

On Being in Shape vs Noticing the 1%

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Most of my trumpet life, I've been "in shape." Not taking credit for that, it's just that I've been obsessed with playing, obsessed with trying to be a successful player, a very good player, etc., and as we know Mr. Adam impressed upon all of us that the route to that was via getting your ass into that practice room, and don't come out until you like what's coming out of that bell. So, like most of my IU chums, we are almost always "in shape."

However, I've learned a few things that might apply to the people I try to help. People of all ages and skill levels come to me, and that's great...but I VERY often encounter some version of this:

"you don't understand...when I play (fill in the blank) this or that happens to my chops, or to my air, or my throat, or "when I use "X" mouthpiece this happens . . .When I get to high "x" this happens . . . and on it goes"

This "reactive" thinking, allowing the 1% to dominate vs the all-encompassing commitment to the result, will not work. If this is you, you are proving it every time you play – ouch.

When I hear this sort of rationale, my reaction is, "why are you thinking about THAT stuff? That line of thinking is simply not going to work. Until you have your focus TOTALLY on the result (the musical sounds you are making, in GREAT detail) you will not get out of that rut you have built for yourself; the mind/body kinesthetic response will not happen, and you are going to keep sounding like you sound right now! . . .which ain't that great, or you wouldn't be coming to me for help.

So here is my point:

Circumstances can be such that once in a while I am NOT "in shape." Travel, maybe a health issue crops up, grandkids visit and I need to be "Grampa" and take them out on the lake vs shutting myself in my practice room, whatever.

IF I AM OUT OF SHAPE, I NOTICE ALL THAT 1% STUFF!

When I am doing my regimen (for me, two substantial sets per day) over a period of time, now (likely) I am in shape, and ALL that awareness of the 1% stuff falls away. I just play. In THAT context, obsessing on simply sounding great takes care of ALL of it. YES.

If you are noticing 1% all the time, you have mental work to do, and likely,

here's the truth bomb, you are out of shape and need to play more.

It's amazing what goes away when we simply play MORE.

Bottom line, crank up that practice regimen, while you work on having your mind in a place that is useful, vs clinging to that which is not useful.