

# C A R M E N M O R I N

## ***Music Mindset Podcast - Episode 5: The Most Important Thing You DON'T Know About Practicing***

### Episode 5 Transcript

Hello everyone. And welcome to the music mindset podcast. I'm your host, Carmen Morin. And this is episode number five. So today on the podcast, I would like to talk about something that I am so passionate about. And you might think I'm going to talk about a certain style of music or my favorite composer or something about performing.

All of those things. I have lots of passion for, but something that I am most passionate about in my life and in my studies and in my learning is. Practice now, before you think that that's a dry topic, I want you to know that studying practice and the habits of good practice being so fascinating for me.

And there's a lot of research and a lot of study around it, especially in the past, probably 25 or 30 years, things that they've learned about how you can really train and develop talent through. Certain types of practice. So I will say there are many things that I'm thankful for in my life. And when I think back to the things that I am thankful for in my upbringing, it's that even though I grew up being quite an accomplished young student, a lot of things, very young.

So I performed with orchestra. By the time I was 10, we were doing a lot of competition and performance. So even though I was raised to, I suppose you would say be a high performer. So we accomplished a lot. And when I say we, I mean, my two brothers and I, we accomplished a lot yeah. Is young competing and performing musicians, but I'm so thankful that we were never really praised in our home as being talented.

I mean, a very loving home, but we were never praised as being gifted or smarter than anyone else. Really, we were always praised on just the work we did and how effectively we worked and how consistently we did it. So when we had a positive outcome and we were excited about it, it was always quickly tied back to the work we did, how we planned it, um, how effectively we worked in the months leading up to it.

And when we didn't have quite such a positive outcome, then we were always just tied back to things that we could have done differently in our preparation. And this goes, I mean, now you read about this in the locus of control. So people are going to be more resilient and more positive and more hopeful if you help them to understand.

And if they really believe that the world around them is. Not under their control, but that they have power over the outcome, um, that they have in their lives. So growing up, we were taught

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and I still believe that everyone, it has seeds of talent within themselves. So everyone has a unique seed within themselves of their own.

Talent. So your job then is really just to choose which seeds you want to cultivate. And your job is also to do the right work to bring them out. So we all have just I'm sure. Thousands of seeds of talent in all different areas. And whatever that seed can grow into is just huge potential. But it's our job to learn how to do the work, to bring it out.

So I'm very thankful for these experiences in my youth, not just because of what I've enjoyed now as a musician and as an artist and as a teacher, but because I've been able to take the same system of how to break things down. And how to do targeted practice to reach a high level of execution. And I've been able to apply this same mindset and methods and this principle two, literally every area of my life.

And I do this actively. So I've done this throughout university. I did this. Uh, building my business. When I focus on my health and wellness, my mental health, my relationships, my parenting, I basically use these same principles of the way that I was guided to break things down and refine a piece of music.

So I always say when I'm, um, working with my students, that these character traits and these values and experiences. Are more important to me that they, they work through then if they ever decide to be a concert artist or anything like that, I think that that's where there's just deep, deep value when it comes to studying an instrument.

And so, so that's really why we practice. So. Whether it's to be able to confidently make a presentation at work, um, to do negotiations, um, any self-evaluating person can look at themselves and be honest that we all have weaknesses. And we all have vulnerabilities that we want to work on. And under targeted practice is able to not only find them that needs to be fixed, but also.

Feeling confident in the tools you have to fix and reshape it so that you can perform reliably with it in the future. So perfecting and refining details and being able to execute a performance is really what classical music training is all about. So I am really excited to share my insights on that now.

There's a lot of study on high performance and how to develop talent. And often I've realized the studies are focused on, you know, high level athletes, and they're also focused on classical

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musicians. So the study showed that the principles of the practice though, are the same. If you are creating a world class chess player or a

World-class skateboarder or a concert pianist, or a mathematician, the steps of practice that all of these, um, top performers in these disciplines go through business people. Um, they're, they're all the same. Most often practice is associated with time. And consistency. Now, these things are very important, but it's also very important to know that many people.

And I see this just knowing people that come and study lessons and are interested in lessons. There are many people who work very consistently and they put in time every single day. And that does not mean that they are doing the type of work that will make them and improve. Let alone. One day unlocking their true potential.

And in fact, as a piano teacher, I'll say that in my field, it's, we're very well aware that if people work consistently and they put in time everyday, but they aren't doing the right type of practice. It's common knowledge. As far as piano teachers, that your students will make themselves worse. So if you practice every day, but you're not doing the right type of work, you, you will make yourself actually worse at playing the piano.

Through your time and consistency. So I don't want that to discourage you. I want you to just be aware of how much control you have over the outcome. And it's really not. As associated with time, as you may think. So I think most importantly, what comes from understanding practice and how to build skills is that by understanding what happens when you practice and how you practice and how you can build skills, it can really shift our beliefs on what it means to have skill in the first place, because I think we've all.

Being in a position where we look at someone who has a high level of skill and you go, wow, I could never do that. Or while they must've been born with that. And so it demystifies the idea of talent and that's what I hope to. Try and help you to do, as we talk about this today. So I want you to think about, let's not talk about playing the piano or skateboarding or golfing or whatever the skill is.

I want you to think about something like confidence. So often people will think of confidence as a character trait, and there are some things that I've read that say, some people are born. I'm more likely to show confidence than others, but in all of those studies, they agree that confidence is. Something that you can build.

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Of course, I think we would all agree on that. So really you should be thinking of confidence again, as a skill. So I remember reading. A quote that says confidence is the ability to move from thought to action. So if you have an idea, confidence is the ability to take it and make it into something real and take action on it.

And the more you practice and develop that skill, the more you will be able to apply it in all areas of your life. So I've enjoyed success as a pianist. So very often it would be thought and said to. To me and to our family. Oh, you were born into a musical family. So you have, you have the musical gene and this is a gift that your family has.

So my dad is, uh, was always our team. Sure. And my two older brothers were quite accomplished. Pianists are quite accomplished pianists as well. Um, so they would always say, well, you guys are a musical family and you all are quite musical. So no, I always say yes, I was born in to a musical family, which means that at a young age, I was put to together, very focused work to hone these skills.

And thankfully this was done in a very targeted way. And I worked under the close supervision of my teacher and with my family. So people might call it talent. But when you look at the process that we would have gone through, I, I see it as something that was very much intentionally built. So what I want you to take from this is talent is something that is crafted.

Talent is something that is built and it's built from the ground up. So what I hope you can take away from this as we get started and I will do multiple episodes on this. Cause there are lots of interesting insights that I've learned over the years. And I, um, feel that I just will keep exploring throughout my entire career, but things that I want you to take away today are some of the core principles of targeted practice, deliberate practice, and how to know if you are actually practicing or if you are just putting in time.

At your instrument or your skill or whatever it is that you're working on growing or refining at this point in your life. So obvious things that you can apply this to are playing a musical instrument or building skill with a sport. But yeah, I would love if you would also look at how you can apply this to.

You know, phone calls that you make for your, for your work, for your business or tough conversations that you have to have with someone who you love or, or ways that you approach your parenting. Because I have really seen how these tools have served me well in areas far outside of being a musician and being a performer.

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Something else that I would love for you to take today is that skill and talents are not fixed, which means that you're not born with this set outline of how talented you'll be in one type of skill or another. And qualities are not fixed. So confidence, honesty, learning to draw boundaries, experiencing gratitude.

All of these things are skills that can be built as well. Does skills in playing the piano and skills and drawing and skills in sports and all these things, the things. So I've applied this mindset to everything that I've done in life. As far as. Building my business, the way that I parent, the way that I have worked to build my physical, mental, or emotional health.

Um, and I hope that this can serve you well, if you think of it in this way. So when you realize that all skill and talent is built in the same way, I really believe that this allows you to move through life from a place of empowerment, choosing with intention, which seeds within yourself. You choose to cultivate.

So it's these beliefs and the stories that we tell ourselves about our own abilities that will have the greatest influence on the paths we take in life. And the way that we think about skill and talent can really shape the risks that we take and the choices that we make when you think of skill as something that can be acquired and built.

Through a system of deliberate and targeted work, as opposed to something that we are just are, or are not born with endowed with. I really believe that this is the mindset and the psychology of success and growth. And it's also where you'll find your flow and your windows of creativity and innovation.

With risks that you become confident to take in your own life and your own artistry or any, any path you apply this to. So let's take a moment and talk about what happens when we practice. So let's talk about some of the misconceptions. So we all agree that practicing is very important. It packs a lot of value, but some practice is like gold.

I would say. And other types of practice are an absolute waste of time and you're actually better off not doing it. So we have all kind of heard that. Practice makes perfect. And people will talk about the 10,000 hour rule, which has led us to believe that if we just invest 10,000 hours of time, intentional time, then you will become an expert in your field.

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So time and consistent see are definitely important. You, without a doubt, you can not become great without it. But investing the time and the intention does not mean you're doing what's needed to unlock your potential. When we think of practice, I think we often think we often think about and our bodies.

And if you think you would be practicing the piano, for example, you get this idea that I'm trying to get something into my fingers. So I mean, obviously different muscles that I'm using are going to develop and support what I'm doing repeatedly, but. What most people don't know is that there's no such thing as muscle memory.

So yeah, it's a term that we use, but all of the skills that you're building when you practice are being built out in the circuitry of your mind. So. Stay with me now, anything that we do, any spoken word, any action, any thought that we have when that happens? We have a little tiny electrical impulse that travels through fibers in our brain, and it travels down a path of whatever we just did.

So it creates and fires a little electrical circuit. So whatever I'm doing, if I move my hand, if I ride my bike, Or I play some Bach on the piano or say I have a self-defeating negative thought. Any of those things that I do will have an associated neural pathway or a circuit in my brain that fires each time I do it.

So if I react to something like say I dropped my coffee and I reach out and grab it, that circuit fires, and it's an impulse and that's my response. But if I do something repeatedly, which means I repeatedly fire that exact same electrical, current something very different happens inside my brain. And this is the mechanism where skills are built.

So the way that it works is that each time you fire this little electrical pulse in that same circuit, you wrap a little layer of insulation around the circuit, and it's called myelin. And this myelin sheath is this fatty gum protein substance. And this is also the substance that for example, degenerate in people who have multiple sclerosis.

So I want you to picture, and I will have a picture of this in the show notes. Um, but I want you to picture myelin is like the plastic that goes around a broadband cable. And the more that you insulate that connection, then the stronger, the faster and more precise that connection will become. So when you are training these circuits and building these circuits, this is actually what you're building.

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When you're trying to build your skill, this is what people are referring to when they talk about muscle memory. And when things, all of a sudden to feel automatic, it's not that it's become automatic in your muscles at all. It's the pathways and the connections that you built in your neural pathways that have become smoother and more.

More automatic and without struggle. So of course the muscles around it support. Um, but this is actually what you're training. When things start to become automatic, this is where, what happens when you've built out habits. So when you're trying to build a new skill and develop something in yourself that you don't yet have circuitry for.

I want you to think of it. Like you are trying to send an electrical impulse so that electrical impulse, you're trying to send it across like a shaky rope bridge. So picture that. And I'll maybe I'll put a picture of that in the show notes as well. If you keep firing that circuit, that connection it's stronger and the insulation wraps.

Thicker around that neural pathway. And so upgrade to like a dirt and gravel road and you continue firing with intention and working on that same circuit, then you're going to build a faster connection, like a super highway and eventually like a bullet train. So the stronger that you make these connect in your mind, the more accurate, precise, reliable, okay.

And seemingly effortless, your skills will become. So when you have a strong neural pathway, this is where the electrical impulse will automatically want to travel. And if you really want to create a new one, you have to be intentional about how you carve out a new pathway. And this is why when people are saying, okay, we have to break a habit.

You're taught that you should replace it with another habit because you have to actually lay out a different neural pathway. Um, to change that habit as well. So I want you to just think in life how important this is to know, because it is hard with everything that you do regardless of what your intentions are when you sit down to do your work.

So for example, I want you to take. A typical piano practice that you might see a student do or anyone do. And let's pretend that there is a woman and she is working on a passage on the piano and she's determined to get it. So she tries to play it and she gets it incorrect. Okay. I'm going to try again.

Stick with it. So she plays it three times, four times still doesn't get it right. She plays it five times and she still mixes things up and six times close, but doesn't get it seven times. Doesn't get it.

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Then finally on the eighth, try, she gets it right. And she succeeds. So that's fantastic. That's commitment, that's dedication, that's perseverance and consistency and grit and all these wonderful qualities that we should all value.

And we should all strive for. But if I'm thinking about practicing and how to improve when I hear that scenario is wonderful, that she's dedicated, but all that I hear is that she fired the circuit that she didn't want seven times. And then she fired the circuit that she did want only once. So seven times she fired the incorrect circuit.

And one time she fired the correct circuit that she's aiming for. What happens is this student, she feels motivation from that experience. She said, wow, I really stuck with it. I was dedicated. And if I just keep sticking with it, I'm going to improve. And then she's done her practice and she feels like she ended on a point of success.

But knowing what you know about how skills are built, you can see now that there is failure looming a top of this process. If she continues to work in this same way, she will struggle through her practice. She will achieve what she was working towards, by the end of her practice and end on a high note.

But all that I hear is that she fired the circuit that she didn't want. Seven times and the one that she wanted only once. So I see it often that people will invest a valuable, they will invest their valuable time in hopes of unlocking their potential, but not understanding targeted practice is so pernicious because when you don't see the results that you're capable of.

It creates this false belief about your potential. And I can save, um, just having my school and being, having the opportunity to meet so many parents and talk about them. Their children with them and their experiences. So I meet a lot of moms and a lot of parents who will tell me with vivid memory that they took lessons when they were seven years old and they took lessons for four, five years and they practiced and they did all their lessons, but they never turned out to be musical.

They never unlocked any talent or potential. So they say, well, at least they tried. Um, but now they know they don't have any musical potential. And, and I hear this a lot and when I hear that, I acknowledge that that's what they experienced. And I, you know, when there's opportunity to discuss, I will, but I always think right away, you know, I bet you weren't even practicing.



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You were probably yes. Going to your lessons, but I bet you weren't practicing. I bet you were just. Playing pieces on the piano. And when you do that, you don't actually get a representation of your potential. And I'm a big believer that because so many people don't take active steps. Yes. Learning how to practice that most people don't experience their full potential.

And this is why, I mean, as I go through and I'm doing my foundation course, uh, the piano foundation formula course. This is what I start with an understanding. This principle is. At the root of everything else that we do. So everything is done with intention. I'm really focusing on not just putting in the time, but to be very clear and to work at building these circuits with intention.

So. What I do, of course, as I go through what the steps are for targeted practice, and we will talk about that in the next episode, there are five core principles that I will outline when we talk about that and also how we can break them down further and how you can use these five steps to apply them to anything that you're doing in life.

But most importantly, I think that this is the number one mechanism and thing that people have to understand, even before you approach the steps, really understanding what you're trying to trigger and how it can help you to get rapid results and also results that represent what inner potential you might have in that area.

So, I hope that's been helpful. Like I said, I will probably split this topic up over probably 10 different episodes. So this would be number one. Um, but I will put the transcripts and my show notes as well as some images of some of the things that I talked about today. And like I said, we're just kind of scratching the surface on the topic, but this has the number, one thing that I think that people need to know before they sit down to practice.

Any skill that they're trying to build. So I will put my show notes. And images on my [website@carmenmorin.com](mailto:website@carmenmorin.com) forward slash episode five. So the word episode and the number five, um, also my transcripts and my notes feel free to write in if you have any questions. And I look forward to unpacking this topic big, further in future episodes, because like I said, this is a topic that is something I'm just so fascinated by, and I think you can draw it.

A lot from, so thank you again for tuning in. Again, my show notes will be on my website site [carmenmorin.com/episode5](http://carmenmorin.com/episode5). The word episode, and five. Feel free to reach out to me and connect with me on Instagram, Carmen, Morgan piano. Okay. And I'm on Facebook as well. I would love to hear from you and continue the conversation.

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So thanks so much for being in touch. I hope you have enjoyed this episode and I look forward to talking to you more soon. Take care. Thanks. Bye. Bye .