What We Say Matters:
A Discussion of Communication Practices of Music Instructors

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Music and Identity

Music-making is a very personal experience.

"Student invest time and effort into their craft, and often have difficulty separating their personal identity from their music-making (Burt & Mills, 2006). As a result of this close connection between personal identity and self-efficacy, criticism or poor performances are perceived as direct attacks on themselves (Kingsbury, 2010)."
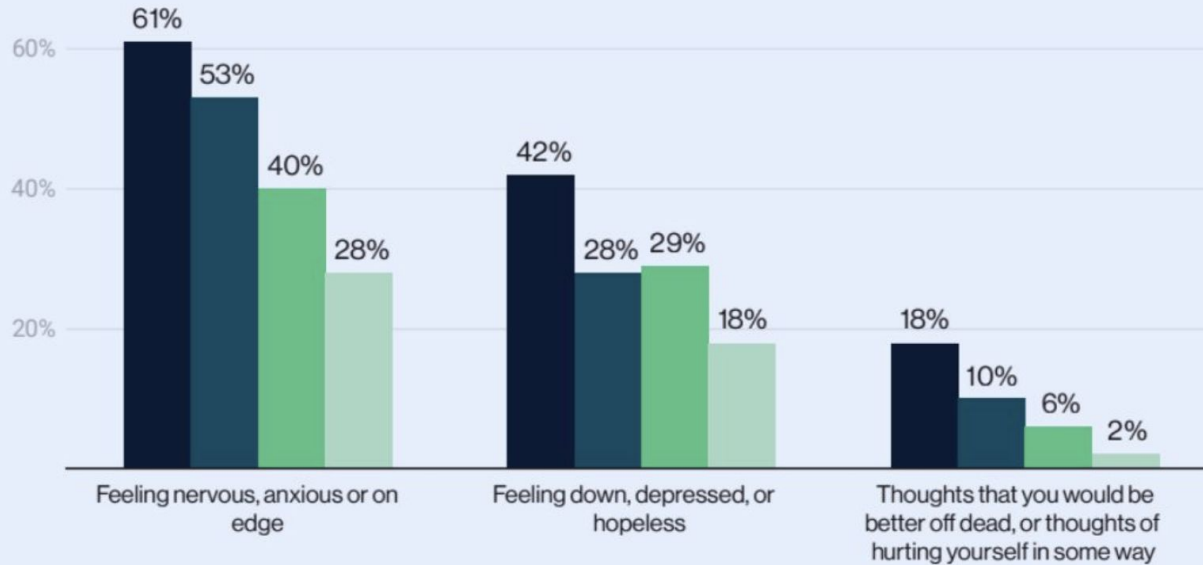- Vanessa A. Mio
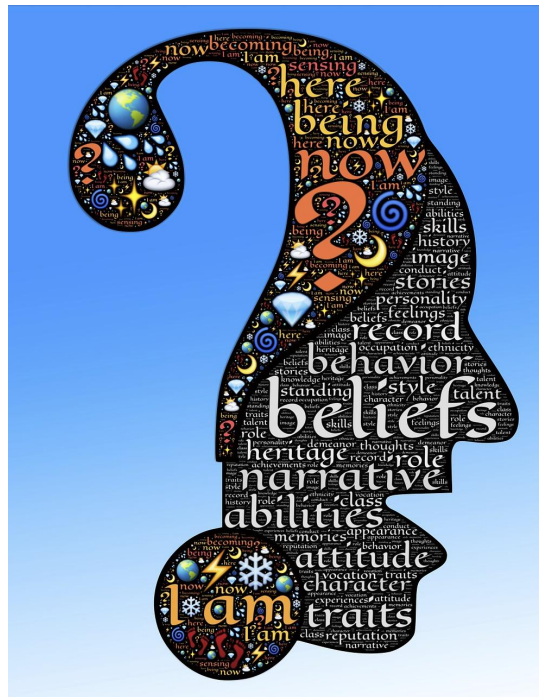
Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

- Gen Z (15-25)
- Millennials (26-41)
- Gen X (42-57)
- Boomers/Silent (58+)

Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge
- 61%
- 53%
- 40%
- 28%

Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless
- 42%
- 28%
- 29%
- 18%

Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or thoughts of hurting yourself in some way
- 18%
- 10%
- 6%
- 2%

Net: At least several days
Source: SocialSphere, Inc.

Walton Family Foundation, Survey from 2022

Importance of Social Intelligence in Music Education

"**Social intelligence** is an understanding and command of social skills necessary to manage personal relationships effectively." - Jay Juchniewkz

"...the majority of attributes influencing external evaluators' ratings of overall teacher effectiveness were social, constituting more than **85%** of all responses." - Jay Juchniewkz
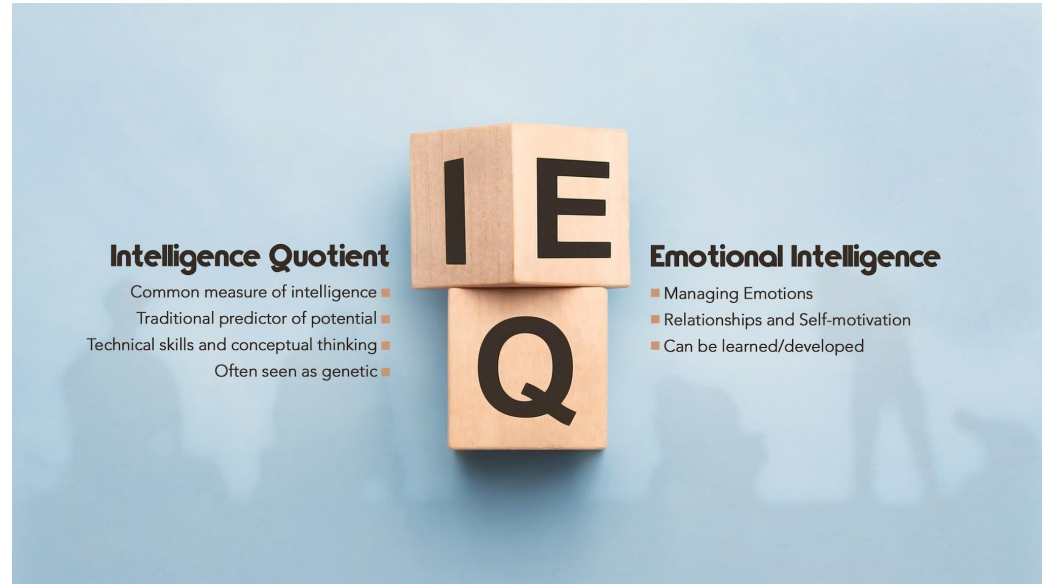
Agenda

Feedback

- Assessment + Understanding

- Constructive vs. Destructive Criticism

- Developing Good Communication

Mindset - Growth vs. Fixed

Self-Care - Important Practices for Teachers

Feedback

Assessing for Feedback

- When encountering a student, we must assess their readiness for feedback
- Students may not be ready for feedback:
    - Dealing with stress
    - Emotional or psychological challenges
    - Unmet needs
    - Upcoming Activities
- "[a] teacher must be a good psychologist. He must beware of discouraging the student, and he must know that there are times when it is advisable to correct certain things and times when it is not advisable to do so." - I. Galamian (*Principles of VIolin Playing and Teaching*, 1999)

Assessing for Feedback

In learning, emotions plays an important role as learners have to improve their weaknesses, so feedback needs to be given in emotionally supportive environments.

Hattie et al. (2021) accentuates the importance of strong **student-teacher relationships** characterized by warmth, trust, and empathy. These positive relationships foster a safe learning space where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities, making feedback a valuable component of growth.
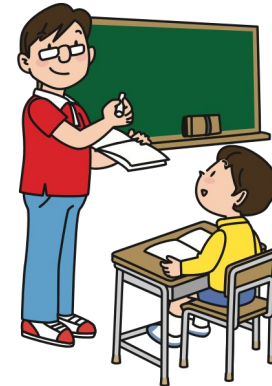
Differences in Understanding Feedback

Teachers

- A way to give comments
- Instruction or Criticism for what is being learned
- Ways to answer students' questions
- Pros and cons of working certain ways
- Providing assessment

Source: Hattie and Clarke, 2018

Students

- Feedback helps them what to do next.
- When there is no instructions what to do next→ no feedback

Conceptualizing Feedback

Task Level Feedback

- Information about content: rhythms, notes, tempos, marking on the score
- Immediate feedback (correct or incorrect)

Process Level Feedback

- Strategies and practice methods students used Teachers need to work with students to provide feedback

Self-Regulation Feedback

- helps learners control their own learning and improve their skills.
- involves setting personal goals and monitoring progress to reach those goals.
- Students take the initiative in their learning, but teachers can also support and guide them

Research indicates that while task level feedback is common in learning, feedback's effectiveness extends to task, process, and self-regulation levels. As students improve, it's beneficial for teachers to offer increased process and self-regulation feedback (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Wisniewski et al., 2020)

Guidelines for Effective Feedback

- At the learner's level of understanding
- Is specific and clear
- Is concise and non-judgmental
- Should help students see a path forward
- Help a student understand how current situation is related to future achievement of goals
- Is Constructive

Constructive Criticism vs. Destructive Criticism

Definition

Intention

Area Criticized

Help

Nature of Criticism

Critic

Constructive	Destructive
Constructive criticism is criticism given with a compassionate and helpful attitude	Destructive criticism is criticism given with the intention to harm or insult someone
Main intention is to help a person to improve his work	Main intention is to hurt and embarrass the creator
Focus on shortcomings of the work or strengths and weaknesses of the creator	Focus on the creator of the work, not the creation
Offer suggestions and tips to improve	Do not offer suggestions or tips
Specific, clear, detailed and actionable	Vague and non-specific
Critics are usually experts	Critics tend to be ignorant

Source: Graphic (PEDIAA): Understanding Constructive Vs. Destructive Criticism

Developing Communication in Lessons

- Traditional Pedagogical Approach:
  - Teacher tells the student how to play something with potential demonstration, and student imitating
- Transformative Pedagogy (Carey et al., 2013):
  - "is characterized by a 'deep' approach to learning orientation on behalf of the teacher, and pedagogical agility in terms of its collaborative, explorative, scaffolded, meaningful, and contextualizing qualities."
  - Working from student requests/needs

Mindset

Growth Mindset vs Fixed Mindset

Developed by: Dr. Carol Dweck, Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University

Fixed Mindset: "In a fixed mindset, people believe their **basic qualities**, like their intelligence or talent, are simply **fixed traits**. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that **talent alone creates success** – without effort." (Dweck, 2015)

Growth Mindset: "In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities **can be developed** through **dedication** and **hard work** – brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a **love of learning** and a **resilience** that is essential for great accomplishment." (Dweck, 2015)

Fixed Mindset

Growth Mindset

Carol Dweck

Intelligence is static.

Leads to a desire to LOOK SMART and therefore a tendency to:

- ✓ AVOID CHALLENGES
- ✓ GIVE UP EASILY DUE TO OBSTACLES
- ✓ SEE EFFORT AS FRUITLESS
- ✓ IGNORE USEFUL FEEDBACK
- ✓ BE THREATENED BY OTHERS' SUCCESS

Intelligence can be developed

Leads to a desire to LEARN and therefore a tendency to:

- ✓ EMBRACE CHALLENGES
- ✓ PERSIST DESPITE OBSTACLES
- ✓ SEE EFFORT AS PATH TO MASTERY
- ✓ LEARN FROM CRITICISM
- ✓ BE INSPIRED BY OTHERS' SUCCESS

Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano- @langwitches

Using a Growth Mindset Perspective in Your Studio

- Think that teaching is another way to learn
  - Teachers should be constantly learning in lessons - not simply imparting knowledge
  - Deep desire to learn about each student and how to teach them
- Have high standards for every student instead of judging who can excel
- Compliment students for demonstrating learning and putting in effort
 - Avoid: "You're so talented/smart/other fixed trait"
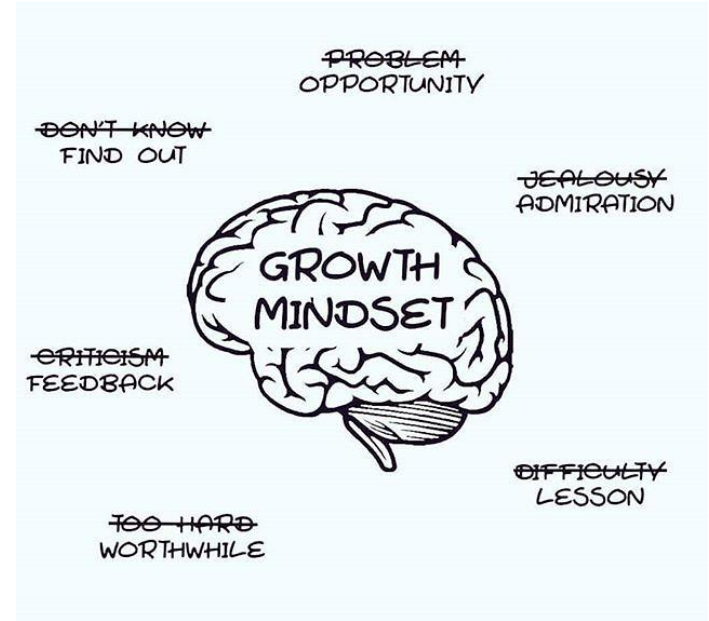
Understanding Growth Mindset

- **Effort is not the aim** - Teachers should focus on students' learning not just their effort.

- **No Victim Blaming** - Learning is complex. When students fail, you cannot blame them for the lack of effort, but you can change the process.

- **Accurate Sense of Current Abilities** - growth mindset does not inflate self-esteem or one's current abilities. It actually helps to gauge in more accurate ways.

- **Either you have a Growth Mindset or a Fixed Mindset.** Everyone has a mixture of both.

Benefits of Growth Mindset in the Music Studio

- Increased Student Motivation

- Better achievement and progress

- Students bounce back more quickly from failure

- Students have ability to tackle challenges

- Improved self-esteem

- Managing stress, frustration, and aggression
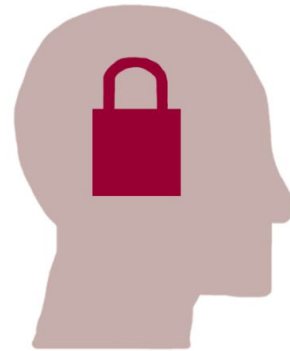
Fixed
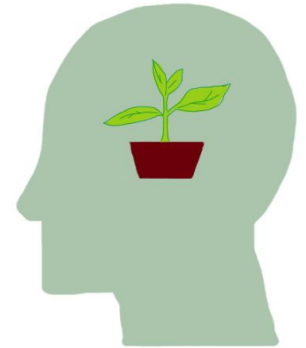
Growth

Self Care

Self Care - Important Practice for Teachers

- If we do not take care of ourselves, it is challenging to

  be an effective teacher

  - Challenging students require additional patience

- Attend to basic needs

  - Take breaks in teaching schedule

  - Have a small snack, something to drink nearby

  - Check on breathing and feeling grounded/aware

- Take inventory of how you are feeling in the moment

- Consider ways you can make sure you are at your best

Conclusions

- **Consider** a student's readiness for feedback
- **Examine beliefs** about talent, ability, and potential
- **Develop** an **appreciation** for **different approaches** to learning, development, and culture
- **Offer feedback** that is specific, optimistic, and clear
- **Reframe** your speech to be **kind**, **encouraging**
- **Take care!**

Resources (1)

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Graphic (PEDIAA): Understanding Constructive Vs. Destructive Criticism

Vanderbilt University Information on Unconscious Bias

Information about Microaggressions with Examples

Questions?

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