ROCK YOUR PERFORMANCE!

SAY GOODBYE TO AVERAGE AND PERFORM AT YOUR BEST

GEORG VOROS

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Rock Your Performance

First published by Big Drum Publishing 2026

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Georg Voros asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

Second edition

This book was professionally typeset on Reedsy.
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Foreword

It is indeed quite an honour … and responsibility, to write this Foreword on such a basic yet intrinsically expansive concept … performance!

I found this book to be an exceptional example of the wonders of realizing ones goals and ultimately, one more part of ones huge potential. It really tickled me in all the right places and having known and 'performed' with Georg over a number of years, I was not surprised by his excellent 'performance' in putting it so simply… down to earth and straight. I cannot help but think that the answers to most deep questions of life are often extremely simple and seemingly obvious.

There seems to be an inverse relationship between depth and simplicity… the deeper the question … the simpler the answer! … however this is where things get difficult, for we are not programmed to see simple answers. It is almost as if the education system fades out our natural self intuition and replaces it with great big blobs of important knowledge thus creating a buffer between who you really are and what the 'system' thinks you should know about yourself. Whatever! … I suspect foul play … as there are far too many people in all walks of life who are not enjoying what they are busy with. Perhaps it's got something to do with 'chasing the buck' and doing any

activity to achieve this.

I have often heard discussions between adults and youth about career choices where money earning seemed to be the main yardstick in the process of choice. I have also often been asked what I do 'for a living' and when I say I'm a musician, the response is normally "and for work?" I believe that I would rather do something 'for a living' than just 'for work'… in fact, this goes further, in that one will always have enough if one is happy realising ones talents and potential. The trick is to realize that this is an ongoing, never ending, challenging, pleasurable, fun filled and ultimately, joyful quest. The result is YOU … only a bit more each day!

I was always a musician at heart but started my quest in life as a psychologist. Although I learned a great deal about myself while doing this, what I learned led me to the realization that I needed to be a musician in order to 'be who I am' … so I changed the channel (we each have our own remote control! … something we tend to forget). I moved out into the African bush and lived in a caravan for three years while I refined my approach to being a better, more adventurous and capable musician. I don't stay in the caravan anymore but this quest still has yet to find its end. I know it never will!

I have been involved in music performance for many years and I know that the same principle would apply to any area of life, namely that those who bother to get to know themselves better will be able to expand and raise their performance, for it will encompass being aware of, not only what one can do, but also what one can't …yet!

Like what you want and want what you like … then there will be passion and a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction. Of course, this is not all for free. It will take effort and require imagination and productive creativity …but what the hell … you're not paying off someone else's house … it's YOU we're talking about!

FUN & SPIRIT!

Greg Hadjiyorki Georgiades - MUSICIAN! BA(Psyc,Soc)
Hons(Psyc) MA(Clin Psyc)
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Preface

This is an unusual book!

For starters there are no chapters, at least not in the traditional sense.

At its heart, this book is about performance. And you might assume because of my background that it's aimed only at people working in the creative arts. Not so. You see the nature of the game is this: Performance is something we all engage in, every single day. Now that may sound like a blanket statement, but it's true. Almost everything we do involves some form of performance, regardless of whatever you do and where you currently find yourself in life.

This book unravels the secrets behind performance: exploring its process, its power and how you can harness it to bring greater meaning to your life and elevate everything you do.

Importantly, everything I share here comes from personal experience. I haven't borrowed theories from other books just to sound credible. If an approach hasn't worked for me, I won't recommend it to you. That doesn't mean other methods don't work. It just means I haven't tried them, or they didn't resonate with me personally. What you will find here is only what I've

tested, lived, and seen make a difference for myself and for others. This rule keeps me honest. It means I can share these ideas confidently, without guilt or the risk of being caught out for offering advice I don't fully believe in.

This book is not a dense, all-encompassing analysis on performance. Instead, think of it as a focused, practical guide. A kind of workshop in book form. Here, you'll find the essential ideas and tools I believe can help unlock your performance potential. Just as in a workshop, you'll be invited to actively engage with the concepts and apply the exercises, turning insights into tangible benefits for your own life.

Why are there no numbered chapters as such? The reason for this is that I considered if I based the contents of this book on the actual word PERFORMANCE, that I would have to dig deeper in matching the relevant content to the eleven letters that make up the word. I feel I've achieved this.

You may also spot some overlap between sections. That's deliberate. Because real life doesn't fit neatly into boxes and performance is no different. Everything connects and my aim is to reflect that natural flow, rather than force ideas into rigid compartments.

I truly hope you achieve whatever you desire with the exercises and suggestions offered throughout this book, but more than anything else, have fun while doing this. That is key!

Let the curtain fall…

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge everyone who has had a hand in my life so far, from the not so desirable, because even these helped shape where I am today, to my life mentors.

Firstly, my immediate family. My wonderful wife who is my soul mate and means everything to me. My amazing daughters and now my grandkids. You are all very special human beings.

My parents. Thanks for bringing me into this world and the guidance and love you showed me. My sister who is responsible for me choosing music rather than football as the career path that I would take in life.

My closest friends…. from those still with us and those who have moved on.

Henry David Thoreau: In my early twenties I discovered these special words which have been the guiding principle in how I have approached my life. In following these, this has kept me in check in knowing that every decision I have made, whether right or wrong, was down to my own personal choice, not others.

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it

is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

In the drumming world there are so many to acknowledge. So many great artists who helped shape me as a musician. Some I have been fortunate to meet along the way. Thank you Carl Palmer, Dom Famularo (RIP), Jojo Mayer, Virgil Donati, Gary Husband, Bill Bruford, Phil Collins, Charlie Watts, Derek (Bokkie) de Beer, John Marshall, Barriemore Barlow, Clive Bunker, Phil Ehart… and many more.

Maurice Fresco: The first music booking agent I worked with in the late 70's in South Africa. Such a positive character and always supportive.

All the musicians that I have worked with. You have all taught me something.

And lastly but of equal importance, all my ex-students. The hundreds of characters and personalities I have been fortunate to meet, interact with, mentor and help shape their path. I am honored to have known you all.

And sincere thanks to you, reading this right now. I am honored that you have taken the time to show interest in what I do and how I might be able to positively influence and help your path in life.

Prologue

There is a process in Performance that needs to be made clear before starting to read this book, and before you get into the actual 11 Elements of Performance.

There are 3 components to this process and they lead from one to the next in the order you see them.

I have abbreviated this to the 'RPD' Process of Performance.

Research ► Practice ► Delivery

The three components are not interchangeable. Not if you desire to achieve a successful outcome. You can't successfully attempt your end goal of *delivery* without the necessary *research* required on your subject. And then very importantly, devoting enough time to quality *practice*.

This book offers you 11 essential performance tools to effectively deal with these three main components and to help ensure that you deliver a great performance every time, regardless of whatever field you operate in.

Introduction

THE 3 STEPS TO PERFORMANCE SUCCESS

3. End Result
TOTAL PERFORMANCE

▲

2. Process
RESEARCH ► PRACTICE ► DELIVERY

▲

1. Tools
P – PASSION
E – ENERGY
R – RESEARCH
F – FOCUS
O – ORGANIZE
R – REPETITION
M – MASTER
A - ASSIMILATE
N – NOW
C – CONFIDENCE
E – EXPRESSION

P – Passion

"The only way to do great work is to love what you do."
Steve Jobs

Oprah Winfrey said "Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you."

I agree! Passion is the fuel that ignites our potential and gives us the energy to perform at our very best.

How this key ingredient helped me grow

With over four decades of professional experience in the music industry, one thing has always held true for me. Whenever I've been involved in work that ignited my passion, every other area of my life seemed to benefit as well. I know this from real experience because during my years as a session musician, not every gig set me alight. You see as a 'sideman' I often took jobs simply because they were available. This is the reality of freelancing, you never quite know when the next gig will come along.

This viewpoint is also supported by a conversation I had with a very successful (on the surface) session musician who admitted to me that he only really enjoyed every 12th or 13th job he was booked for. Man, to me that is self torture and bears reference to some of the unpleasant jobs I took in times of 'musical unemployment' in my formative years. These included trainee pizza chef, fire extinguisher salesman and factory worker. Great jobs for other people, but me…? In these situations, I found that I would go through the motions and do the absolute minimum to keep out of trouble.

Now this can happen even in a field that you are fond of, or create an adverse effect in something which you show great interest. As outlined above, this happened to me in the music business, which is my passion. Right? Or is it? Let me explain. The music business isn't my passion. It's the music I love that fuels my passion.

When I started out I didn't care what style I was playing. I was just happy to be part of the business and call myself a drummer. But over time, I found myself involved in areas of the industry that didn't excite me. Slowly, the fire that once drove me began to fade. Was this due to naivety, or did the initial youthful novelty of being a musician start to wear off?

I think what happened was that I didn't have a precise goal or backup plan when starting out. My initial aim as with any young kid who picks up an instrument with serious intent, was to become a rock star. But after a few years in the session scene, I realized this wasn't for me. So, I made a change.

Before I go on, I want to make it clear that not everything I did in the performance world drained me. I was also part of some great bands. One was an award winning outfit, another one was nominated for a major UK music industry award, and others were signed to record labels. Those times where I was involved creatively, truly fuelled my passion. In fact, I'm currently recording an album of my own material and it's reigniting that fire all over again.

The lightbulb moment

Years ago, South African playwright Pieter Dirk-Uys wrote a satirical play called Adapt or Die. While it poked fun at politics of the time, the title rang so true in life. You see, when things don't quite go to plan, you have two options: you either adapt and find a way forward, or slowly die. And by die I don't mean an actual physical death, I mean emotionally. Because when you're unhappy, you tend to lose focus. You start going through the motions, your enthusiasm drops and your passion drains away. Eventually, you fall behind and in any competitive sector, that's the quickest way to lose ground.

In my case, I saw the writing on the wall. Technology was changing the music industry. Drummers like me were being replaced by machines and if I was to survive, I had to rethink everything.

Step one: I stopped seeing myself as just a drummer for hire. Step two: I stopped resisting the rise of electronic driven music and started learning how to work with it. I taught myself MIDI programming and embraced singing, another talent I'd

sidelined. This opened up more doors for me.

Today, everything I do connects back to music - my original passion. Whether I'm writing, recording, teaching, mentoring, or leading a band, I've kept that passion alive. Some people call it luck. I disagree! I made a choice. I changed and adapted. In essence, I 'made' my own luck! You can too.

The lesson here is: Do work that fuels your passion. If it doesn't, it may be time to change direction. Life really is too short to settle for second best.

As George Burns said: "Fall in love with what you're going to do for a living."

Perspective for YOUR right choice

This message isn't just for creatives, it's for everyone. Take what resonates with you, and apply it to your world.

If you're holding down a day job while dreaming of a creative career, I get it. I've been there and also taught many drummers in the same situation. It's tough balancing income and aspiration, something I explore deeply in my book Rhythm of the Head. But here's a reality I believe to my core: everything in life comes down to our own choices.

Choosing to pursue your passion full-time can be a huge step and be scary. But if what you're doing now is draining your soul, then an urgent choice needs to be made; whatever that may be. While we're here focusing on people who have ambitions on

making it in the arts: we've all heard the romantic stories of stars who succeeded, and who suffered for their art. These are the success stories and of course can be quite romantic, even inspirational. But the truth? I've known talented musicians who quit not because they lacked ability, but because they stayed in energy draining situations too long that slowly crushed their passion. Don't let that happen to you.

And in moving on, what about those people with no designs on any art oriented passion, or career? Even if you have no desire to be on any stage but are in a situation where you tell yourself that your job is just temporary, a way to pay the bills, until something better comes along. Hey that's valid! But it only works while your passion, wherever that lies, stays alive. If your 'filler' job starts killing that passion, then you're in trouble, because when that spark goes out, everything else dims too.

Last thoughts on this are: I'm not telling you to jump ship, leave your company, or resign. But maybe, just maybe, if things don't feel right in your current situation, perhaps something needs to change? So be honest, have you explored all angles, strategies or opportunities?

The unavoidable question of truth

Still not clear? Let me ask you a very simple question: If you had to get out of bed and do the same thing, the same job, every day, for the next ten years, how would that make you feel? Does this thought fill you with excitement? Or does it fill you with dread?

There's your answer.

A Radical Turn

For many years I chased the Rock n' Roll dream. I got a taste: big and small crowds, intimate stages to stadiums, magazine features, album credits, autographs, groupies. So, a measurable slice of fame, but I wasn't rich. I sometimes earned well, and also not so well. A reminder, a (sideman) musician only gets paid while working. There is rarely passive income from royalties.

When music trends shifted and tech took over, I adapted by touring more. But that meant more time away from my family. Then the burnout crept in and the passion started to fizzle out. So, I made a bold move and stepped away from the music business entirely. And for a while, it felt good. I was home and could spend more time with my family. I had what I thought I wanted, but something was off… I missed the music, I missed that connection. Sometimes, be careful what you wish for.

An even more radical change

Based on Gallup data it is said that 87% of workers globally are disengaged from their jobs. The breakdown looks something like this:

63% are not engaged. They're generally unhappy or indifferent. 24% are actively disengaged. They not only hate their jobs, but also tend to demoralize their coworkers.

This is factual, I didn't make it up. And my job outside music

may have paid the bills, but it did nothing for my spirit. Most of the time I felt disengaged, not hating it, but not loving it either. Most of the time I was going through the motions and had joined the 87%.

So, adopting a similar approach to when I faced the challenges of a rapidly changing music scene due to technology advancements, I pivoted… again. This time into something I never expected. Teaching! If you had told me years ago that I'd become a teacher, I would have laughed at you. Me a teacher? I was a performer, a musician and that was it! But… I allowed myself to explore all angles, strategies and opportunities. And here's the thing, the more I did it, the more teaching began to grow on me.

At first, it felt awkward, especially learning patience which was not a strong attribute of mine back then. But I had two big things going for me: I was again my own boss and more importantly, immersed again in music. Sure, I missed performing, but I kept that fire alive with occasional gigs. Over time, I realized I was actually very good at teaching and I enjoyed it. My passion had been reignited.

Was It Worth It?

Absolutely! Eventually, after many flourishing years in teaching I moved on to other things. But during that time, I founded two successful music schools, operated student waiting lists and made a regular, lucrative living doing what I loved. I got up every morning with a spring in my step and looked forward to each day. That's rare.

Of course, it wasn't perfect because every job has its routine and can get repetitive. So when things got stale, I'd switch it up and keep it fresh by introducing whatever I felt was needed to keep it fresh. That's really what any successful business demands: creativity, paying attention to detail and constant reinvention. I can honestly say that I loved it, because I was back again steering my own ship.

On reflection

One day, after the final lesson for that day, a student and I were chatting about our work and respective lifestyles. At one point I described a typical work day in my life and elaborated on the musical equipment endorsements I had strived hard to acquire, and which I greatly enjoyed. He went quiet, looked thoughtful, and with a wistful smile said, "You're living the dream."

I agreed!

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Bring passion into all you do: work, social life and everything in between.
- If you want to do something great, you've got to enjoy the process.
- Passion spreads and inspires others.
- Sometimes you've got to shake things up: Adapt or get left behind.

E - Energy

"You see things; and you say, "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and say "why not?"

George Bernard Shaw

Okay, without going too deep into the mystical stuff let's start with a simple idea: Everything is Energy… just in different forms.

Science tells us that even solid objects are made up of energy. But here's something cool, so are our thoughts. You can't see them, but they're real and powerful. In fact, our thoughts shape the actions we take and the outcomes we get in life. A good thought leads to a good result; a negative one? Not so much. That's why Henry Ford famously said: "Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right."

Your Thoughts = Your Outcomes

If you're currently not getting the results you want in life or your performance, the good news is you can change your thoughts. This is where you can start making a shift.

Like Attracts Like

This idea links closely to what I cover in the PASSION chapter. Optimistic thoughts create constructive energy, which fuels positive action and in turn helps you achieve more. Simple, right? Basically, when you feel upbeat and energized, it's easier to do better - the passion is present.

From personal experience, every one of my greater achievements came when I had a positive mindset. No exceptions. And here's the thing, the people around you affect your energy too. Ever heard "birds of a feather flock together"? It's true. If you hang out with negative, draining people, their vibe will rub off on you. You'll start to think like them, talk like them and eventually become one of them. That's what people mean when they say, "like minds think alike."

Choose Your Circle Carefully

Who I play in bands with, makes a huge difference. When I play with excellent musicians, this spurs me on and pushes me to be my best. I want to match their superb energy and skill.

On the other hand, I've also played in bands where I've had to carry the show. In situations where musicians of lesser skill have leaned on me and constantly needed my support, and as much as I wanted to help out, I've never stuck around for long. This is because it can be very draining on energy, especially in a professional situation. It's also not inspiring and can adversely affect one's reputation.

Same thing at school. Remember that group of kids always getting into trouble? If you were part of that gang, you were guilty by association, even if you didn't actually do anything wrong. That's peer pressure in action. So, choose your friends, bandmates and colleagues wisely, because they shape how others see you and how you see yourself.

Your Thoughts Start a Chain Reaction

Here's the simple formula:

Good energy → good thoughts → good actions → good results

If you're someone who tends to see the glass as half empty, don't worry. That just means you're human and in good company with half the world's population. The key is, you can change. It takes some effort, sure, but it's totally doable. Here are two techniques that have worked for me. I've used them for years and still use them to this day.

Technique 1: Creative Visualization

There is a lot of pop psychology and gobbledegook about this, so I'm going to keep it grounded and simple.

Firstly, this isn't anything new, or mystical. People have been doing this for ages. Athletes do it all the time, like golfers imagining the perfect swing. Concert pianists visualize flawless performances. Architects "see" the finished building in their mind, before they even start designing on paper or screen.

It's proven that your brain doesn't really know the difference

between something real, or something vividly imagined. If you can see it, feel it and hear it in your mind, then your brain stores this as an actual experience.

This reminds me of a time when I prepared for a high profile drum clinic (workshop). Part of my preparation included just closing my eyes and visualizing the performance: what I would play, how it sounded and what it felt like. That mental rehearsal made a big difference when I actually hit the stage.

Quick Story

Back in high school, I used to daydream a lot. I'd imagine myself playing on stage with The Rolling Stones. I could literally feel the lights and smell the air in the arena. Okay, I never played with The Stones. But I did end up playing around the world in clubs, theatres, even stadiums. So, yes… visualization works.

Getting Started

If you've ever daydreamed, you've already done it. Now let's just fine-tune it so it works for you on demand.

Step 1: Relax

Sit or lie down somewhere quiet. Close your eyes and consciously relax each part of your body - from your toes to your head. Breathe deeply. This is sometimes called meditation, but don't get freaked out by the word. It's just quiet time for your mind.

Step 2: Visualize

If mental pictures don't come easily at first, try this trick. Draw a simple shape (like a square) on paper. Once relaxed, look at it, then close your eyes and try to picture it. Repeat this until it sticks. Once you're good with that, move on to something more complex like a flower, maybe your hand, or your favorite place. Build it up slowly. You're just training your brain like any other muscle.

Step 3: Focus

Now pick something specific you want to achieve. I suggest starting with something simple or small and as you get better, visualize more complex goals. I've personally used this to master tricky drum patterns and even techniques. (more on that in the footnote at the end of this chapter).

Note: Don't expect movie quality images in your head. Sometimes, these can appear more like feelings, or even just suggestions or outlines. This is totally fine. With practice, it gets clearer and stronger.

Peak performance expert Charles A. Garfield puts it well: "Numerous top performers mentally run through important events before they happen." I do it anywhere: in bed, on planes, in the studio. Your imagination is your rehearsal space.

Technique 2: Positive Affirmation

If you think words aren't important or powerful, then think again. I can personally attest to this. Thoughts are powerful and shape your words and actions. And these determine the results you experience whether good or bad.

The brain can only hold one thought at a time, so why not make it a good one? Replacing a negative thought takes repetition. Positive phrases help overwrite the bad stuff, but here's the key: you need to say them like you mean it.

Make them Personal and Present
Use phrases like:
"I am…"
"I can…"
"I do…"

Repeat them with belief and emotion. The more feeling you put into your affirmations, the faster they work.

My Story: From Stuttering to Public Speaking

As a kid and into my adulthood, I had a brutal stutter. Even simple conversations were painful and standing up in a classroom to read was an absolute nightmare. You see, when I stuttered my self-image and belief was: "I am a stutterer!" So of course, if I constantly thought and repeated that to myself, that is what I experienced, every day. It was a self-fulfilling prophecy in a sense.

Then I decided to change. Through persistence, slowing down my speech and repeating the thought and words "I am a fluent speaker", I slowly made the change. The stutter was obstinate, powerful and 'comfortable,' because it had been around a long time. It didn't want to leave me. But the more I repeated "I am a fluent speaker", I started to gradually believe this and the stutterer phrase and belief started to weaken.

I've since led workshops, spoken on radio, TV and stage, you name it. Do I still stutter sometimes? Sure. But because "I am a fluent speaker", I now know how to manage it.

Add Emotion to the Mix

When you say your affirmations, feel them. Imagine what success looks and feels like. Even though I'm older I still have a set of life goals I repeat often and I always visualize the benefits that come with achieving them. That emotional connection fuels my drive.

Final Thoughts

These techniques aren't just helpful, they can be fun and yes, they do work. So, want to change something? You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain by trying them out.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Positive energy makes you feel good and perform better.
- Good energy → good thoughts → good actions → good results.
- Use Creative Visualization to rehearse mentally before the real deal.
- Be sure to follow the 3-step method: relax, visualize, focus.
- Use Positive Affirmation to shift your thinking and build belief. Remember my stutter!
- Keep your thoughts personal, present and positive.

Footnote: The Four-Limb Exercise

I was down with the flu. I had no energy and was laid flat in bed for a full week. With no plans to do anything as I couldn't, I remembered an exercise I'd heard about at a drum workshop. It involved playing four different rhythms with each limb, at the same time. I was intrigued, so with nothing better to do I decided to give it a shot… and play it in my head.

Note: If you don't understand the musical terminology here don't worry. The core message is what and how I accomplished this.

I adopted a progressive approach and visualized a screen split into four squares. Each one represented a limb. I started by mentally 'seeing' me play quarter notes with my left hand, then eighth notes with my right hand. When I could comfortably focus on each square individually and also together, I added triplets with my right foot. Finally, I added sixteenths with my left foot. It took some focus and I stumbled at times, but eventually, I got all four rhythms going at once in my mind. I could also feel the muscles twitching in my limbs as it played in my mind.

When I had recovered from the flu I sat down at my kit and tried it for real. In my anticipation I hesitated a little at first, and then nailed it. Why? Because I'd done the hard work. I'd figured it out and already played it inside my head.

R – Research

"He who does not research has nothing to deliver".
Georg Voros

It's quite simple. The more you know about a subject, the better prepared you will be to perform and deliver at a higher standard.

Here's an example: One man has ten books relating to his entire knowledge of life, while another has 1000 books. Who do you think will have more to talk about and be able to share more information in greater depth? Too out there?

Here's another example: I remember some people saying that guitar legend Jimi Hendrix played the way he did due to the drugs he took. They said it expanded his mind, making him play better in aiding his improvisational ability. I don't buy that.

The drugs would certainly have altered his perception of reality,

but I can tell you this without exception, Jimi Hendrix played the way he played because he spent a lot of time honing his skills and as a result became an exceptional musician. If he wasn't blessed with such superior instrumental ability, no matter how many joints he smoked before a show it wouldn't have made any difference to the end result. It was his extensive knowledge of the instrument that determined how he played. Period!

Research vs. Knowledge

Some confuse Research with Knowledge as both enrich your understanding of a subject, or area of interest. There is however a major difference. I find knowledge to be the end result of research. Another way to look at this is that knowledge gives you the insight needed to help you perform better at your task, whereas research is the tool used for gaining this insight.

Therefore, through this research I am able to present myself in a more confident, convincing and professional way. It reflects the knowledge and skills I've built up through consistent study and practice over time. Together, these efforts shape the depth of understanding and expertise I bring to a subject. And this level of knowledge is what enables me to perform at the professional standard I aim for.

Makes sense, right? But what if after having mastered a desired level of professionalism, you're required to do something that takes you outside of your existing comfort zone. What then? How do you cope in this situation? Well, this is where research kicks in again.

Some personal examples

I believe the best way to drive home the core messages in this chapter is by personal example that proved successful. Because I believe, "if I can do it, then so can you".

The first example is when I undertook to sit my Music Performance examination. This degree level qualification required a high level of execution and even though I was very knowledgeable in the area of performance, I still needed to research certain elements for my exam. This is because I chose to play some music genres outside of my comfort zone. As a result, I had to dig deeper into these uncomfortable styles to gain more understanding of what was required. My end goal here was to come across as someone knowledgeable and comfortable in these uncomfortable areas.

Once I had researched what was needed, the intense practicing began that took place over a few months. I'm pleased to say that this research and practice paid off handsomely, because I passed my exam with Distinction. Here's the official report back on my assessment sheet regarding one of the pieces I performed.

"This Latin piece was equally complex, demonstrating some fascinating cymbal work and demonstrating highly accomplished advanced techniques with seamless co-ordination. The balance of sound produced from the kit was even and of the highest order. You altered the dynamic of the piece with sensitivity to the style".

In breaking this feedback down: My level of knowledge and expertise took care of the "highly accomplished advanced

techniques" comment described and also to a certain extent the "fascinating cymbal work". The reference to the "balance of sound produced from the kit was even and of the highest order" statement required me to dig deep into my many years of performance experience to be able to achieve that. However, without a doubt the comment that states "You altered the dynamic of the piece with sensitivity to the style", is a direct result of my research.

This piece of music required me to research the Latin style of music known as Salsa. In all honesty, I don't think any of the comments about my performance would have been as complimentary had I not done the necessary research into the style, as everything achieved was a direct result of this. My already learned knowledge and level of expertise was merely the vehicle that helped carry everything through competently.

Expanding this approach

The key here is to not relate my experience above to only this musical situation. No, the core message focuses on what I undertook to achieve the end result, which in this case was an accomplished performance! As such, this experience could represent a sales presentation, speech or audition. In any of those situations, the better prepared you are, the more professional you will come across for you to deliver your best performance. That's what any accomplished performance demands.

Here's another music based example, but on a bigger scale:

I auditioned for a UK country band once. They were

renowned and had already won the British Country Music Association award for 'Best Band' twice. Up to this point I had really just skimmed over country music, delivering what I call 'pseudo' country music drumming. In other words, just enough to get by and fool most uninformed people. This band however was the real deal! They were a British band that many times blew American country acts off the stage. They were that good!

I got lucky - I nailed the audition. Being aware of the high calibre of this band, I took it upon myself to really get 'under the skin' of country music drumming, because I sensed that I was 'on probation' - to see how things worked out.

So guess what? The research kicked in: I watched CMTV Europe (Country Music Television) night after night studying the drummers, observing how and what they played. I bought country music CDs and listened even more intently. I played along to these CDs attempting to emulate the drummers. After a certain amount of time and with a few shows under my belt, a strange thing started to happen. People started talking. From the audience attending shows, to other bands, the music press, word was spreading about this new drummer on the circuit who played like a 'real' country drummer.

When the band won the 'Best Band' award for the third time we travelled to Birmingham for the awards ceremony. We played on the show and Nashville country music legend Marty Stuart was present. After we had finished playing our song he said over the microphone: "You boys can really play country music!"

None of this would have been possible without the dedicated

research and practice I had put in to widen my understanding and knowledge of country music drumming. I had upped my game!

Expanding this approach universally

Both examples above are intrinsically music based. This one is completely different.

In 1994 I began writing my first book 'Rhythm of the Head'. The book took approximately one year to complete. In this time I had also managed to secure endorsements from nine world class drummers. This was all good and well, but I needed a publisher, otherwise all the work I had done up to that point would count for nothing. You guessed right, research into publishers was needed.

It paid off.

I hooked up with a publishing company interested in my book. I met one of the partners over lunch in London's West End with the aim of closing a deal. Which we did! I was ecstatic. Then as is customary with all deals of this nature, we set out a sequence of timelines. And then the waiting began.

I patiently waited… and waited some more. And then some more. You see my future publishers were a relatively new concern and up to that point had published three titles. They had more books lined up for release and mine was somewhere in that queue. After quite a few months of waiting around and many phone calls later with no positive progress, I decided to

'fire' the company and terminate the contract. I decided to 'go it alone' and self publish. Great idea, but I had absolutely no idea how I was going to do this.

You guessed right again… I started researching.

I visited our local library and took out a couple of books on Self Publishing. I also learned about a specific book that I'd heard was very good with simple, clear explanations from an author who had experienced great success with self-publishing. I bought this and with my newly acquired knowledge started to formulate a plan.

I wrote down all the steps to take to get me to the point where I would have printed copies of my book. I sought finance and got it, I looked for a good printer and found one. I found out how to prepare the book for the final printing process. Within a few short weeks I took delivery of 2000 books. Great! Now what? I needed a distributor. Back to the drawing board!

My book on self-publishing contained a section on how to find a suitable distributor and what to do in this situation. This research secured distribution with the UK's number one drumming magazine. What a great result!

I had 'performed' all the functions of the publisher I had 'fired' and as a result kept all the rights to my book, which I still possess to this day. Not bad for someone who had no idea how to 'perform' in the publishing field. Was this luck? No way. This was due to effective research into an area I had no experience of, ensuring that I could competently perform all the tasks needed to accomplish my goals.

Formulate your plan

So how can you turn something similar around in applying it to whatever area of the arts or other kind of business that you're involved in? Only you know the answer to that. But rest assured, if you devote enough time and energy to efficient research into whatever you intend to do, you will perform better – guaranteed. But only if you research effectively and allocate sufficient practice time where required.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Research is the tool for gaining insight.
- Research your subject fully.
- Research is not the same as knowledge.
- Research and practice are essential to achieving a great performance.

F – Focus

"Concentration is the secret of strength."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is very difficult to achieve anything worthwhile in life without applying concentrated focus.

The key element

I see concentration as the fundamental tool that makes focus possible. Without maintaining a high level of concentration, focus simply can't be built. When the two come together, concentration and focus, they form what I call Concentrated Focus.

For me, concentrated focus is the key to preparing for any performance, speech or otherwise. When I direct my full attention towards what I'm trying to master, I reach my goals far more quickly. The real obstacles are procrastination, poor planning, or attempting to work through a task without a clear process.

That's why good planning is essential if you want things to end well. The more focused your preparation, the faster you'll reach the level needed to perform with confidence. And that confidence only grows as your skills improve. Then once all this groundwork has been laid through concentrated preparation, it's time to step forward and deliver the performance itself.

If this is a bit of a mind twister, don't worry. It will become much clearer as you move further into this chapter.

A little discipline doesn't hurt either

I'm fortunate in that I tend to have a pretty disciplined personality that has helped me greatly in developing my focus on whatever I want to accomplish. And I firmly believe that everyone needs to apply a certain amount of disciplined action to achieve a similar result.

My most successful students are those who have worked with disciplined focus to achieve what they've strived for. This is no secret and has been the necessary ingredient throughout the ages to achieve great success.

For me Focus is the tool required to ensure that I stay on course with whatever I am doing. Again, I regard it differently to concentration, which is the primary tool I use while I am in the actual process of performance, not to forget in practice as well. Concentration and focus feed off each other because the two (should) co-exist throughout the preparation process before your performance - and then also during it.

Dealing with mistakes

Over the years, I've prepared hundreds of students for exams and performances. In my experience, mistakes in the preparation stage usually occur for one of two reasons:

- The student has not yet developed the ability to perform at the required standard.
- Levels of concentration were not consistent.

After time and practice, once the necessary standard has been reached, errors are far more likely to stem from a lapse in focus rather than a lack of ability. Of course, nerves can also play a role, especially in a high-pressure exam scenario. That said, when a piece has been practiced thoroughly and repeatedly, this repetitive approach provides a solid foundation. It gives the performer a cushion to fall back on and helps to counteract nervous tension, since the required actions should already be firmly ingrained.

This is also where the technique of 'creative visualization', as described in the Repetition chapter, can make a real difference. By mentally running through the performance in advance, the performer can strengthen focus and significantly improve chances of success when it comes to the real event.

Let's now take this situation out of any musical context.

Competence vs Error

Every one of us has at some time flown in an airplane. If you

haven't then I'm sure that you have used some form of public transport? I have taught drumming to quite a few airline pilots and always find it interesting to chat to these people. If ever there was a job that requires total focused preparation and total concentration in 'performance', this is that job. There is no margin for error! Interestingly, it's a fact that many public transport accidents occur due to human error.

So, whenever I get on a plane I sure hope and trust that the captain and flight crew are totally focused, because if anyone loses concentration and doesn't perform to scratch, then the situation could get interesting to say the least.

Why should it be any different in any other job?

Lapsed Concentration = Diminished Focus

Over the course of my career, I've often found myself in high-pressure situations - big stages, bright lights and plenty of eyes watching. And I've noticed a pattern: whenever I haven't performed at my best, whether in a show or an audition, the reason has usually been simple… I lost concentration and my focus wandered.

These experiences have taught me something important: to perform well in any scenario, complete focus is essential. But focus alone isn't enough. It has to be balanced with relaxation, because tension never helps, especially when things don't quite go to plan.

Mistakes will happen. What matters is how you react and

deal with them in the moment. In music, that might mean improvising, covering the slip seamlessly so the audience (or the band) hardly notices. Of course, this skill doesn't come overnight; it demands time, practice and plenty of performance experience. And it's not only musicians who need it. Many other fields call for quick, decisive actions when circumstances take an unexpected turn.

It never ceases to amaze me how many opening nights I've played where the band has been skating on thin ice because of a lack of preparation. In those situations, the only way through is to give your absolute focus to the task in front of you. That way, if something does go wrong, you're in a far better position to deal with it with sharper reflexes and a cooler head.

What's even more surprising is that opening night often goes better than the second. I think this is because, on the first night, everyone performs out of their skin. The concentration is intense and the focus is total. But once that first show is done, people tend to ease off a little on the second night, feeling they 'know' the show better. Unfortunately, that relaxed attitude can lead to mistakes and it leaves you more vulnerable if anything unexpected happens.

This has just been my observation over the years. I wonder if you've noticed something similar in your own experience when giving presentations or performances?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Concentration and focus of course feed off each other.

- Focus is the tool required to ensure that you stay on course.
- Concentration is the tool required to focus on the actual process of performance.
- It's not about the mistakes you make, it's how you cover them up on demand that counts.

O – Organize

"Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up"
AA Milne

The extent of your organizational skills impacts the volume of work you can accomplish in a designated period. Your level of orderliness also plays a crucial role in your ability to sustain any kind of position or assignment.

Organized discipline

I'm lucky. I was blessed with a pretty disciplined character, which has generally enabled me to maximize the efficiency of the time I devote to activities. An example of this goes back to when I was in my second last year of high school.

My Dad had his own business and had sent me to a private college that was costing him quite a bit of money in fees. I became aware that his business was going through a tough

period and that he was experiencing financial difficulties. To help the situation I suggested that I quit the expensive college and do my final high school year at home via a correspondence course – now commonly known as 'online learning'. At first he was dubious, as he couldn't see how I was going to manage this. However, after a lot of discussion with both my parents I finally managed to convince him that I would be disciplined enough to cope, and that I would do the work required.

What he didn't realize was that, besides genuinely wanting to help the family financially, I also had another motive: finding more time to practice drums. My practice hours were already limited because our neighbor often complained about the noise. On top of that, taking the school bus meant I'd get home late, leaving hardly any time to play. I figured that if I could cut out the daily travel to and from school, I'd gain extra time at home for practice.

Looking back, I can't help but see this as an early version of how I'd later run my drumming schools. I never went to my students, they all came to me which saved me travel time and freed up more hours to focus on other things.

Getting things into place

When I started my year of self-education, I designed a structured plan that resembled a school timetable. I pinned it above my desk so it was always visible. I divided my subjects into lesson blocks to make sure each one received enough attention every week. Each morning, I woke up at the same time, had breakfast and began my 'school day' with consistency. I allowed

myself a thirty-minute mid-morning break for coffee and a reset, then returned to studying until the day's work was done.

To be honest, I even surprised myself with how well I managed my time and stuck to my plan. The result? I completed my Matric exam. It wasn't great, but I passed. My expectations were never too high anyway. What mattered most to me was having more time to practice the drums and being able to hand my parents that certificate. And I did exactly that!

The moral of the story? I reached my objectives and firmly believe that my success was significantly aided by being well organized.

One thing leads to another

In my role as a drum teacher, I've often found myself wearing many different 'hats.' At times, I've stepped into the role of mentor, as some students have opened up to me about their worries and struggles in life. One student, a professional woman, once remarked that she was paying her shrink a hefty fee for advice that sounded almost identical to what I was giving her, at a fraction of the cost. She even told me that her therapist had described her as having a "very astute" drum teacher. Perhaps I missed a different calling. Who knows?

One certainty is that I also focus on assisting individuals in improving their self-organization, because this is an essential component for achieving successful outcomes in their drumming. And I've observed that students with low levels of self-discipline rarely know how to organize themselves properly.

This obviously reflects in their drumming studies, but tends to also spill over into other areas in their lives.

A common characteristic is lack of punctuality: students who consistently show up late for their lessons. For these individuals, something always seems to 'come up' in causing them to be late. With a little insight into how they conduct their life generally, I tend to see patterns that reflect this lack of discipline. However, I have also discovered that some individuals can maintain orderliness in just one aspect of their lives. For certain people, this might be evident at their job, while their personal life outside that setting can be quite disorganized. One of my daughters exhibited this behavior when she was younger—meticulous at her job, yet her room would be complete chaos.

Generally speaking, if an individual possesses an organized manner, they usually exhibit this trait across all aspects of their life. To further support my argument, there is a famous samurai maxim that resonates with me: "a man who has attained mastery of an art, reveals it in his every action".

Developing a sensible schedule

There have been countless times where I have had to organize myself effectively in preparation for many different situations that have included:

- rehearsing material for a show
- sourcing information for an interview
- meeting a deadline in the publishing industry
- preparing students for exams

- preparing myself for an exam
- finding time to write a book
- organizing the smooth operation of a busy teaching schedule

As previously mentioned, I consider myself lucky to possess a pretty disciplined personality, which helps me cope with this kind of workload and demand. However aside from that, one of the key elements in being organized is to not over-burden oneself with too much to do at one time.

Being easy on yourself

Without a doubt, whenever I have been inundated with too much pressure to the point where I feel unable to cope, this has always been due to placing too great a demand on myself. If you've experienced this kind of pressure often, then try to balance out your commitments. In my case and in working for myself, the truth is that I tend to create my own pressure. I state this in context referring to the year 2009, which was a momentous year for me. I felt enormous pressure to the point that I had to decide on which commitments to 'put on ice', with the aim of coming back to them when I could pay proper attention to them.

I've come to realize that I'm someone who can only focus fully on one thing at a time. Whenever I've tried to spread myself across too many areas, it quickly becomes overwhelming.

A good example of this was in 2009. The year began with the

usual task of preparing more than 20 students for their mid-year practical music exams, on top of teaching my other students who were following different curriculums. At the same time, I had begun preparing for my Licentiate Music Performance Exam. A demanding, degree-level qualification that required enormous amounts of practice and preparation.

Alongside this, I was also writing material with the goal of recording my debut solo album that year. To add even more pressure, I was invited to compose music for a TV series. In the end, that was one project I had to set aside because I simply couldn't give it the time it deserved. I also made the difficult decision to stop taking piano lessons, as I no longer had enough hours in the day to practice properly.

Right after completing my Licentiate exam in September of that year, I threw myself into preparing for the very first six-date drum clinic (workshop) tour of South Africa. Nothing like this had ever been done before, and together with my wife who also happens to be my business partner, we organized the entire tour from scratch. Thankfully, she handled all the travel, venue and sponsorship details, which freed me up to concentrate on shaping my presentation.

At the same time, another major project demanded attention: re-writing my first book, Rhythm of the Head. We had discovered that second-hand copies were being sold on Amazon for over £140, which made it clear that a new edition was needed. So, I updated and modernized the book, added three new chapters and arranged for a Foreword written by the late Dom Famularo - Educational Director for Sabian cymbals and

twice voted No. 1 Drum Clinician of the Year by Modern Drummer magazine in the USA. (For context, a "clinician" is the drumming term for someone who presents drum workshops.)

Hey, you didn't think that was the end of the story, did you?

I was approached by Rob Gainey, an American sound engineer and author who asked if I'd contribute some 'Pro Tips' for a new book he was putting together on getting the best possible sound on stage. I was in pretty amazing company, sharing pages with top industry pros who have worked with legends like Stevie Wonder, Aerosmith and Al Jarreau. And it gets even better… Rob really loved my tips and when he found out I held a UK music performance qualification, asked me to write the Foreword for the book. Oh boy, another commitment, right? Ha! The book, Rockin' Your Stage Sound, is published by Hal Leonard. Definitely check it out. It's packed with practical advice and the very first photo you'll see when you flip it open is… yep, me!

The light at the end of the tunnel appears…

Once the six date clinic tour was finally over and I had submitted the pro tips and Foreword, I was free to focus on the rest of the year. This cleared the way for me to begin the writing and recording of the TV music I had put on hold, which resulted in me securing the title theme for a 13 part TV series. Nice one!

There was more… Over the Christmas period I began writing

this book. Another project that I had shelved until I could pick it up when I was clear to do this. As my teaching started to wind down towards the end of the year I had more time to write. I spent many enjoyable hours with my laptop, sitting next to the pool, enjoying the beautiful weather and writing this book. I really am blessed when it comes down to what I do for a living.

On reflection… 2009 was a great year and it taught me a lot about time management and how to effectively work through one commitment at a time. The only difference between me and someone who works for a boss is that I set my own agenda. Aside from that it's exactly the same. Because, I still have other people with whom I work and need to consider and I also work to deadlines. So basically, if you're in a situation where your agenda is set by someone else, you still need to time manage yourself effectively just as I had to do.

How to clear mental clutter

You've probably noticed that the heading above is written in all capital letters. That's because what I'm about to share is one of the most important techniques in this book. It's incredibly valuable, and I wanted to emphasize that by using capital letters.

The Blank Piece of Paper Method

Whenever someone asks me for advice on time management or how to create an effective practice schedule, I always give the same answer: "your best friend is a blank piece of paper." Almost without fail, this gets me a puzzled look and the question: "A blank piece of paper? What do you mean?"

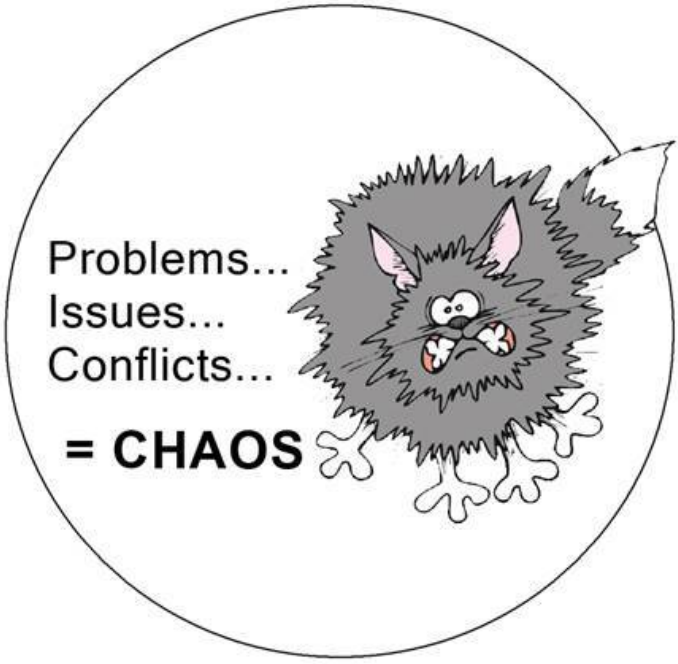
My explanation is simple. I use a three-step method to work through any pressing issues. It helps me figure out what truly matters, explore possible solutions and prioritize tasks in order of importance and consequence.

I strongly encourage you to get comfortable with this practice. It works surprisingly well.

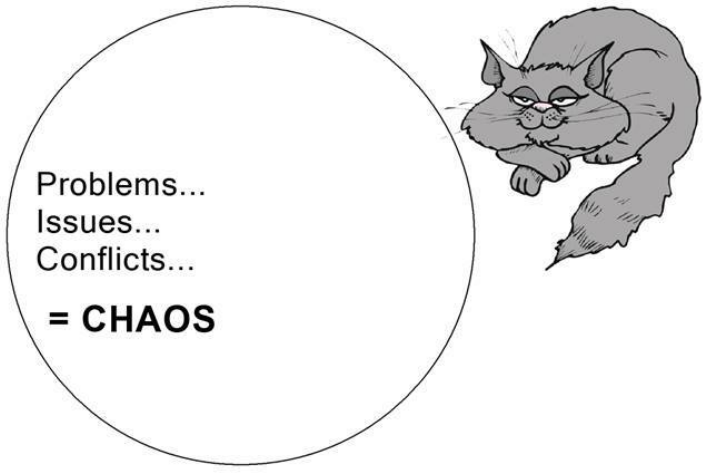
STEP 1. The first thing you have to do is 'step outside' of your problems. It's a fact that most people carry their problems around in their head. Yes, they may be aware that they have things to sort out, but they never quite seem to resolve these issues in any organized kind of manner. This is simply because they have no idea where to start. I call this the…

Circle of Chaos

Check out how freaked out the cat is in the circle. It looks that way because it's perpetually surrounded by problems and conflicts. It can't see a way out because it can't yet see a clear picture of how to solve these issues.



Now check out the cat in the next picture:



It looks a whole lot more chilled now doesn't it? Why? It's removed itself from the chaos and from this fresh new vantage point can now calmly see and assess what's been bugging it. It can now start discovering effective solutions.

Before we begin, I'd like to point out that, yes, I do address problems as problems. I don't sugar coat the word 'problem' with a positive such as 'situation'. I subscribe to Robert Kiyosaki's (Rich Dad Poor Dad) thinking on this in that the word problem means that you have a pressing issue and that it is negative. Otherwise, it wouldn't be causing you stress or aggravation. Right?

Here's some further evidence to support this line of thinking.

> The Cambridge dictionary's definition for the word 'situation' is: "the set of things that are happening and the conditions that exist at a particular time and place". Now to me that can mean either a good situation, or a bad situation.

> Here's the definition for 'problem': "a situation, person or thing that needs attention and needs to be dealt with or solved". Now that sounds more ominous doesn't it? This indicates that a call to action is required, because there is a issue that is fundamentally adverse, and needs to be turned into a positive situation.

With that in mind I like to move on to a highly effective effective way to identify and solve problems affecting you right now, however big or small.

Getting started

I've tried and tested this many times and it works a gem every time. It's called:

YOUR BEST FRIEND IS A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER…

Problems	Solutions	P

…METHOD FOR CLEARING MENTAL CLUTTER AND EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

*The first thing that might come to mind when you see this is think "this is too simple, or what's special about this"? You're right! It is simple, which is the whole point. It's down to how you approach this. Let's begin the **PSP** process!*

STEP 1. To begin, grab a piece of paper or on your computer lay out your sheet as you see above with the three headings.

Problems, Solutions and P (Priority).

Next, type or write down into the Problems column everything currently stressing you out. And I mean everything! Don't be conservative.

Allow your thoughts to flow freely. The intention here is to clear your head fully of all problems, big to small from the lack of money in your bank account, to the cat always peeing on the carpet, to waking up tired every morning. Write down all your issues and remember, even though this is aimed at improving your performance potential, this method works for any area in life from social, family to career. It is all encompassing!

By committing these problems to paper or screen, what you are doing is removing them from your head, which starts the process of clearing the clutter and making room for answers to appear.

Once you've emptied all that clutter from your mind, you'll likely feel an immediate sense of relief. A lightness and clearer outlook. That release can be so energizing and liberating that you might want to dive straight into the next step.

I suggest not doing that!

For me, it helps to pause before moving forward. Taking a short break seems to reset my mind after unloading all those pressing thoughts. In doing this when I return to the page I often see those issues from a fresher, almost new perspective. The pause doesn't need to be long either. Even just the few minutes it

takes to brew a well-earned cup of coffee. But in any case… it's worth making space for that moment.

STEP 2. The next step is to start writing down all the possible solutions or answers. From the sublime to the ridiculous.

Don't try to examine each solution as they come to you, just keep them coming like a free flowing stream of water. You may find that you come up with five solutions to one problem and only one to another problem. It doesn't matter. The important thing here is that you are dealing with these problems.

Once you feel you have exhausted all possible solutions, then stop. Don't do anything else. You will feel elated in the sense of knowing that you have cleared your mind of all those problems that have been affecting you, and that you have now made a concerted effort in addressing them.

Pause… breathe, enjoy the process. Another coffee or glass of wine perhaps?

Then… when you feel ready, come back to your sheet of paper and carefully review what you have written down. Now narrow it down and choose the best solution for each of your problems.

STEP 3. Once you have chosen the appropriately best solutions, the third and final step is to prioritize.

Now you understand what PSP means:
Problems
Solutions

Priority

Place in order of importance which problem you are going to tackle first, and then the next, and then the next, etc.

Now act!

Congratulations, you have just created a step-by-step method of effectively solving your problems one at a time.

Note: I tend to just use just the letter P for the Priority column. This is because this column usually only has numbers in it that don't take up too much space, thereby allowing more space in the Problems and Solutions columns.

It always works

Without a doubt I can honestly say that this 3 step PSP method of problem solving works every time. However, the caveat here is that it only works if after you have identified all the right solutions, that you work in an organized manner to turn these negative problems into positive situations.

Good luck!

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Being Organized helps you accomplish more in a shorter space of time.
- With discipline comes organization.
- Effective Time Management helps you organize yourself

better.

- Problems are not situations.
- Use your best friend - the blank sheet of paper to identify and solve problems.
- Use the 3 Step PSP Method to effectively resolve issues.

R - Repetition

Initially this chapter was devoted entirely to Repetition hence the title. And then things evolved.

In updating this book I found that I had two letter 'R' performance related areas fighting for inclusion here. After careful consideration I decided to include both.

While they are quite different, they essentially complement each other. They are:

Rhythm
&
Repetition

As you can see both suggest something happening 'repeatedly'.

For Rhythm to work and be effective, it has to repeat. And if we take Repetition in its purest meaning, this suggests doing something over and over, which is exactly what rhythm requires.

So, as you can see and as mentioned previously, the two are separate, but intrinsically linked. I'm also a drummer and have lived my life in rhythm.

With that in mind… let's begin with:

Rhythm

In not giving it much thought, you probably don't realize that we share certain rhythmic characteristics that are unquestionably linked.

We both have hearts that beat and which without, we wouldn't exist. And in order to further live our lives, we have the need for breath, again governed by repetitive rhythmic cycles. Going beyond these no compromise essential elements for life, you're currently reading this, and how well you understand this information is controlled by rhythmic pulses, communicating the information from one synapse to another in your brain.

In extending beyond our bodily functions, what about the bigger picture in the world around us?

We live in rhythmic cycles of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years. Our everyday lives are dictated by rhythmic cycles of breakfast, lunch and dinner - awakening and sleeping. As you see everything in life is dictated by rhythm. So it stands to reason that if we have a method of using and manipulating rhythm to our advantage to live better, that we should do this.

The catalyst

What I've outlined above is common to us all in order to survive everyday. But there are those who have gone beyond this. I'm one of them. It's also how I came to add in this extra information to this book. You see, aside from the fundamental rhythmic elements we require to live our lives, I've made it my life's work to specialize in rhythm.

I've been playing drums for over 50 years, and aside from seeing the effects that rhythm can have on people while performing on stage, I've also had extensive educational involvement in rhythm.

As a drum teacher, I've taught hundreds and hundreds of people over the years. And I've seen the effects that this has had on people's moods, psyche, and lives.

I'd like to share a great story to illustrate when this all really began: This goes back to when I had a successful drum school in Johannesburg and was teaching around 60 people a week.

A new student started with me who had a very high pressure corporate job. One of the reasons he came to me was of course to learn how to play drums, but equally, he came to me because he wanted some kind of outlet to get away from his job, and where he could let off steam.

The first lesson consisted of mainly talking because that's what it's about. It's a session of discovery in getting to know each other, for me to explain my teaching methods, and also devise

a strategy in moving forward for maximum progression.

In the following lesson the first exercise I gave him to play was a very simple one, what we call a single stroke roll. This is basically right, left, right, left, right, left, or right hand, left hand, right hand, left hand, etc.

I'm giving you this information not as a drum lesson but just to put into context what I gave him to play and what result we got out of this. I made sure he understood what he had to do and then left him to play. This was due to the fact that I used to teach two students at once in completely separate teaching studios. So in effect, I could have an advanced student in one room and a beginner in the other room without any impact on each other.

About eight minutes later I went back into the room to check how he was doing. I walked in and I asked "how's it going?"

He looked up at me in a trance-like state and said, "this is fantastic".

I replied: "what's fantastic?"

He said: "This! I'm sitting here just going right, left, right, left, right, left, and I've forgotten about my job, I've forgotten about my worries. I feel like I'm in the moment here and really enjoying what I'm doing".

Now even though I've seen the enhancing effects that rhythm can have on people within a live performance situation, this really was the first time I saw this kind of transformative power. Here was an individual who walked into his lesson in an uptight and tense state, and within minutes, went from that to a very

calm, very centered and in the moment person.

To be honest, I don't even think I quite realized or appreciated at the time how powerful this experience really was, but the thing is for sure it was the precedent for things to come.

In circles

Now aside from performance and teaching within drumming, my other area of expertise is within drum circles. I'm a certified drum circle facilitator and learned this from Arthur Hull, the godfather of the drum circle movement worldwide.

I learned more in one weekend with Arthur in his intensive workshop than I would have messing around on my own for two years. Once again, I was witness to something quite remarkable.

I saw how rhythm could energize a room of 40 people. I saw how rhythm could change the mood to more subtle, not just as a group experience, but individually as well. It was pretty mind blowing. So following this, I decided to hone my newly learned skills and put this to use.

I attended a number of drum circles to develop what I had learned. I decided to branch out on my own and hosted a monthly community-based drum circle at our local village hall. I founded an organization called 'Hands on Drums'. We ran corporate events for small and large audiences. The highlight was being invited by the Harrow Arts Council UK to facilitate and host a mass drum circle at the annual Harrow Arts Festival.

What a unique experience. Once again, I was privileged to experience the transformative power of rhythm on people young and old.

As all this was happening, my understanding and concept of rhythm was developing more and more. I fully understood that repetition was key to improving whatever I was doing.

Repetition

Repetition in any activity is only effective when concerted effort and practice is applied. The Cambridge English Dictionary's definition of the word concerted is "planned or done together for a shared purpose".

I can truthfully say that I have mastered the skills of concentrated effort and practice. Why I say this without any pricks of conscience is because the only way I have achieved my current level of skill in what I do is through constant repetition of whatever exercises, drills and studies were required of me to achieve this. There's no other way to gain competence in a learned skill whether it be public speaking, playing drums or trading shares. You must dedicate regular time for practice, and it's this practice that creates excellence in whatever you do. But then on the other hand, you also need to ensure that you practice the right things in the correct manner.

Talent versus acquired knowledge

From my personal experience it can be subjective as to how and what to practice with the aim of achieving success in

the performing arts. This is especially true in the 'informal' sectors of the industry such as Pop and Rock. This is because a person can achieve great perceived success without following a formally prescribed route as there really is no one definite route to achieving success in these genres. A lot of factors are involved here aside from possessing a little natural talent.

How many times have you heard someone singing and wondered how he or she got to where they are, because you thought them to be talentless? I know I have. This is because people can sometimes make it on image alone (you might remember the 80's one hit wonder 'Sigue Sigue Sputnik') or some other factor that doesn't necessarily require talent. I will admit that this irks me as I've spent countless hours in the practice room honing my skills. Now the opposite of this exists in the classical music field.

Mozart showed prodigious ability from early childhood. He composed from the age of five and performed before European royalty, but still, he practiced and learned voraciously from others to develop a brilliance and maturity of style. As you can see, even with all his god given talent, Mozart still needed other people and other influences to achieve what he did.

In general, classical musicians only ever get employed if they can do the job properly, not because they have a devastating smile or their hair looks cool when dyed purple. The world of classical music demands many hours of dedicated practice and performance to reach the top of this field. Outside of the area of music, this is also especially true in the medical profession, where top surgeons require many long hours of dedicated study,

research, practice and 'performance' to become the elite in their field.

Whether you study a profession or prepare for a one-off task or presentation, you'll be required to put in a certain amount of study and/or practice to ensure that whatever you wish to perform, comes out the way you intend it to. It is only a fool who believes that 'hoping for the best' is enough to ensure success.

Please note: At this point I need to stress that this chapter is not intended to deal with the BIG question of whether you have chosen the right career path or area of work. I say this because liking what you do is a crucial ingredient that helps fire your enthusiasm to deal with the long hours of dedicated practice and/or study, required to accomplish your goals.

Repetition over Fear

It's always easier (and more fun) to prepare and practice for something for which you have an affinity. Then again in your chosen field that you're passionate about, you may still have to deal with certain factors that you aren't that fond of. For example, you may be a newly promoted manager and be tasked with giving a talk on a subject that you love. However, while you may be an expert in your field and love the subject matter, you may be filled with dread with the idea of giving this presentation. While on this subject, it's interesting to note that one of the biggest fears for most people is speaking in public. And the term public doesn't necessarily have to mean people you don't know. These could be employees or work colleagues. I know when I first had to talk in front of a group

of people that I was nervous. I made all the classic mistakes an inexperienced speaker would because I was unprepared to deliver this performance effectively. The only way I have become a better public speaker is through research, and then repetitive practice and actual performance.

Theory versus experience

Reading a thousand books on a subject is great for increasing knowledge on that subject, but if this learned knowledge is not put into practice, it will forever remain theoretical. This is where repetitive practice steps into the picture and is essential for success in performance of any kind.

I like to view this as the 'travel agent versus tour guide' scenario. The travel agent is almost always the theoretically trained person who has acquired information from books or online research. In other words, their knowledge is based on information acquired, not actual experience. The experienced tour guide on the other hand is the person who has actually 'walked the walk'. They have first hand experience of whatever it is the travel agent is trying to sell you. Which one would you rather believe?

Practice smart

Repetitive practice need not be boring. It's all down to how you approach this. My motto here is: "Don't practice hard, practice smart" and could also be summed up in two words: be sensible.

I remember back to my younger days where I would set myself

grueling practice sessions. One of the reasons being that I could then boast to my friends by proudly announcing, "oh yeah I practice six hours a day, no matter what" … and wait for their impressed response. Their answers would usually be something like, "wow this guy is really into it, what dedication". Although this was true in that I was dedicated and still am, the difference is that my practice routines are now a lot more sensible.

The more you practice the better you get. Right? It depends. The problem begins when you try to cram too much into your practice sessions. Here is a list of suggestions to help you better cope with repetitive practice:

- Firstly, be very honest with yourself and only take on what your day personally allows. We all have different time demands and restrictions placed on us, so only allocate time that you know you can afford to the task you wish to master.
- Strive to create a forward moving practice system by writing out all your objectives. Place them in order of importance and only focus on one or two objectives at a time. Ensure you're comfortable or at least understand each one fully before moving on.
- If you have many areas to juggle then focus on the ones that you know you can finish first, and then move onto the harder or more difficult ones. Some people prefer to do this the other way round. Both approaches are correct. It just depends on what works better for you personally. I like the former not latter. Either way, your rule should be to always complete every area with the feeling that you could confidently deliver what's required.

- Take time to refocus. Reward yourself with regular breaks and always begin and maintain your practice sessions in a fresh and alert state of mind.

The tension suitcase

Incessant, repetitive practice can sometimes lead to a tense mental and physical state of being, that can totally work against you. This gets 'programmed' into whatever skill you're trying to master or whatever abilities you require to complete a task. This leads to what I call your 'tension suitcase'.

The suitcase gets opened up every time you need to perform your practiced efforts. Now being nervous before a performance is different. This can at times be part and parcel of pre-gig preparation in the excitement of the moment. It can also psyche you up by getting the adrenaline flowing. Of course, this depends on what it is you're about to do as giving a talk in front of 20 stiff college academics is vastly different to performing in front of 20,000 screaming Heavy Metal fans.

To close here I remember reading an article by a famous classical violinist in which he quoted: "practice as though you are performing, the two should not be any different". So true… this applies to any skill or area of life!

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Concerted effort and practice are applied when preparing for any performance.
- Enthusiasm is vital for success when dealing with long

hours of dedicated practice and/or study.

- Talent alone is not enough to attain mastery of a skill.
- Learned knowledge must always be accompanied by experience.
- Practice smart and use the five suggestions to achieve this.

M – Mastery

"Only one who devotes himself to a cause with his whole strength and soul can be a true master. For this reason mastery demands all of a person"

Albert Einstein

If there's one thing all top professionals have in common it's this: they have become masters at what they do. Ernie Els is a master golfer, multiple F1 World champion Lewis Hamilton is masterful behind the wheel, Richard Branson is a master dealmaker and J. K. Rowling mastered the art of storytelling.

Defining 'The Best'

People have asked me "Who's the best drummer in the world?" My honest answer? There's no such thing. There are absolute beasts in jazz, others are technique experts, while some know exactly what to bring to a rock band setting.

Being 'the best' is totally subjective. It's like asking a bunch of petrolheads what the best car in the world is. That's bound

to start a serious debate where some might agree on a brand, but even then, they'll probably argue about which model takes the crown.

My Take

For me, being the best has never been about beating someone else. It's about pushing myself to operate at my personal best.

I've been doing what I do for many years and have been lucky enough to earn some respect in the music industry. Recognition from my peers has always meant far more to me than public fame, but saying that, over the years I've ticked a few boxes on that front too.

Here are some career highlights I'm proud of:
In South Africa:

- Played with three bands that reached number one on the charts.
- Recorded an international Worldvision release (similar to the UK's "Band Aid" single).
- Performed and recorded with both local and international artists.
- Recorded drums and percussion for the 2003 World Parks Summit stage show that was attended by ex-presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki.
- Shared the stage with some of the biggest names in drumming.
- Featured in national magazines and newspapers.
- Regular guest on both radio and TV.

Internationally:

- Recorded an album with a band nominated for the UK's Mercury Music Prize for "Best Album of the Year."
- Worked with a group that won the BCMA's (British Country Music Association) "Best Band" award four times.
- Recorded an album that made it onto the CMTV Europe playlist and was seen as far away as Russia.
- Member of a band signed to a major American record label and publishing company.
- Listed in two music encyclopedias: one American, one South African.
- Published a book that's been read around the world and endorsed by drummers from legendary bands like Genesis, Oasis and Yes.

Now, while to some that list might seem impressive, here's the thing: its value really depends on how you view it. Personally, I don't see it as a huge deal, but I've met a lot of people who've said they'd give anything to achieve even part of it.

At the end of the day and in the business I'm known for, there's a saying that couldn't be truer: "You're only as good as your last gig." What this means is you could have an amazing resume, but if you've been fired from your last three jobs, then past achievements don't mean a thing if you can't get hired.

The Mastery Mindset

There's an old Samurai saying I love: "A man who has attained mastery of an art reveals it in his every action."

I totally agree!

When you put your energy into mastering something and truly give it all, this creates a ripple effect. That commitment and pride in your work tends to spill over into everything else you do. It boosts your confidence, sharpens your focus and sets a standard for how you approach life in general.

So, if this makes sense and you're wondering where to start, don't worry about trying to master everything. Just focus on one thing. One discipline, one craft and from there, let it shape how you move through the world.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- People at the top of their game have usually mastered their craft.
- 'The best' is subjective, it's all about perspective.
- Your last performance matters most: you're only as good as your last gig.

A – Assimilate

"Apprenticeship is the phase in which you absorb the wisdom of others."
Robert Greene

Whenever I've set out to do something new and especially something that others have already succeeded in, I've made it a point to study those who've made it work. And although I wanted to make my mark, I never tried to reinvent the wheel because that wheel was rolling long before I came along. In short, I learned by watching how it turned.

There's an old saying that goes, "Nothing succeeds like success." It's true. If you want to break into a field, develop a skill, or simply get better at something, one of the wisest things you can do is find out how the top players do it. Learn their methods, study their stories, see what makes them tick and then use that knowledge to shape your own path.

In the past when I was primarily a drum teacher, people didn't

come to me for drum lessons just because I was a nice guy (although I was a nice guy). They came because I had built a solid reputation in my field. I had been teaching for years, built a successful business but most importantly, I had spent time observing the best teachers. I took what I learned, made it my own and passed it on to others.

The results spoke for themselves where many of my serious students went on to play in successful bands and the majority of my exam oriented students consistently achieved the highest marks – a fact acknowledged in writing from the music exam board.

(Fact: Back in the mid 2000's after relocating from the UK back to South Africa and after establishing my new drum school, I entered my first batch of students for the Rockschool/Trinity College London practical music exams. 13 students from beginner to advanced earned 11 Distinctions and two high Merits. I'd say that was a great result.)

Improving through immersion

Let me tell you another story that sums up what I'm talking about here even more.

While growing up in South Africa, at age eleven the primary school I attended was forming its first ever soccer (football) team and needed bodies to fill shirts. I decided to try out because I thought "why not" and maybe, just maybe it would make me look cool in front of the girls. The 'why not' angle worked out as I was accepted for the team, but the girls' part

not so much.

The reason why I made the team was that it was terrible and I was even worse. I couldn't kick a ball straight to save my life and we lost every single game. I recall, painfully, that we lost 9-Nil in our last game. So, not a very promising start to my soccer career.

But a funny thing happened. I caught the soccer bug - bad. The problem? Like I said, I was the most useless player you can imagine. But that didn't stop me. I was hooked. I started playing constantly, in our backyard, my bedroom, on the field, you name it. I was obsessed. I even started going to professional matches, watching how the pros moved, kicked, passed, tackled… everything. Without even realizing it, I was mentally soaking up what I saw and learning by observation.

When I got to high school, I tried out for the team which I must add was a lot better. And somehow made it. I also joined a local club team, not a great one but I didn't care. I just loved playing. I practiced relentlessly and kept watching the pros, especially the players I admired most. I tried to mimic them. Again, without realizing, I wasn't just watching - I was modeling myself after them.

In the next and my third year of playing soccer, I tried out for a professional club's under-14 junior side. These were good players with some of them at provincial level. So, like the 'Premier League' equivalent at this level. I remember cycling down to the trials and thinking "am I good enough?"

To be honest, I really wasn't expecting much, but to my surprise

I made the team. Up to that point it also wasn't quite clear what 'type' of player I was. Was I forward, midfield or defender? After a few games, I moved into a permanent striker role and guess what? I ended up the top goal scorer at 17 goals for the season. We even made it to the league cup final at the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg, playing in front of 15,000 people. To me it felt like Wembley.

I even scored in that final, or at least I think I did. The goal was disallowed for offside. However, the referee's assistant (linesman as it was called in the day) also happened to be the coach of the team we'd knocked out in the semi final. Coincidence? You tell me. Incidentally, it was my goal that won us the semi final game that took us into the final.

Now, the reason I'm telling you all this isn't to boast. It's to prove a point: I had zero natural talent when I started. I wasn't gifted, I was lousy. But I was passionate, determined and became completely obsessed. I practiced all the time, studied the pros and slowly absorbed their moves. In retrospect, I don't even think I was a particularly great player. But somehow, I found a way to consistently score goals, which is useful when you're a striker.

The following year, I gave up soccer to focus on music, partly thanks to my elder sister who encouraged me to lean towards drumming instead of chasing a ball around a field. No regrets, but I sometimes wonder what could've been.

Learned Authenticity

In my music career, I've always kept an eye on the best in the business. I've aimed at getting a sense of how they think, how they practice, what drives them. In a sense… to get under their skin to understand their process from the inside out. But then and very importantly, once I've got a feel for how they operate, I take that knowledge and attempt to shape it into something that works for me – because being a 'clone' was never the long term goal. So in short, initially I copy but then adapt and make it mine.

In creative fields like music, this kind of learning and modification is not only encouraged - it's essential. But even if you're in a more structured field with tighter boundaries, the principle still holds: study the best, learn from them and apply what you've learned in your own way.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Learn from the best to boost your chances of becoming the best
- Don't just observe, dig deep. Try to understand what makes top performers tick
- Master your craft. When you do, mastery will spill over into every area of your life

N – Now

"Your big opportunity may be right where you are NOW"
Napoleon Hill

This chapter is about two things:
Taking action the moment you make a decision.
Staying fully present in whatever you're doing.

Personally, when I make a decision and get moving quickly, I get way more done. That burst of energy and excitement you feel right after deciding to do something? Use it and act on it.

Don't let it fade

The biggest enemy of progress? Procrastination. That classic line, "I'll do it tomorrow" has derailed more plans than we can count. Because tomorrow turns into the next day… and then the next… and, well, you know how that story goes.

The caveat is yes of course, you need to think things through

and get clear on your goals. But once you've done that - begin! That's exactly how this book initially came together. It was the end of a hectic year, and honestly, I could've just taken a breather. But I had a goal: finish this book before the year was over, so I could send it to print early in the new year.

If I'd delayed and pushed it into the new year, I'd have started with a big unfinished project. Not how I wanted to begin. So I figured, "I've already had a full-on year so why stop now? Let me wrap it up strong." That mindset helped push me through. And just to be clear, I loved writing this. The topic is close to my heart but more than anything, I wanted to finish with a settled state of mind and clear this off my plate.

Instill clarity before you start

Before I sat down to write, I had a good sense of what I wanted to include. But that didn't mean everything went to plan. Chapters got rewritten, new ideas popped up constantly, and I often found myself swapping out entire sections. I also spent time finding quotes that complemented each topic. That part was fun!

What helped the most? I had already taken care of my other major commitments, which freed me up. That's what acting in the NOW looks like. I handled what needed to be done earlier so that when the time came to write, I was ready. And because of that, I got a lot done and I'm proud of it.

Acting with Intention and Focus

Next time you're handed an assignment or project with a deadline, don't wait. Decide on your approach, make a plan, and get moving. That quick action could be what keeps your job, or even lands you a promotion. The bonus?

When you act quickly, your brain doesn't get weighed down by those nagging "I'll get to it later" thoughts. That kind of mental clutter is exhausting. I know I'm far less productive when my mind is full of things I've been putting off. And once you've started, stay focused. This is where being in the NOW really counts. Any time I've made mistakes, it's almost always because I wasn't fully present.

Take the recording studio, for example. The pressure's high and everything is under a microscope. But when I've walked in and approached this with sharp focus, I've nailed it. I've even finished sessions in a third of the booked time. That kind of result only happens when you're focused and you've got the skills to back it up.

But here's the truth: all the talent and skill in the world won't help if your head's not in the game. I've had a few tough moments in the studio where I just wasn't mentally present - and it showed. That kind of disappointment stays with you, especially when you know you could've done better. There were times when a lack of preparation was also to blame. But whatever the reason, my confidence always took a hit. And when your confidence drops, your focus gets adversely affected. So, not only do you need to be present during the performance, the actual delivery, you need to bring that same presence into your preparation.

In short: Focused practice = focused performance.

Dealing with the mundane

We all have boring or frustrating tasks we'd rather avoid. But here's what I've learned: get them out of the way fast. That nagging thought of something unpleasant and unfinished, will drain your energy more than the task itself.

One trick I use for these situations is to mentally block out time for the task. If I think something will take four hours, I set aside four hours. I accept this… and then I start. And even if I don't finish for whatever reason, I'll know I've made progress and won't feel like I'm continually procrastinating by endlessly putting this off.

This is really useful advice because what you don't want is to tackle something reluctantly, minute by minute, grumbling through every second. That's just self torture and makes it worse. So instead:

Take a deep breath
Set aside the time
Commit to finishing
Get it done

The health perks of staying mentally sharp

There's a major bonus to staying focused and keeping your mind active. Quite simply, it's good for you!

An engaged mind keeps you sharp, alert and even slows the

aging process.

We've all heard stories about people who retire and seem to lose their spark, sometimes even their will to live, within a year. That's often because their job gave them a sense of purpose and structure, and once that's gone, they feel lost. But those who stay mentally active after retirement, learning new skills, exploring hobbies, diving into new adventures, those are the ones who thrive. They live in the moment. They live in the NOW.

Always bring your Best

Whether it's work or leisure, the more present and focused you are, the more you'll get out of it. When you give your best at work, you'll feel fulfilled and earn the rewards that come with it. When you show up fully in your social life, you'll build strong, meaningful relationships.

It's common sense which can often be forgotten.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Once you've decided something, ACT!
- Be clear on what you want before you start.
- Being in the NOW helps you get more done, faster.
- Don't let unpleasant tasks drain your energy.
- Keeping your mind active is good for your health.

C – Confidence

"As is our confidence, so is our capacity"
William Hazlitt

Is Confidence the same as having a Positive Attitude? In a way, yes. But I'd say a positive attitude is a core ingredient in developing real self-confidence.

A natural process

When you properly research whatever needs to be done, map out the steps, apply diligent practice, you naturally give yourself a great head start which tends to trigger positive feedback. This process sets you up with a strong, positive platform from which to move forward and deliver with confidence. And the more you do this, the more it becomes ingrained into a positive habit, the result being that you feel you can handle any task and perform at your best.

Mistakes Do Happen

A big reason people go into things with a negative attitude is because they expect to mess up, before they even start. And if they do happen to slip up, they fixate on this, even if everything else was great and went to plan.

That's why the best mindset to have is: Expect to do well. Try not to entertain the idea of failure. Basically… what you dwell on, comes around.

Mistakes happen. Even with the best of intentions and preparation, things can still go off track. These are often due to unexpected circumstances beyond your control. When this happens don't let this throw you off. The key is to focus on what you performed well and make 'friends' with the hiccups. Turn these mistakes into useful feedback that you can use to up your game. Work on these so that if it ever happens again, you'll be better prepared to deal with this.

This shift in attitude in focusing on what went right, and acknowledging the mistakes, starts to build a strong, lasting sense of confidence. You'll start to improve faster, make fewer mistakes and believe more in your ability to 'take care of business' when it counts.

Learn to shrug off mistakes

Let's face it, no one likes making mistakes and it can be painful owning up to them. But the trick really is to not give them power over you. They will only ever be as big as the importance you attach to them.

Here's a great example: I was on a session once with a bass guitarist in a London recording studio. While I'd tend to get frustrated by making a mistake, he had a relaxed, almost nonchalant attitude about it. He said to me, "If I make a mistake, I just play it again."

Let me tell you, this wasn't some amateur. He has worked with top bands and done tons of recording work. At the time of writing this chapter he is a full-time member of a world-renowned band that plays arenas around the world. So, no slouch!

His calm approach really struck a chord (I couldn't resist the pun.) Since then, I've trained myself to take things less seriously, while still staying professional. It's an ongoing process, but I am a lot easier on myself.

Acknowledge, then Improve!

So again, brushing off mistakes doesn't mean ignoring them. You acknowledge them… and then 'fix' them. That mindset is what separates positive thinkers from negative ones. It shows you believe in your ability to improve, which ultimately raises your confidence and performance levels.

Everyone loves a story so here's one that perfectly illustrates this, and which involved me directly: Years ago, I was a percussionist in a military band. Our four strong percussion section was tasked with learning a quick, challenging xylophone piece called On the Track to perform in a concert at the City Hall. We had a month to prepare.

At the initial rehearsal nerves were sky-high and everyone was feeling it, most noticeably me. You see out of the four of us, the others had years of orchestral experience under their belts, and one was even classically trained. So as primarily a drum kit player, I was the least qualified to do this… and it showed. Using this experience as feedback, I got to work and practiced, practiced and practiced.

At the rehearsal before the actual concert, one of my colleagues went up first to play. He started strong but got lost halfway through. He then stopped playing for several bars, visibly shaken and unsure how to recover. Not an easy situation and understandable in such a quick tempo piece. Eventually, he stumbled back into the piece and finished. The orchestra applauded as was customary while he walked back towards us, shaking his head and looking defeated.

Then it was my turn.

Truthfully, even though I had done all the practice, I still wasn't sure how this was going to go because of my lack of experience in this kind of musical setting. But then something happened. Just before starting, something shifted in me. I thought, "Well, this is it. I'm just going to go for it." I blocked everything out and just played. I knew I hit a few wrong notes, but I never paused or let it throw me off. I kept going with a focused, positive attack on the piece. This time after my performance the applause was louder and felt more genuine.

Later at the bar, even our commanding officer who never usually handed out compliments bought me a drink and praised

my performance. One of my fellow percussionists even said, "I loved the way you just attacked it!"

Now here's the analysis: I was the least experienced. But thanks to my mindset and preparation, I pulled off a solid performance. I truly believe that aside from the practice, it was my attitude that made the difference. I didn't let the mistakes derail me. I just kept going and learned from them afterwards. When we played the piece again for an audience, I was even better.

Why the Beginning and End matter most

The following might be more applicable to actual performers on stage, but perhaps you can relate to this in your own line of work?

In any performance or presentation, the audience remembers two things most: how you start and how you finish. Sure, the body content matters, but a weak opening can kill your credibility right away. And if your closing is flat, that's the last impression you leave. This is especially true in public speaking but also applies to any kind of performance delivery.

So, if you mess up, at any time, the good news is you can recover. And the best way to ensure that you carry through? Solid preparation! To maintain momentum in a performance, assignment or presentation, the better prepared you are, the more refined your delivery will be. My military band xylophone experience is proof.

This is a great quote: "By failing to prepare, you are preparing

to fail." — Benjamin Franklin

In conclusion

Everyone has their own way of dealing with tough moments, whether on stage or in the office. But again, the golden rule is to never let these moments define you. Avoid self-defeating statements like "I'm useless", "I'll never get this right", "I suck" …

Remember, the mind can only hold one thought at a time. By filling your head with the right thoughts, these push out any negative ones. It just takes time and practice but does work. So, aside from solid preparation and practice, using techniques like Positive Affirmation and Visualization (the ENERGY chapter) can improve your chances of success.

From another angle: Think about how Richard Branson handles setbacks. I read an interview where he was asked about losing $1.9 billion in 2008. His answer? "Don't believe everything you read." But then he added: "The most important thing is to pick yourself up from a downturn and be prepared to start again - it's not easy, but it's possible." I love that.

It's similar to what I offer to my drumming students: if you make a mistake, the quicker you recover, the less chance the audience (even the band) will have of catching on.

It's not about perfection; it's about how you bounce back.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Take whatever steps you need to build your confidence.
- You're human and you'll make mistakes.
- Deal with mistakes fast - then let them go.
- Focus on the positive, not the negative

E – Expression (of self)

"Be yourself, everyone else is already taken"
Oscar Wilde

Expressing who we are might just be one of the most important human needs. Why? Because when we fully express ourselves, we experience true freedom. We just don't always realize it.

No one else can do it for you

At a fundamental level you and I want to be seen, heard and understood. We want to share our dreams, ideas and passions. And when we're not able to do that, it can be frustrating when people don't 'get' who we are or what we're about. Even worse, it can feel like we've let ourselves down in the process.

Traits like shyness, low self-esteem and being overly introverted often stem from not expressing ourselves enough. But let's be clear, self-expression isn't just for singers, actors, or artists. Sure, it's encouraged and even essential in the creative world, but it applies equally to business, science, education and

everything in between.

Think about Elon Musk. Do you think someone like him held back on self-expression? Not a chance. His success came precisely because he refused to follow the rules. He took risks, broke the mould and built what felt true to him. That boldness, that belief in his own vision, is what made him an icon. I've always admired Musk for that. To me, he's the rock 'n' roll of the business world: fearless, unconventional and unafraid to turn the status quo on its head.

Breaking rules or shaping the future?

One of my all-time favorite bands is The Rolling Stones. When they exploded onto the scene in the '60s, their blues-infused rock and wild antics made them look like total rebels. They were seen as anti-establishment troublemakers! But despite the chaos, you can't ignore their impact. How their music, their presence and unapologetic attitude shaped modern music.

They weren't alone.

While controversy also surrounded the Beatles at times, they came across as perhaps more charming and polished, while the Stones were the rough and ready bad boys' fathers warned their daughters about. Ironically, those 'bad boys' are now cultural royalty. I remember watching a concert DVD where VIP guests that included Bill and Hillary Clinton, the Mayor of New York shook hands with the same guys who once shocked society.

Now just to be clear, I don't promote anarchy. I'm not

suggesting that being rebellious or chaotic is the only way to express yourself. And in staying with the music business just for now, there are a lot of tragic stories: Brian Jones, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Amy Winehouse. But there's often a fine line between challenging the system and changing the world.

That's why I say: "today's anarchy might just be tomorrow's mainstream". Maybe one day businessmen everywhere will ditch the suits and start showing up to board meetings in jeans and hoodies. "Never!" you say!

Jeans, tattoos and piercings were once symbols of rebellion. Today they're mainstream expressions of personal identity.

Your Self-Expression Is Yours Alone!

Here's the real point. Self-expression is personal. What works for one person might not work for another and that's perfectly fine.

You might be thinking, "That's all well and good, but I've got a regular job with an overbearing boss. How am I supposed to express myself?" That's a fair comment and one I can't answer directly because every situation is unique. But I will say this: if your job or career isn't firing you up, but… you're content to the extent that it pays the bills, then perhaps your outlet lies outside of work. Could it be salsa dancing, skydiving or even learning how to play the drums?

On the flip side, is there a way you can express yourself more

fully at work? Perhaps you haven't really shown people what you're capable of? Could your creativity, passion or personality shine more, helping you stand out and feel more rewarded? Only you can answer this.

Balance sheets vs The stage

When I was younger my dad constantly pushed me to get a 'proper' job. In his eyes playing drums was fine as a hobby, but he didn't see it as a real career. So, eventually I gave in and started studying accountancy as it seemed safe, solid and dependable. Great reasons for some, but it registered zero on my passion meter. In truth, I was thinking only of the money. So not surprisingly, after a while I started to hate it. It didn't spark anything in me with numbers not speaking to my soul the way music did.

After a year and a half of trying to convince myself that I could live the accountant life, I quit! I was made to drum, not crunch numbers. My dad also eventually came around, especially after seeing me in a multi-page feature in a national newspaper with a band I was playing with at the time. He was very proud of that and showed it to all his friends. That's when he started to realize that music and playing drums might just be a career after all. On personal reflection, my music career has had its ups and downs, but I've sure loved most of it. Not many can say that about their jobs!

Final thoughts

Whatever path you take in life, make it yours. Do it fully and

don't hold back.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Shyness, low confidence and self-doubt often point to a lack of self-expression.
- Self-expression isn't just for creatives.
- What seems anarchic today could be acceptable tomorrow.
- Self-expression is deeply personal.
- Find what lights you up, whether inside or outside of work.