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Proem (Preface) 00:00

I keep a daily spreadsheet of steps walked and minutes playing music. I pause to reflect on my progress at the end of April every year. It's April 2021. I see that I've met my goal of 3,500 steps a day for 360 of 365 days with a daily average of 4,400 steps a day. My goal is to maintain. I have maintained my steps for the ten years I've tracked, although I've gone from one cane to two canes to two crutch canes. Still, I'm maintaining through the years and the seasons. I'm delighted to report I have spent an average of seven hours a week playing music for the entire past year. I averaged 2.4 hours a week in 2014, increasing from 4-6 hours a week over 2016-2020. I've bumped up to averaging an hour a day in the past year some because of COVID, some due to the coaching and motivation of weekly virtual lessons, but also taking the time after 30+ years of playing to learn theory, scales, chords, counting to four (keeping my place in four-measure chunks). Not as much time as podcasting (12 -20 hours per week), but still, it's not nothing. Currently, my wife is learning Spanish. A different language than music, yet many similarities. Work on it regularly, speak (play) with people more fluent than us, in a warm community of learners, a sensitive coach, accept the slow pace of learning, celebrate growth at whatever pace.

Approach to professional practice 02:50

I'm most proud of my attitude improvement over the year. While my actual playing quality has improved some, I now consider myself a professional musician (thank you, Gabrielle Pitman). See the episode, [The Silence Between the Notes](#) in the show notes. I learned to end every practice session (almost every day) with 10-15 minutes of entirely pleasurable playing instead of ending with woodshedding difficult passages, learning scales, chords, or ear training. I can't minimize taking weekly lessons with Jeff Harrington, sax professor at Berkeley College of Music. We've worked together for more than ten years. I fell in love with him when I was struggling with uncontrolled symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis. He was so adaptable. When my double vision crippled me (let's work on ear training). When my dexterity sucked (play long notes). When I was exhausted (rhythms). When traveling 45 minutes each way became a burden we switched to virtual lessons (years before COVID). Jeff ends every session with a positive.



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Continual learning system 04:04

Last week, a significant win was reliably hearing the difference between a minor second and a major second (a half step and a whole step) when starting from different roots (first notes far apart). For you non-musicians who study English as a second language, this is like understanding the difference between learned (lur-nid) and learned (lurnd), subtle but important. I worked on listening to the difference between a minor and major second for months, and then it clicked. Trusting that it will eventually click is enormous. Last weekend, the Latin band I play in, Lechuga Fresca (Crisp Lettuce), resumed outdoor play in 42-degree weather. We last played on November 30th in 42-degree weather. I'm not sure I was any better this weekend than in November despite playing seven hours a week. I spent three minutes disgusted with myself, then realized that I now know better how to manage my practice time. I know what I need to do. I have nothing but time, until I don't, so I'll keep at it.

After debriefing with Jeff this week, I realize that I'm listening and hearing differently. I'm better at keeping my place, but not there yet. I know when my bandmates aren't sticking to the form as I understood it. Hard to keep your place when the place isn't fixed. When I know the form and the chords, my improv is more confident. That's about 25% of the time - a gratifying 25%. My internal repertoire of rhythms, patterns, and chords is larger (more muscle memory).

Best, my older grandson started playing the harmonium (blow into a tube connected to a keyboard). We put on a Latin rhythm backing track and trade fours, he in C (all white keys) and me in A (I play an Eb instrument). Trading fours means we don't play at the same time. He's delighted. I'm ecstatic. Now we have two things we both enjoy - chess and music.

Now a word about our sponsor, ABRIDGE.

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Feeling in my Bones 07:30

My podcasting cronies reviewed my recent [episode #118, Destination: Best Health. Life Goals. Symptom Goals](#). We get together every other week to review each other's episodes - a great way to learn, inspire and mentor. They liked how I drew a roadmap of how I think while managing my best health journey. Perhaps I can share how I think while managing my musical journey. What do I want from music? Why do I play at all? Why the baritone sax? Well, I'm good at my professional work as a patient-caregiver activist. I think I'm as good as they come if you don't mind me saying so. Not so much music. Music is an exercise in humility. My professional work leans most heavily on my left brain - words, facts, logic, one foot in front of the other. Music, which lives more in my right brain, needs exercise - feelings, intuition,



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rhythm, arts. I love not being the leader in music. Why the bari? The baritone sax resonates within me. Playing the bottom makes me quiver. I tried the soprano sax (it's a lot lighter), but the reedy high notes grate on me. I want to be part of a horn section. I want to tell stories with improv.

Trust, time, talk, connect, control (3Ts and 2Cs) 08:53

My musical journey has many similarities to my health journey. I cultivate a team: warm, positive, people with different abilities and expertise than me, who appreciate and encourage me. I experiment. I persist. I know it takes time to create new brain pathways. I have several mentors and coaches. I don't know what I don't know as a musician. In my professional life, I know that as a leader, I need to listen first – to my staff, my customers, and partners. Same in music; listen first. In leadership, do less. Same in music. Find the sweet spot of playing just enough to tell a story, not too much to get lost-. Professionally, I know that nothing gets better, improves without solid infrastructure – at least not change that lasts. Professionally, infrastructure includes standards, people management, data, trusted communication channels. So, too, in music. You need a form, a lead sheet, a tune. You need to know how to start and stop together and communicate throughout. You have to be in tune. In my professional work, I focus on the 3 Ts and 2 Cs: Trust, time, talk, connection, and control. Necessary for informed decision-making in health and musical improv. I play better when I trust myself and my fellow musicians; we take the time to listen and practice, we talk through the form of the tune and the arrangement; we connect with each other and our inner voices; we take control of our playing and give each other space to control.

Reflection 10:36

One of my heroes, Miles Davis said, "Composing will always be a memory of inspiration; improvising is live inspiration, something happening at that very moment. Do not fear mistakes. There are none."

My approach to managing my health is improv. I keep trying stuff. Behind trying is the work of continual learning about the basics, the language of music, my horn's techniques, listening to others, feeling the groove, creating the groove, yet responding. Some stuff works at the moment; some doesn't. Listen, learn, appreciate. There are no mistakes. We are where we are, trying again.

