

Ask Mike!

Stressed about an upcoming gig? Work got you singing the blues? Local 47 member Michael I. Goode can help!



In my last column, in May, we talked about the importance of good advice when setting up related music businesses and types of beneficial exercise. Today, we are going to talk about how to "be in the zone" while playing and tips on being more consistent on the job.

Q: Dear Mr. Goode, what is "the zone" and how do I stay in it?

A: "The zone" is that mythical place that lots of people talk about but don't understand. It is the place where we operate at our absolute best in all ways, physically, spiritually, and psychologically. As artists, this is the place we need to be in all the time when we play; otherwise, we will not move the audience and make the best impression and may not get asked back.

Staying in the "zone" is a function of feeling great and taking care of ourselves well so that we are always feeling good about our playing. So we need to

exercise, eat well, sleep well, and have other outside interests as much as time allows to nourish our soul and our musical and artistic abilities. If we don't do these things away from playing we are just going to burn out. When we burn out, consistency and the ability to stay in "the zone" goes away. Lots of players have used various substances to put themselves in another state so that they can try to access this state. Alcohol and recreational drugs are popular examples. These may work in the short term, but in the long term they tend to not be dependable and in some cases are very bad for your health.

It's best to try to get to "the zone" by just being healthy and not depend on other substances for our playing state. "The zone" feels like the best day of our life when we have felt the best we've ever felt. We should always feel this way when we play, and playing should always be enjoyable. "The zone" also feels like we are out of ourselves and we are connecting to something larger in an effortless way. If you are not feeling like this while you are playing, something is wrong, and you can do better. It's true that you can get away with playing

mechanically and even base an entire career on playing mechanically and some people do, but in the long run, you will never have the joy and happiness that comes from playing in "the zone."

The greatest performances always happen in "the zone." It doesn't matter what type of music you play – jazz, rock, studio, rap, hip-hop, country, orchestral, or even industrial music – when you are in "the zone," everything works as it should, and while you are doing it, feels almost effortless. In "the zone" you feel like you are paying attention to everything in a way you have never done before and everything goes right. If you have ever felt this while playing, the best way to get back into "the zone" is to remember what that felt like and try to recreate it in your practice sessions at home. Recreate that feeling in your mind first, and then continue practicing this state at the beginning of your practice sessions as you play until you can do it longer and longer. Once you have gotten a sense of this state so that you can sustain it for a long period of time while playing, you can start experimenting with it on gigs. Being in "the zone" makes playing fun again!

Q: Hi Mike, I am having problems with consistency lately on the job. What can I do to play better and be able to count on myself more?

A: Staying in "the zone," as mentioned above, is one of the best ways to be consistent. Taking lessons from a great teacher is also helpful. In addition, writing anger letters will help clear out any things in your head that are keeping you from consistently playing your best. Start them with, "I am angry about..." or if you feel numb, "I am angry I feel numb and have no reference point...", tear them up when done, and keep writing with pen and paper until you feel like you have gotten it all out. And keep them private and uncensored!

Send your questions to: Ask Mike!, Trumpetworks Press, P.O. Box 11574, Marina del Rey, CA 90295 or you can check out my website at www.trumpetworkspress.com and see information on my book, "Stage Fright in Music Performance and Its Relationship to the Unconscious" and my upcoming book, "Your True Self." All names are confidential and will not be published. © 2009

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ESTATE PLANNING An Introduction

Did you keep the resolution you made in January to do your estate planning? Did you not get around to it? Or postponed it because the money was tight? The timing couldn't be more critical to take care of your estate planning. It can save you or your family thousands of dollars in legal fees. The best time to plan your estate is now – while you can and before you need it.

Estate planning is more than a will. A good estate plan will also protect you in the event of your incapacity. It will let you – not the courts – make decisions about your medical care, keep control of your assets, or decide who would care for your minor children should they become orphaned.

Who Needs Estate Planning?

EVERYONE over the age of 18 should consider the benefits associated with designating a person who, in the event of your incapacity, will have the authority to make health care decisions on your behalf. And whatever the size of your estate, someone should be in charge of its management. If your estate is larger,

you will want to consider various ways to preserve your assets for your beneficiaries.

What Is My Estate?

Your estate consists of everything you own – your home, bank accounts, investments, retirement benefits, insurance policies, collectibles, and personal belongings. When you start adding it up you may find that you own more than you think. Now, perhaps, you understand why people need and should do estate planning.

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