In this day and age, many people believe they can multitask; we always want to accomplish many things at once. Musicians often try to multitask while practicing their instruments. They think about breathing, articulation, jaw movement, finger technique, and more. However, research has proven that multitasking is impossible and actually decreases our efficiency. Practicing with a “quiet mind” will lead to peak performance and avoid the detrimental effects of trying to concentrate on many things at once. Of course, the questions are: What constitutes a quiet mind, and how does one attain this mental state?

### Literature Review (Cont.)

#### The Inner Game of Tennis

*By W. Timothy Gallwey*

- Self 1 (conscious mind) vs. Self 2 (subconscious)
- Trust Self 2 and let the body complete the swing
- Only focus on the tennis ball

![Roger Federer, professional tennis player, with eyes glued to the ball](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8390182)

For imagination sets the goal ‘picture’ which our automatic mechanism works on. We act, or fail to act, not because of ‘will,’ as is so commonly believed, but because of imagination” (Maltz, 31).

“Getting it together mentally involves…learning how to get the clearest possible picture of your desired outcomes…” (Gallwey, 13).

#### Zen in the Art of Archery

*By Eugen Herrigel*

- Never think about *how* to draw the bow
- Only focus on breathing

“…stop trying to ‘do it’ by strain and effort, picture to yourself the target you really want to hit, and ‘let’ your creative success mechanism take over” (Malz, 41).

“Trusting your body in tennis means letting your body hit the ball. The key word is *let*. You trust in the competence of your body and its brain, and you *let* it swing the racket” (Gallwey, 36).

#### Peace is Every Step

*By Thich Nhat Hanh*

- Conscious breathing in everyday life
- Staying in the present

“Of course, thinking is important, but quite a lot of our thinking is useless” (Hanh, 11).

#### The Organized Mind

*By Daniel J. Levitin*

- Attention is most important mental resource
- Multitasking is the enemy of attention
- Use external organization systems to clear the mind of tasks

Conscious breathing in everyday life allows them to devote all of their attention to what is immediately before them” (Levitin, 9).

“Mastery in ink painting is only attained when the hand, exercising perfect control over technique, executes what hovers before the mind’s eye at the same moment when the mind begins to form it…” (Herrigel, 37).

#### Quieting the Mind Using Connections in the Literature

- **Musicians must possess a mental version of their goal sound**

  “For imagination sets the goal ‘picture’ which our automatic mechanism works on. We act, or fail to act, not because of ‘will,’ as is so commonly believed, but because of imagination” (Maltz, 31).

- **Musicians must think less about how to play the instrument**

  “Sad is just the trouble, you make an effort to think about it. Concentrate entirely on your breathing, as if you had nothing else to do!” (Herrigel, 40).

- **Musicians must let their bodies do the work**

  “…stop trying to ‘do it’ by strain and effort, picture to yourself the target you really want to hit, and ‘let’ your creative success mechanism take over” (Malz, 41).

- **Musicians must learn to stay in the present moment**

  “Consciously practice the habit of ‘taking no anxious thought for tomorrow,’ by giving all your attention to the present moment” (Maltz, 86).

  “Mastery in ink painting is only attained when the hand, exercising perfect control over technique, executes what hovers before the mind’s eye at the same moment when the mind begins to form it…” (Herrigel, 104).

  “Our appointment with life is in the present moment” (Hanh, 10).

- **Musicians must learn to relax in order to focus**

  “…process of concentration by relaxing our bodies” (Herrigel, 90).

  “In and ‘Out’…As you practice, your breath will become peaceful and gentle, and your mind and body will also become peaceful and gentle” (Hanh, 7).

### Conclusions

- Sound created on one’s instrument is a direct result of aural imagination
- Focus only on the goal sound, and hear it as vividly and as accurately as possible in one’s mind
- Think in the moment and play in the moment
- Be aware of the physicality of playing, but do not focus on it
- Focus is a result of a quiet mind

### Further Discussion

- Balancing teaching how to play an instrument vs. how to play music for a middle school band director
- Altering music education curriculum to encourage personal excellence on one’s primary instrument vs. learning pedagogy of other instruments

---

*Further thanks to Mr. David Marvel and to my faculty advisor Dr. Shelley Binder*