



Music and Mindfulness

Strategies for the Ensemble Educator



Craig Yaremko

MA, RYT-200

Band Director, Holdrum Middle School
River Vale, NJ

cyaremko@rivervaleschools.com

www.craigyaremko.com



Why music and mindfulness?



Why music and mindfulness?



Benefits of Meditation and Yoga

- Reduce overall stress, anxiety and depression
- Establish and maintain healthy habits
- Lower blood pressure
- Improve sleep and balance
- Enhance immunity
- Improve cognition
- Reduce distractions and improve focus



What is mindfulness?



“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.”

–Jon Kabat–Zinn

Mindfulness practice is about building the capacity to engage with experience.

ANY Activity can be done with mindfulness especially making music



Where to begin?



Consider YOUR experience

- Teach what you know
- Establish and develop your mindfulness practice
- Music and mindfulness are both PRACTICES
- Be honest about YOUR experience



How to incorporate?



Budget Time

- Suggested 10% of total class time (3–6 minutes)

Enhance Lesson

- Consider time of day
- Open Lesson vs. After Attendance/Warm-Up



How to incorporate?



Establish Norms

- Silence is expected
- Practices are an invitation, not required
- Respect is key

“Your efforts are always rewarded, but you cannot be rewarded for the effort you did not make.”

–Darren Rhodes



Practical Strategies



Mindfulness can be achieved through many (and any) means, including:

- Themes and inspirational quotes
- Guided meditation
- Breath work
- Body movements and yoga
- Music performance, creation and listening



Mindfulness Themes



Help connect “real life” to the experience of playing music.

- Quotes
- Poems
- Fables and Stories

Connect Theme

- Source and meaning
- Personal to Universal
- Relation to Music Making



Meditation

—●—
Meditation = You + Your Mind

Many Types

- Grounded to Breath
- Focused/Counting Practices
- Guided and Body Scan (many scripts, videos, and apps available)
- Mantra (repeated phrase)

Suggested First Practice: 30 sec to 1 minute, with a sound source



Breathwork



“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh, The Miracle of Mindfulness



Breathwork



Many types breathing exercises done in ensemble:

- In/Out for specific counts
- In-Hold-Out-Hold for specific counts

Pranayama (yogic breathwork)

- Ujjayi =victorious uprising
- Lion's Breath
- Three-Part breath
- Nadi Shodhana (alternate nostril)



Yoga and Stretching



Considerations

- Instruments and equipment
- Small groups

Connect to technique of musical performance

- Focus on alignment and posture
- Head, neck, wrist, hand stretches



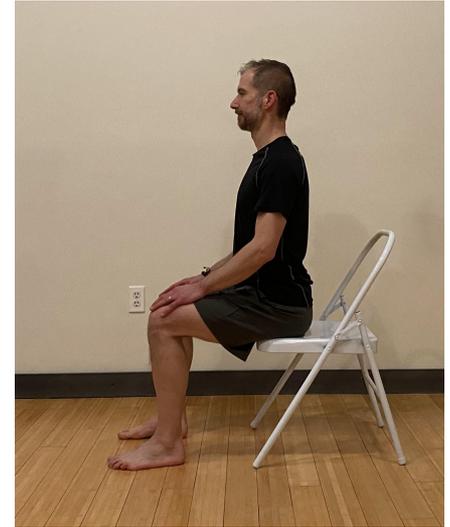
Yoga and Stretching



Mountain Pose



Seated Mountain Pose



Standing Poses



Warrior 2



Reverse Warrior



No-handed Warrior



Standing Poses



Warrior 1



Triangle



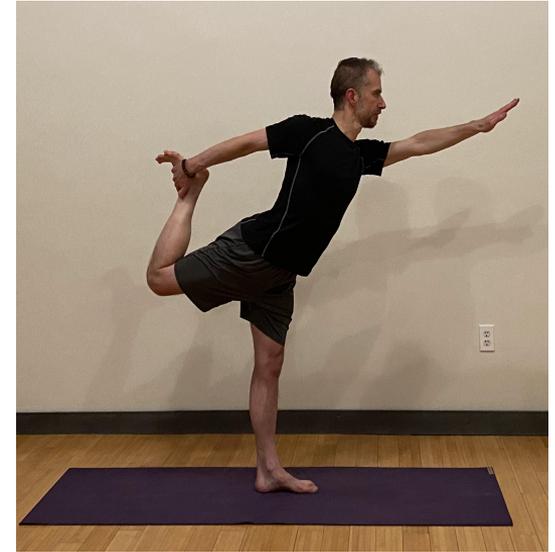
Balance Poses



Tree



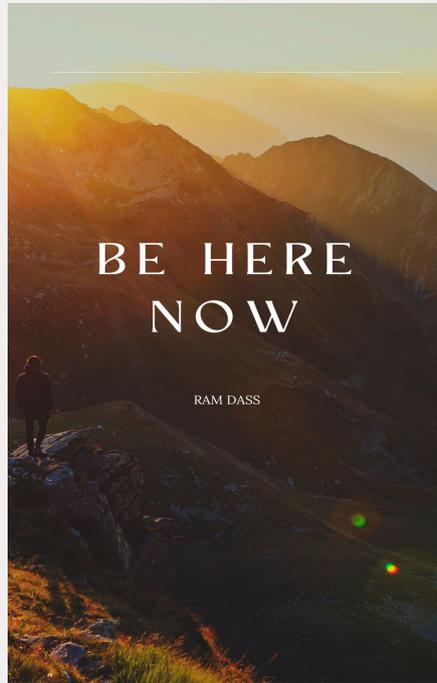
Eagle



Dancing Yogi



Lesson 1

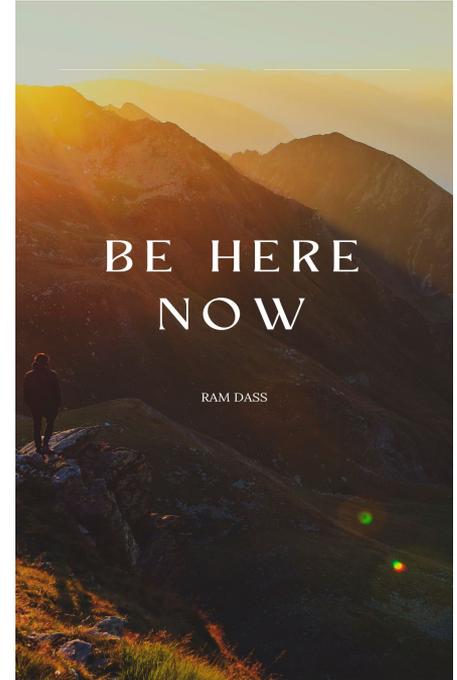


Lesson 1



Teaching: Playing music requires you to be fully present, which includes being prepared for what is coming.

Practice: 30-second meditation with bell



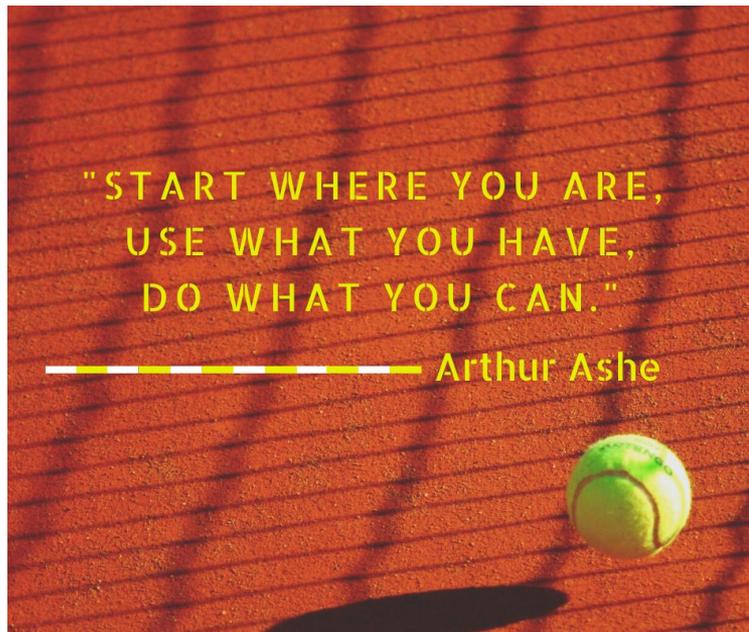
Lesson 2

"START WHERE YOU ARE,
USE WHAT YOU HAVE,
DO WHAT YOU CAN."

— Arthur Ashe



Lesson 2

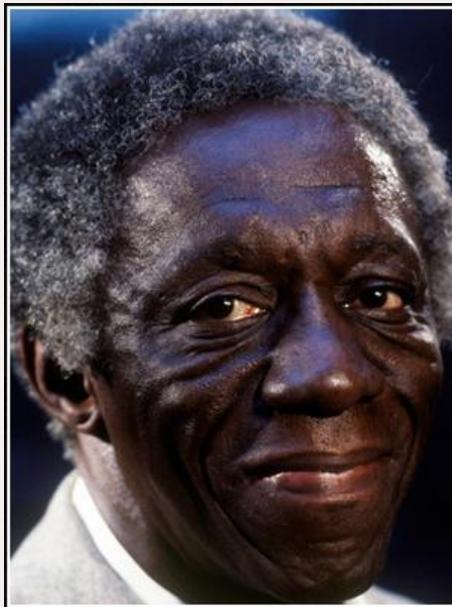


Teaching: Use your foundational musical and performing skills to move you forward in new challenges.

Practice: 6-moves of the spine seated or standing



Lesson 3

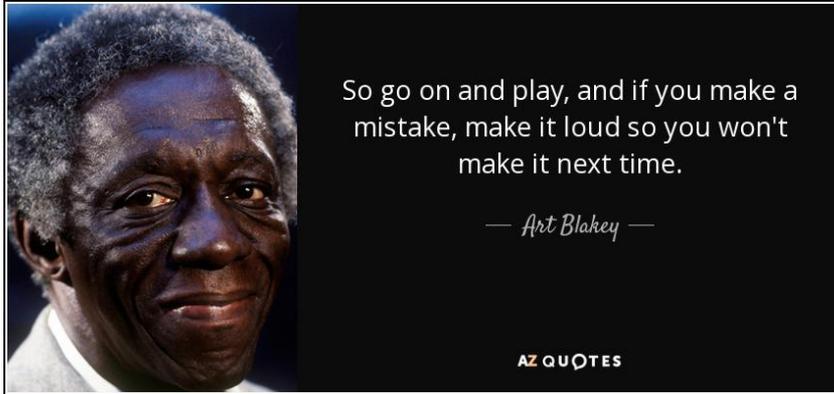


So go on and play, and if you make a
mistake, make it loud so you won't
make it next time.

— *Art Blakey* —

AZ QUOTES

Lesson 3



Teaching: Performing music confidently and making adjustments will result in strong musical performance over time.

Practice: Ujjayi pranayama



Lesson 4

"The secret to
success in any
human endeavor is
total concentration."

—

KURT VONNEGUT

Lesson 4



Teaching: A musical performance will be lacking if there is even one moment of a loss of concentration

Practice: Meditation, Count Breaths

"The secret to success in any human endeavor is total concentration."

—
KURT VONNEGUT



Lesson 5

THE BEST TIME TO PLANT A TREE WAS
20 YEARS AGO.

THE SECOND BEST TIME IS
NOW.

– CHINESE PROVERB

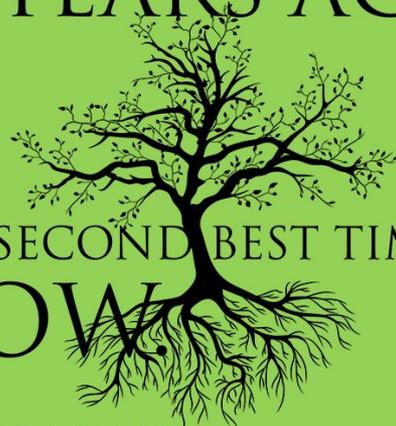
Lesson 5



Teaching: Establish strong roots now, regardless of what has already happened. Maturing as a musician means establishing a strong foundation right now.

Practice: Tree pose

THE BEST TIME TO PLANT A TREE WAS
20 YEARS AGO.



THE SECOND BEST TIME IS
NOW.

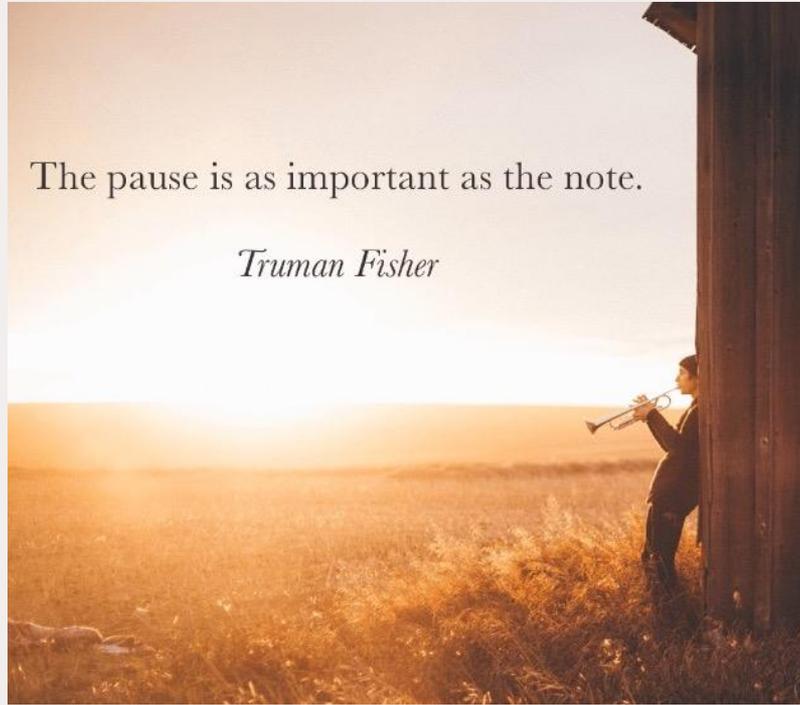
– CHINESE PROVERB



Lesson 6

The pause is as important as the note.

Truman Fisher

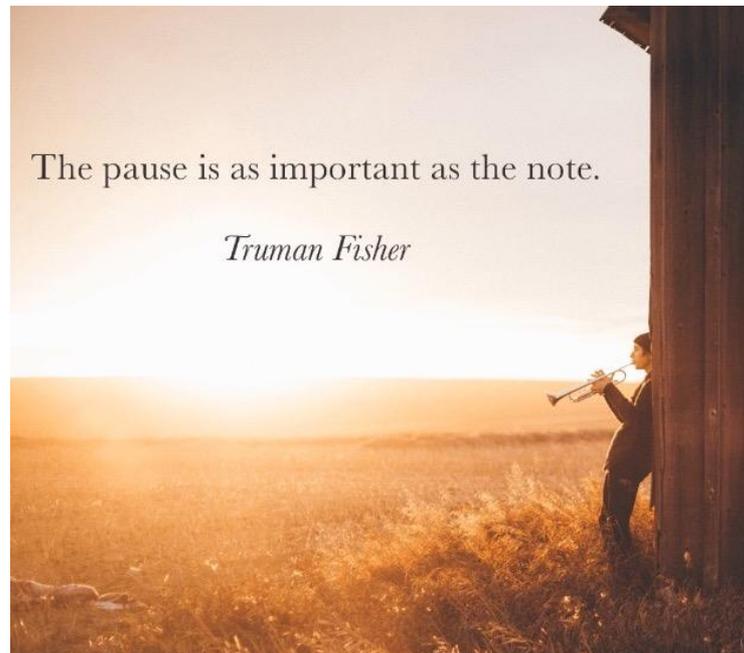


Lesson 6

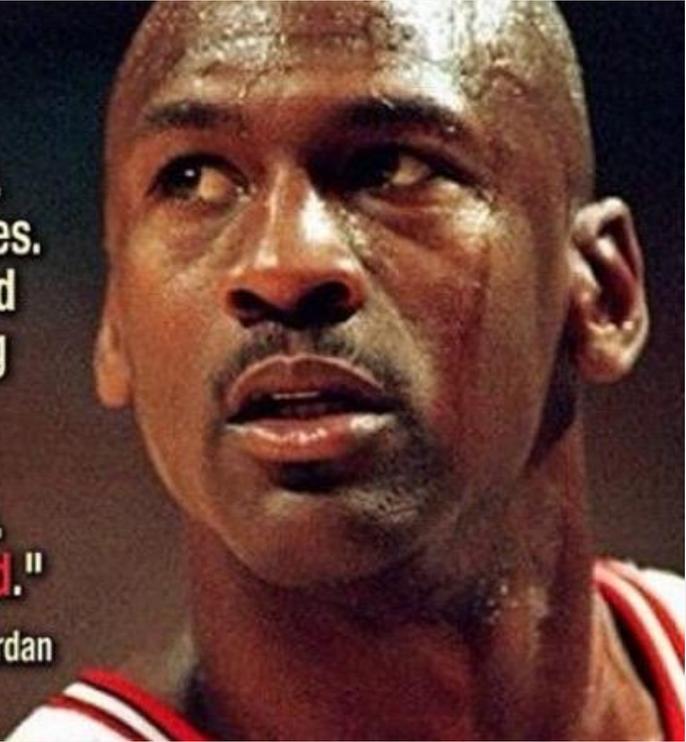
Teaching: Patience can be useful in many situations. Pausing is necessary and helpful in musical performances.

Practice: 3-part breath

hold breath in/out 0–15 seconds



Lesson 7

A close-up photograph of Michael Jordan, looking upwards and to the left with a focused expression. He is wearing a white jersey with red and black stripes on the collar.

"I've missed more than
9,000 shots in my career.
I've lost almost 300 games.
26 times I've been trusted
to take the game winning
shot and missed.
I've failed over and over
and over again in my life.
And that is why I succeed."

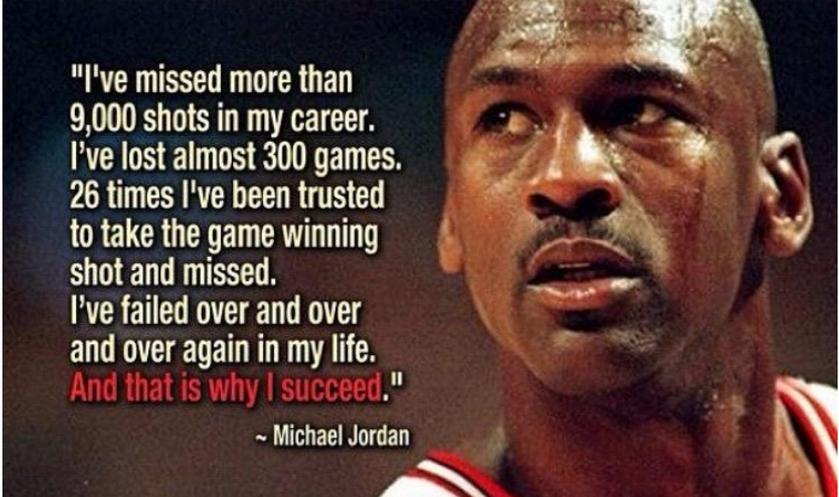
~ Michael Jordan

Lesson 7



Teaching: Failure leads to growth.
Musical obstacles help you grow and improve as a musician.

Practice: Warrior 1/2/3

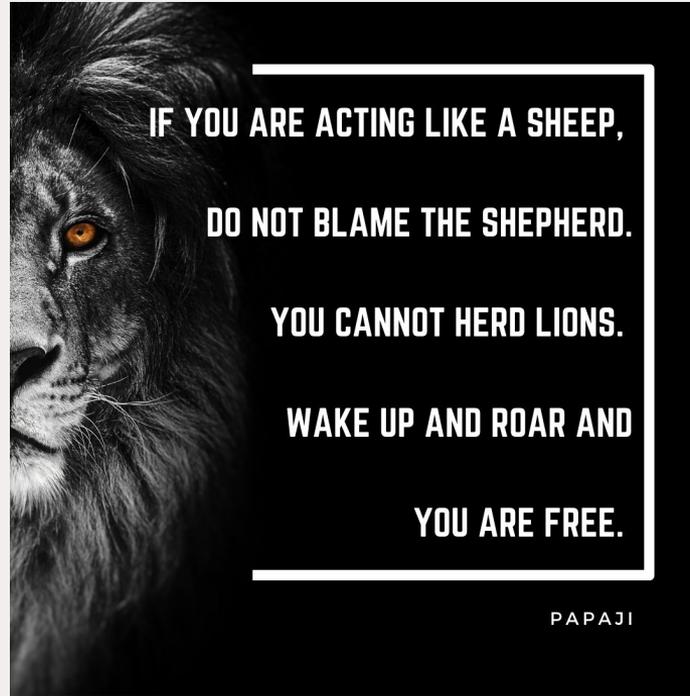


"I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. **And that is why I succeed."**

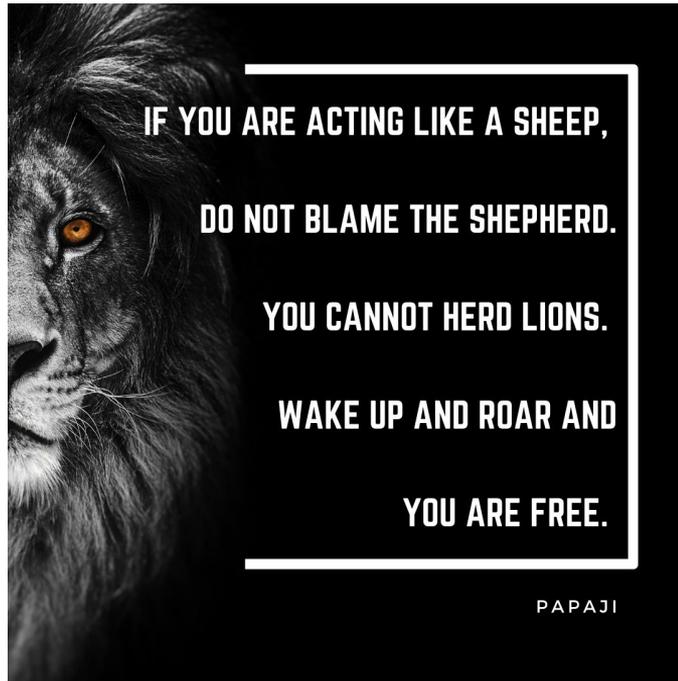
~ Michael Jordan



Lesson 8



Lesson 8



Teaching: Balance your role as a leader and member of something bigger. Performing in an ensemble takes both your own confidence and conviction as well as the ability to adapt, blend and coexist with others.

Practice: Lion's breath

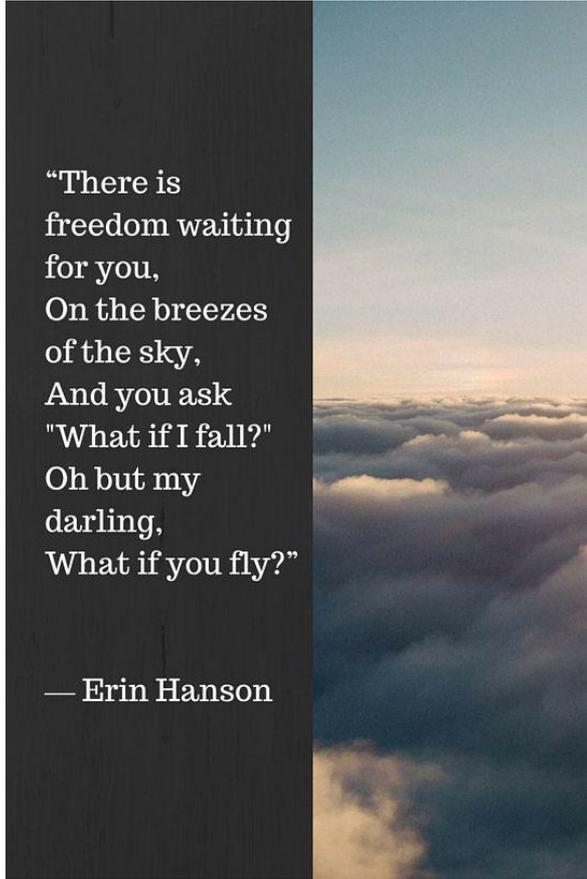


Lesson 9

“There is
freedom waiting
for you,
On the breezes
of the sky,
And you ask
"What if I fall?"
Oh but my
darling,
What if you fly?”

— Erin Hanson





“There is
freedom waiting
for you,
On the breezes
of the sky,
And you ask
"What if I fall?"
Oh but my
darling,
What if you fly?”

— Erin Hanson

Lesson 9

Teaching: Move forward with confidence. Performing music or incorporating new techniques is a risk. But what is the worst that can happen?

Practice: Eagle pose



Suggested Readings



The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation

Thich Nhat Hahn

Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness: A Guide for Anyone Who Teaches Anything

Deborah Schoeberlein David

Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art

James Nestor

Light on Yoga: The Bible of Modern Yoga

B.K.S. Iyengar

Yoga Resource Practice Manual

Darren Rhodes



References



<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23541163/>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/03/cover-mindfulness>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24127622/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18678242/>

https://d1wgtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/39616081/Mindfulness_meditation_improves_cognitio20151102-1793-1onmb2t-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1642106360&Signature=UFs2c7hf3rn9~9L8heu-T~KKZz5G17nYHWFTx1udB3YxT0w8UErUis-qsdt1zTzUohT9sErljYxcj3Q5v2zj877oKClj~tznzLPPn7vq6ld5tltExL2mo8EAflcs3BYguf~Wa75JypsTEblegQuHOLybkKt-LIGlsevOw3zGR8KzkTzc9~Don-aRQSn8jOg8kLTDcj44XWs8x3xcUXkmablwjWpTrrs1D8FSTbb6L3hvmVux1ZziFhGODk9IIB5J30zKofyocD935uT70e2rqj6dwZSe~7WJfYIKGPllEFyBHVBr4KhRCHt~BORTa2WsOaSOAJuLWv0H7FRfCH1IfA__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/04/turn-down-the-volume/>

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/yoga-what-you-need-to-know>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33928908/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33528905/>

