

## *How To Get Out Of A Practice Slump*

Diary of A Pianist Blog

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Parents and students often ask me how to motivate their child or themselves to practice --- especially when they feel stuck in a musical rut. If only I had the magic formula! Alas, I do not, however, here are a few suggestions that have worked for me or for my students.

1. Be patient! Being in a practice slump often means that you or your child is about to break through to a new technical level.
2. Think quality not quantity. Practice as little as 10 minutes a day. Set specific goals for each 10 minutes. Work on only one measure, phrase, or piece per day. Learn a scale a day. Or don't practice any new repertoire -- just play your favorite pieces for 10 minutes a day.
3. Repertoire. Sometimes the pieces students are working on are just not inspiring, even though they may be important to study to continue to develop piano skills. Find a piece on the piano that you just can't wait to play (old or new repertoire). This is a strategy that works for me. I always have a least one piece that I have to play every day, because I love it so. Once students are at the piano playing something they love, it is easier to work on the repertoire that is hard or giving them trouble.
4. Think Teamwork. For parents: offer to be your child's piano coach. Then offer your child the opportunity to coach you through something you are having difficulty with --- getting enough exercise, stopping smoking, cutting calories etc. It's always easier to get through a down period when you are part of a team.

What the parent can do as part of the team: Sit with your child while they practice. Playing an instrument by yourself is lonely - especially when the rest of the family is watching TV or playing games. Don't offer suggestions or corrections. Just be there and offer gentle encouragement if it is needed.

5. Rewards. When students are in a slump, punishment is not going to help. Offer rewards for practice. Pay yourself to practice. It is work, after all. Go to a concert --- find performances that will inspire in any genre. Arrange a lesson with a different coach or master teacher as a special motivation. Your regular teacher may be the best in the world, but outside perspective often provides a needed spark.
6. Make a "PLAY" date! Arrange to have a friend or family member who also plays the piano or another musical instrument to get together with the student -- perform for others informally including your family -- adult students have arranged piano potlucks with other pianists to practice performing a complete work, or simply to share the repertoire they are learning.

Most important of all - don't give up! As with any difficult time in life...a musical slump too shall pass.