

## Practice Partners

“What do you do in a practice with a practice partner besides bringing the vibe?”

Establish a mission statement, first thing's first; and then, work on it, figure it out, and leave no man behind. That's the thing I was talking about earlier with my practice session with Ben Paille, my last session. I think we basically take turns kicking each other's ass, in a completely positive way - introducing something to the other that's not so easy for the other 'cus it's been something *we've* been working on, not them.

So when we come together, much more infrequently these days, it's like “Hey what have you been working on? Oh boy! Wow, that just hit me like a ton of bricks that I can't do any of that. Okay, well let's slow down.” And then, you know, we just make sure not to go at a pace that would bring on anxiety for one of the people.

So, if you need to go slower and your practice partner is like “No man, you got this, you got this at a hundred and thirty”; like, “No dude, I don't have this in one ten! We need to slow down!”. And your practice partner says “No no no no, you got this, you got this come on, just keep up” that's not successful practice partnering; that's just demonstrating dominance in any given moment over the other person.

And you need to be- you need to be *a good friend*. If you want to be a good practice partner you need to be a good friend to that person. And just respect that whatever capacity you have today, that's the capacity I'm gonna be working with, you know? And even if I would like to be able to burn through a whole bunch of stuff, and the reality is, due to where you're at, we're only gonna get to this much stuff, that's fine. But that stuff that we're gonna get, it's gonna be impeccable.

And that's where you start with a practice partner. You establish your goals; you figure out something that you both want to work on, something that's important to both of you, and then

you try to play those exercises; and go at whatever tempo you can both successfully play them at, and offer each other encouragement.

And when something goes wrong, then just, then begins the process of trial and error, that becomes the hypothesis: “Well, I don't know let's see, have you tried this?” or “What are you focusing on?” “It's not working.” “Okay, what are you focusing on? Have you given any thought to the position of your lips? Have you given any thought to what you're pronouncing when you're doing this? Have you tried playing it with ear plugs in, so that you can listen more to what's happening inside of your mouth than the...?” — whatever it may be. Or “You know what? Why don't we - how about if we play it like half-tempo in the left hand instead?” Whatever it is, any idea is valid - is a valid idea; until it's been proven not to work.

And so, just like the rules for any good creative think-tank strategy session - don't shit on people's ideas, let it play out and see what happens, and see if it makes things better. That's the whole point. You have a practice partner so that you don't have to do all the thinking. You don't have to come up with all the ideas. You don't have to have all the answers. And you don't have to be the only person encouraging you. You've got a really strong ally right there with you, to encourage you.

And that's, that's just the most important thing that's ever happened to me. I don't know if Ben's still tuning in or not, if not I'll make sure that he sees this later on in video. But you know, Ben, if I didn't have Ben to practice with there's no way that I'd be the trumpet player that I am right now. If I didn't have somebody as, as beautiful of a person as, as inspiring and compassionate and just all-around inspirational and patient. *And* at the same time very motivating - patient, but also willing to push, you know, Ben is just the perfect practice partner. And if I didn't have him, then I really can't speak to where the hell I'd be right now.

So practice partners are the thing; that's the support system that can get you through a challenge that you might not have overcome otherwise. It could be that the practice partner

that you choose is the only reason why you're going to succeed and actually getting something at all. Or maybe just getting it today versus next week or next month. So just be very, very mindful of what kind of practice partner you *want*, and how that should inform the kind of practice partner that you *are*. What are you bringing to the table? Are you trying to measure your dick against theirs all the time? Or is it about lifting each other up?