

Teach, Breathe, Move, Repeat: Tips for Physical Wellness during a Pandemic

Presenters: Laura Amoriello, Lesley McAllister, and Paola Savvidou

Mindful Activities

- a. Breathing Meditation: Count each exhale from 1 to 10
- b. Five-directional movements of the spine from a standing position:
 - i. Axial extension: Root into earth and lift crown of head toward sky
 - ii. Side bends (deepen the breath): Lift one arm up and reach overhead and to opposite side, keeping chest open and chin lifted away from chest
 - iii. Twists (relieve back tension): Hips face forward; twist with hands in prayer position or with straight arms
 - iv. Forward folds (calming): Swan dive down and reach toward the earth, relaxing the head and neck
 - v. Backbends (energizing): Reach overhead and then open arms out to “cactus” position, with upper arms parallel to floor, looking up and opening heart and throat up to sky
- c. “Chest pulses” to counteract hunching: With palms facing forward, pulse arms behind you ten times as you open the chest
- d. Cat/cow from seated or standing position
 - i. Inhale to arch the back, looking up and drawing shoulder blades together
 - ii. Exhale to round the back, tucking chin to chest and separating shoulder blades
- e. To relieve vision fatigue: “palming” eyes and focusing on arms’-distance object
- f. Body scan
- g. Body tapping
 - i. Stand with your feet about hip-width distance apart. Rub your hands together vigorously
 - ii. Using your fingertips tap vigorously starting with your head(front to back), then move down to the neck, shoulders, arms (in and out), chest, lower back, and legs. Pause and notice how you feel.
- h. Self-compassion break
 - i. Meditative walking
 - j. Affectionate Breathing meditation

Presentation Summary

- I. Primary Challenges
 - A. Physical manifestations of anxiety and emotional responses to stress
 - B. Consequences of extended sitting and remote teaching
 - C. Benefits of body awareness, meditation, stretching, breathing, and flexibility during this time of “crisis teaching”
 - D. “Quick tips”: structuring days and finding a retreat space
 - E. Exercises for vision fatigue (*trataka*)

- II. Self-Compassion for Mental and Physical Wellness
 - A. Being kinder to ourselves
 - a. Speak to yourself as you would a friend.
 - b. Take a self-compassion break (“This is difficult. Everyone suffers. Sending myself kindness.”)
 - c. Ask yourself: What do I need right now?
 - B. Mindfulness of the Body
 - a. “Drop in” to explore bodily sensations in order to ground into the present moment.
 - b. Try “Affectionate Breathing,” or attention to the natural rhythm of the breath in order to feel soothed and grateful.
 - c. Use meditative walking (slow, deliberate, feeling each sensation) as a means of transitioning between activities.

- III. Strategies for Physical Wellness
 - A. Movement while teaching: alternate between sitting and standing, mini-breaks vs. longer breaks, body tapping exercise, and guide students through alignment.
 - B. Nutrition tips for snacking:
 - a. Plan snacks ahead of time.
 - b. Combine complex carbohydrates with fat/protein. Examples: apple & cheese cubes, apricots & cashews, banana & almond butter, berries & greek yogurt.
 - C. Tips for sleep hygiene:
 - a. Exercise (preferably outdoors)
 - b. Maintain eating routine
 - c. Take a “reset break” if you wake up in the night
 - d. Leave work out of your bedroom
 - e. Transition to sleep (restorative poses, journaling, gentle Qigong exercise)

Quick Reading

Laura Amoriello. "Checking In: Mindful Body Awareness for Pianists," Frances Clark Center Resources for Teaching in the Time of Covid-19 (March 10, 2020).

<https://claviercompanion.com/teaching-in-the-time-of-covid-19/covid>

Vanessa Cornett. "Physical Health and Wellness Considerations for Online Teaching." *Piano Magazine* 12, No. 2 (forthcoming in May 2020); article also available on the website

www.claviercompanion.com

Suzanne Bertisch, MD, MPH. "Strategies to Promote Better Sleep in these Uncertain Times." *Harvard Health Publishing*, Harvard Medical School (March 27, 2020).

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/strategies-to-promote-better-sleep-in-these-uncertain-times-2020032719333>

Kristen Neff & Chris Germer. "Self-Compassion and COVID-19." Center for Mindful Self-Compassion Blog (March 2020).

<https://centerformsc.org/self-compassion-and-covid-19/>

Katie Sharkey, MD, PhD. "Pandemic Sleep Advice Straight from Sleep Researchers." *Elemental* (March 25, 2020).

<https://elemental.medium.com/pandemic-sleep-advice-straight-from-sleep-researchers-63cc2095f577>

Websites

Yoga Videos:

Yoga Journal: <http://www.yogajournal.com>

Yoga Basics: <http://www.yogabasics.com>

Subscription-Based Memberships for Online Classes:

Yoga International: <http://www.yogainternational.com>

Alo Yoga: <http://www.aloyoga.com>

MuseMoves

Created by physical therapists at Eastman. The MuseMoves page includes videos warm-ups for piano and guitar and blog posts on eating, nutrition, and Pilates.

<http://www.thehealthymusicianproject.com>

SMTD YouTube Playlist

Created by the Wellness Initiative at the University of Michigan's School of Music, Theatre & Dance the YouTube SMTD Wellness Playlist includes several videos related to physical health as well as a series of Performing WellCASTS providing expert information on wellness topics for the performing artist.

<https://tinyurl.com/s6adfxm>

15-minute Yin practice, breathing exercises, warm-ups, and practice stretches on Lesley McAllister's YouTube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdMJA07ncF7GUNUT4U7KI4Q?view_as=subscriber

Yoga with Adriene: Yoga for Musicians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXEoc1kN4yo>

Music Body Mind YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqtHHwut8-AIP7YruzY42uQ>

Music, Mind, and Movement: <https://musicmindandmovement.com/>

Blog, video, and podcast on physical and mental wellness for musicians.

Mindfulness Resources

<https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath>

Bulletproof Musician Blog

<http://www.bulletproofmusician.com>

Self-Compassion Resources

<https://self-compassion.org/>

See "Resources" for an extensive list of additional reading and websites.

<https://chrisgermer.com/>

See "Meditations" for helpful guided meditations on self-compassion.

Apps

Breathing Zone*

Breathe2Relax*

Belly Bio Interactive Breathing

Calm

Headspace

iChill*

5 Minute Yoga*

Daily Yoga*

Down Dog*

Pocket Yoga

Yoga Nidra* (deep relaxation practice)

Universal Breathing: Pranayama

Stress Doctor

Ten Percent Happier

Live and on-demand classes including yoga, dance, core, Pilates, and spin

Echelon Fit

Peloton

Daily Burn (60-day free trial)

Gold's Amp (free until May 31)

Alo Moves (yoga; 14-day free trial)

*Free

Free Online Exercise Classes

- Core Power Yoga: <http://corepoweryogaondemand.com/keep-up-your-practice>
 - Sixteen free hour-long yoga classes, plus four meditations
- Planet Fitness
 - Free daily class at 7 p.m. ET on Facebook Live page

Books:

Cornett, Vanessa. *The Mindful Musician*. Oxford Press.

McAllister, Lesley. *Yoga in the Music Studio*. Oxford Press. (May release)

Instagram

@musiciansmaintenance

@lsmcallister.yogamusicstudio

@mbmusicacademy

@musiciansmaintenance

@musicmindandmovement

@precisionperformanceandtherapy

@thealignedmusician

@yogaformusicians

Contact

lesley_mcallister@baylor.edu

paolasavvidou@gmail.com

lamoriello@ithaca.edu