

Understanding and Helping Young Musicians with Mental Health & Wellness Issues



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Articles on H&W Topics by Dr. Meyer

“Ten Guidelines for First-Year Ensemble Directors”
Texas Bandmasters Review, Dec. 2018 issue

“Financial Advice for Young Percussionists”
Percussive Notes, May 2018 issue

“9 Ways to Reduce Burnout”
Percussive Notes, March 2016 issue

“Using Yoga to Help Prevent Percussion Injuries”
Percussive Notes, March 2015

DISCLAIMER

Know your school's/organization's policies:

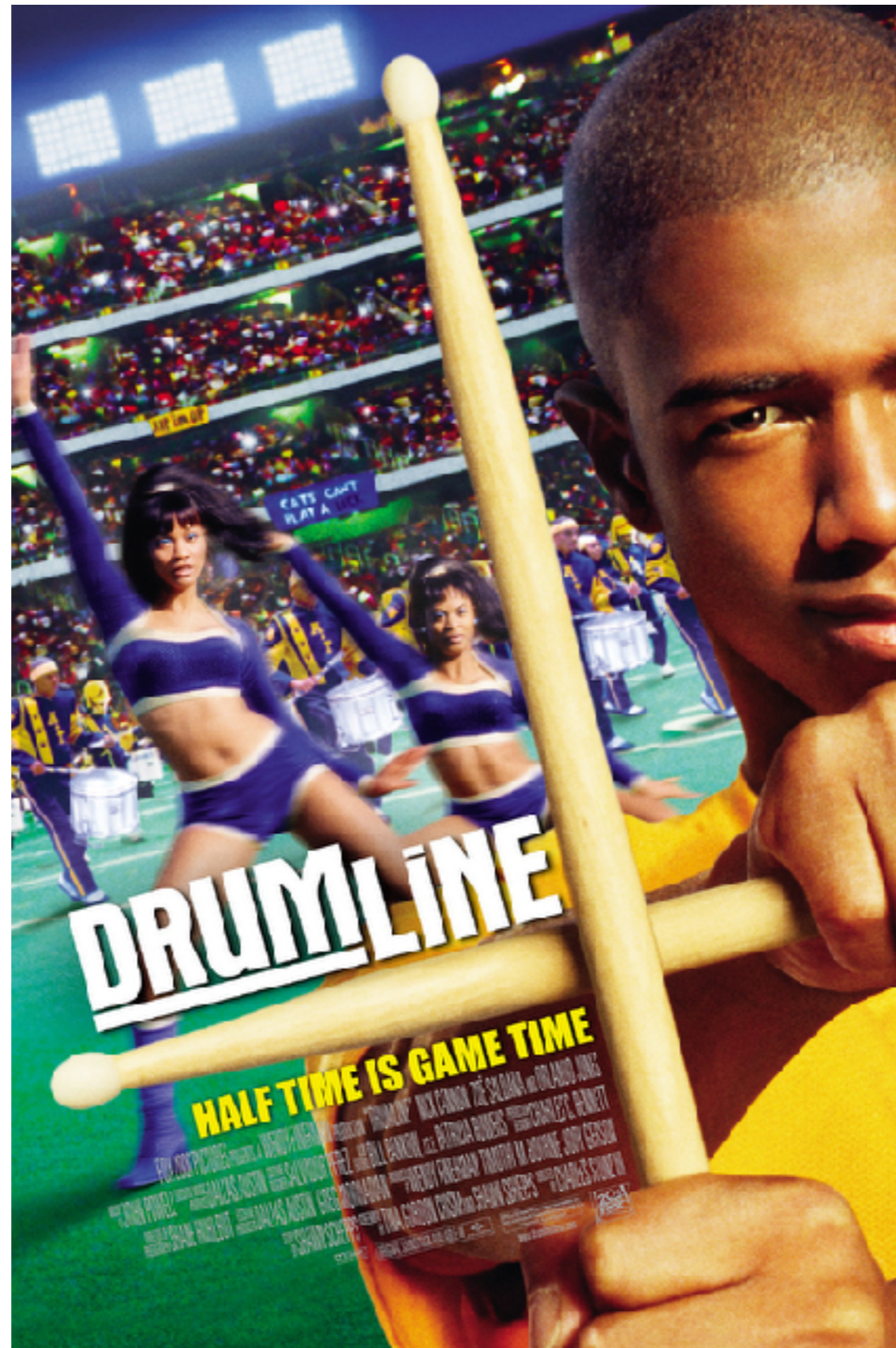
- FERPA
- Child Abuse/Duty to Report
- etc.

Stop a conversation if you gets uncomfortable.

“Don't be an island.”

If you are worried about something that happens or is said, bring it to the attention of someone one above you, immediately.

STORY TIME



WHAT I DID

- **Notice “red flags”**
- **Discuss in a private setting**
- **Listen more than talk**
- **Relate to the student**
- **Offer advice (therapy, counseling, mindfulness techniques, common knowledge help)**
- **Emphasize coming back to you again if anything comes up**
- **End on a positive**



WHAT WE WILL DISCUSS



Mental H&W Statistics

Warning Signs

**Tips for Preventing
Mental H&W Issues**

STATISTICS

(National Alliance on Mental Health)

- **75% mental health conditions begin by age 24**
- **Ages of 18 and 24: 1 in 4 have a diagnosable mental illness**
- **College students: 11% diagnosed/treated for anxiety; 10% diagnosed/treated for depression**
- **College students: 80% of felt overwhelmed; 45% have felt hopeless**
- **73% of students living with a mental health condition experienced a mental health crisis on campus, yet 34.2% reported that their college did not know about their crisis.**
 - **“Stigma” #1 reason students do not seek help**
- **7% of college students “seriously considered suicide” during the past year**
 - **Suicide = 3rd leading cause of death on college campuses**

PHYSICAL WARNING SIGNS

- Not eating, throwing up, significant weight loss/gain, over-eating or avoiding food
- Constantly feeling exhausted despite getting sleep or not sleeping well at all
- Not noticing pain/tension in the body from working or thinking about work constantly
- Experiencing frequent headaches or dizzy spells
- Getting sick more often with head colds, stomach flu, etc.



MENTAL/EMOTIONAL WARNING SIGNS

- Difficulty in concentrating or staying still**
- Careless mistakes they normally wouldn't make**
- Lashing out at others due to pressure and frustration**
- Lacking opinions or ideas during classroom discussions or group projects**
- Losing confidence, motivation, and otherwise feeling incapable to keep deadlines**
- Intense worries or fears**
- Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleeping habits**
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationship**
- Sensitive about small issues with others like comments or criticism**
- Not being able to concentrate on leisure activities like reading or watching a film**
- Constantly feeling bored or uninterested in matters you used to enjoy**

GENERAL TIPS ON REDUCING/ PREVENTING STUDENT H&W ISSUES

The “Big 3”

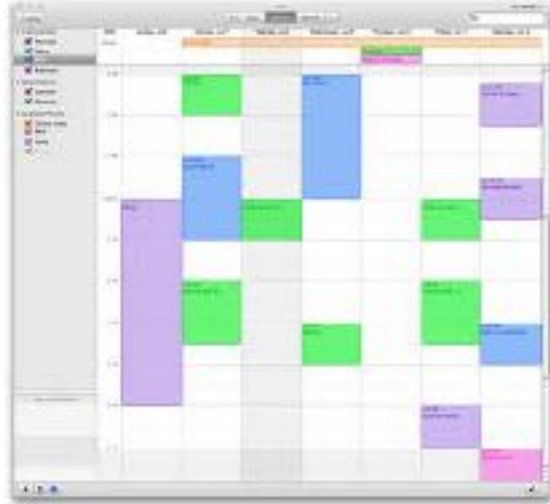
Eat

Sleep

Exercise



SPECIFIC TIPS ON REDUCING/ PREVENTING STUDENT H&W ISSUES



- Time Management and Organization

- Breaking Down Responsibilities



- Set Reasonable Goals and Stick to Them



- “Go Dark” with Social-Media Shutdown



“When Music Goes Up in Flames: The Impact of Advising on Music Major Burnout”

by Marilee L. Teasley and Erin M. Buchanan

ADVISING:

- **Quality academic advising = persistence and retention**
- **Concerned about well-being & progress = retention**

STUDENTS:

- **Most students: self-esteem linked to performance**
 - **focus on progress; not end-result**
- **Practice rooms can lead to exhaustion, isolation, and loneliness**
- **Practicing can be seen as an unfriendly activity -> competitive/exhausting environment = anxiety, stress, and mental health issues**

MISC.:

- **Professional stressors: lack of progress, job insecurity, and balance between musical/personal life**
- **Other stressors: financial problems, strained relationships, and family emergencies**

COUNCELING

*(*Most/all of us are not professional or trained counselors/therapists)*

Ways to help students in an unofficial “counseling session”

- Know Your Limits
- Clarify Your Role
- Listen
- Help Clarify Concerns
- Offer Support
- Suggest Alternatives for Action
- Follow Up Your Efforts



EFFECTIVE LISTENING

- **Face the speaker; maintain eye contact**
- **Be attentive, but relaxed**
- **Keep an open mind**
- **Listen and try to picture what the speaker is saying**
- **Don't interrupt; don't impose "solutions"**
- **Wait for speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions**
- **Ask questions only to ensure understanding**
- **Try to feel what the speaker is feeling**
- **Give regular feedback**
- **Pay attention to non-verbal cues**



BE AS MENTALLY/PHYSICALLY HEALTHY AS YOU CAN FOR YOUR STUDENTS

Be a great role model; not a martyr

Take care of yourself = more mental/physical energy to help your students

Compartmentalize bad days/situations



Dr. Meyer's Recommendations

Understand “this generation”:

- **Long-term attention issues (“Snapchat Generation”)**
 - Discuss small, medium, and large goal setting for specific things: learning a solo, study for an exam, etc.
- **Problem solving issues (“Point-and-Click Generation”)**
 - Discuss simple ideas on how to solve problems: ask questions to peers/teacher/Siri, Google, YouTube tutorials, etc.
- **Time management issues (“Helicopter-Parents Generation”)**
 - Sit down and map out their week by the hour, add in meals, sleep, practice, homework/study, relaxation/friends, etc.
- **Financial issues (highest amount of debt for college students ever)**
 - Make a budget, talk about their spending/saving habits, help them notice the different between “needs” vs. “wants, etc.
 - Talk about what things are: credit cards vs. debt cards, checking, saving, credit scores, mortgages, loans/car loans, etc.
 - Older students - discuss retirement options: Roth IRA vs Traditional IRA, what companies can they use,
 - Other financial resources: Dave Ramsey, ChooseFI, books: Simple Path to Wealth, The Bogleheads' Guide to Investing, A Random Walk Down Wall Street, Your Money or Your Life, etc.

Dr. Meyer's Recommendations, Cont'd

"Laziness Does Not Exit, But Unseen Barriers Do" by Devon Price:

- Students struggle to start tasks:
- Students with academic problems -> usually related to other issues: family, financial, relationship, etc.
- You can't make them adults, but you can show them options
 - *Avoid personal stories, "Back in my day..." (students won't care anyways)*

Ask questions every lesson. Asking one question never works; ask 4-6 questions and you will get real responses

Give them different ways to practice: "Practicing with Purpose" by David Kish

Grounding and Mindfulness Techniques:

- Sleep Meditation
- 30-minute Mindfulness Body Scan
- 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique
 - 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can feel
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 thing you can taste
- 5-minute Mindfulness Meditation/Body Scan before practicing:



Any questions?



RESOURCES/LINKS

“Laziness Does Not Exit, But Unseen Barriers Do” by Devon Price:

https://medium.com/@devonprice/laziness-does-not-exist-3af27e312d01?fbclid=IwAR0YuRd6KhilpAmoQfQ_Dyv2VsQ585Njvp4pVvqhY2Zyr6hqYNjoA5AKJrE

National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org

5-minute Mindfulness Body Scan

<https://youtu.be/dBNc5dQh8zQ>

30-minute Mindfulness Body Scan

<https://youtu.be/6d0cq7YQmMY>

Sleep Meditation

https://youtu.be/L12_GAi2UQ0

Stanford University “Counseling Students Overview”

<https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching-resources/interacting-students/counseling-students>

www.Brad-Meyer.com/documents/

“Ten Guidelines for First-Year Ensemble Directors”

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“Using Yoga to Help Prevent Percussion Injuries”