

## **Tips for Healthy Practice Habits**

Dr. Jessica Hawthorne

### *Prep*

Listen to performers you admire in live performances, recordings, and on the radio to create your vision, sound, and expression.

Limit daydreaming and distractions. Keep thinking and analyzing your playing. Take brief breaks as needed.

Discover your ideal working conditions. This can include location, temperature, clothing, etc. Making yourself feel comfortable will allow yourself to put your best foot forward.

Before starting a practice session, decide what it is you want to accomplish so you can easily increase productivity and efficiency.

Begin each session with a clean slate. The way you play today will always be different from yesterday. Accept that, and just work with what you have now. This attentiveness is important towards deepening your musical intuition, let alone provide you with peace of mind.

### *Tools*

Recording devices keep you honest. Listen to them as if they were someone else.

Use other teaching aids such as: metronomes to establish steady tempo and rhythm, tuners and drones to improve pitch and train your ear, and mirrors to check your posture and embouchure.

Read other sources of brass technique. Experiment with the techniques provided that are relevant to your goals, as well as anything that interests you.

Seek instruction from professionals. Their experience could be valuable to your improvement as a musician.

### *Individualize*

Keep an organized document for yourself to regularly contribute to. You can keep a record of your regular practice habits as well as writing suggestions for improving your technique.

Notate personal exercises for all aspects of your technique. You may also choose to use other books/sources as inspiration for developing your own exercises.

Allow yourself to use experimentation as a method for solving your problems.

### *Playing*

Begin each practice session with a warm-up that addresses all areas of your playing prior to working on repertoire.

Discover the healthiest interval for you to play/practice at a time. Feel free to break up your practicing in multiple sessions rather than one long one.

Consider the difference between the acts of performing and practicing. Utilize both of these actions with separate intentions.

If frustration persists, step out of the room. If you still feel destructive, try again tomorrow.

Remember that practicing doesn't have to be just "face time." Valuable improvements in your playing can come from listening, score studying, and other methods of "mental practice" as well.

Stop when it hurts.