creating an associative issue with performing that was likely never actually a problem. It will always result in failure, which sets up a cycle of failure around performing. Reinforcing the inaccurate idea perpetuates it.

The most powerful and effective way to learn to transform stress is a mindset intervention.

The way to make the most of it is:

Exposure to new info

Exercises to use it (below)

Share with others

Meddlers

“Relax” creates cycle of failure

Turning a want to into have- to or should, or making the obstacle the desire

Vagueness about desire or plans

Impossible instructions like “Don’t Think”

Defining the audience as the enemy or as a hinderance

People saying unhelpful things at or around performances

Antidotes to Meddlers

Remember the audience are willing co-creators. They have choice and responsibility.

Be like the sky- you need not absorb the unhelpful comments of others. Remember- the sky is slippery.

Be so busy doing your plan that you do not have the opportunity to trip yourself up.

Welcome pre-performance energy and use it.

Remind yourself why you want to do what you are doing, and how you will go about doing it.

Ways to Cultivate Performance Readiness in Rehearsing and Preparatory work:

Practicing, Rehearsing, Travel and Soundcheck

Rehearse with the future audience in mind, with the overall why in mind

Include the audience in your rehearsal process, know that they are necessary

Use studied rehearsed plans and replacement plans to do with technique, skill, coordination and performing

Develop Back-pocket plans

You take your psycho- physical history with you wherever you go, so if you know something is likely, have a studied rehearsed plan for it in your back pocket. If old, unhelpful ideas pop up, you can renew your coordination to do what you're doing.

Develop imaginary sensory cues to feed yourself onstage

Develop a game day routine

Imagine the best case scenario. See what happens when you tell yourself a strong positive story.

Define what you want for the performance, be specific.

Do the performer questions throughout your process so you are clear about what plans you need to have at the ready, how you will execute the plans, and how to assess whether you got what you wanted. This will give you a stronger and stronger association with performance as a positive growth experience, where you have control.

Experiments and Warmups

Experiments

1 Practice coordinated freedom of choice

Use the AT to...

Invite us to be with you so that you can...

Make a choice (introduce yourself, perform 5 seconds of your prepared piece, leave or do something unexpected!)

2 Yes/ No Plan Experiment

I don't want to be here

I want to be somewhere else

Our thinking effects our coordination, our coordination effects our audience.

3 Engaging Omnisensory imagination

Power costumes

Yummy smell

Imagine sets, environment, pyrotechnics

Warm ups and cool downs

1 Threshold Exercise

How do I feel? I feel...

Sensory sweep, making contact with material objects and choosing to respond

I like...

2 Warm up dance

Welcoming and using performance energy, including the audience <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdexkdpkIgk&t=1s>

<http://kateconklin.com/blog/michelle-jenneke/>

Putting it together

Use the AT so that...

You can use your technical skills...(includes any studied rehearsed plans) so that...

You can use your performance skills...(includes back pocket plans) so that...

You can take the audience on a journey for some reason

“In the long run there is no more liberating, no more exhilarating experience than to determine one’s position, state it bravely, and then act boldly. Action brings with it its own courage, its own energy, a growth of self-confidence that can be acquired in no other way.”

Eleanor Roosevelt