MINDFULNESS & PSYCHOLOGY FOR THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

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WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU WANT TO SOLVE?

▸ How can we help our students deal with anxiety?

▸ How can we help our students focus/learn/practice?

▸ How can we get to know how our students' learning styles and what do we know about the neuroscience of learning?

What is Mindfulness?

- **Mindfulness is moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental awareness. ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn**

- **"Paying Attention" ~ Brené Brown**

- **Mindfulness is the ability to place your attention (or mind) on what you choose. ~ Susan Piver**

- **A practice**

- **Intentional**

- **Focused on present moment**

- **Exercise for the mind**

What Is Mindfulness Not?

- **A religion**

- **New**

- **Cessation of thoughts**

- **A miracle cure**

- **Immediate/permanent bliss**

- **Goleman & Davidson's 5 Levels (*Altered Traits*)**

  1. **Purest form of Asian Buddhism (monks & Yogis)**

  2. **Removed from total lifestyle and adapted into forms more palatable for the West**

  3. **Wide approaches taken out of spiritual context (MBSR or TM)**

  4. **Most widely accessible and watered-down (Apps like Calm, 10% Happier, Mindspace)**

  5. **Potentially applied to nearly all aspects of life**

Science of Mindfulness

- **Jon Kabat-Zinn - Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR-1979)**

  - **Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)**

- **Ellen Langer - Harvard professor of psychology**

  - **Mindfulness is the ability to approach a topic, subject or activity with openness to surprise while being oriented in the present moment with an openness to multiple perspectives**

- **Daniel Goleman &Richard Davidson - Altered Traits**

Which Conditions Does MBSR Help?

In addition to MBSR's preventive and supportive role in helping us cope with everyday stress — at work and at home — scientific studies have shown that it can be helpful in alleviating the symptoms and psychological distress of a range of conditions. These include:

- chronic pain
- cardiovascular diseases (e.g., high blood pressure)
- sleep disorders
- depression and anxiety
- fibromyalgia
- psoriasis
- chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, multiple sclerosis)
- cancer
- common stress and burnout

How Can Mindfulness Help Singers

- **Start in Stillness**

- **Awareness of Body Map**

- **Awareness of Breathing**

- **Focus Body Map to Vocal Mechanism**

- **Improve Concentration**

- **Neuroplasticity (the link between nature vs. nurture - Goleman & Davidson)**

- **Combat Stress, Performance Anxiety, and Stage Fright**

  - **As little as 30 hrs MBSR training shows dampened amygdala activity. With more practice becomes a "baseline" state with as great as 50% reduced amygdala activation!**

- **Teach Deliberate Practice and Perhaps Induce Flow State**

- **Teach vulnerability and human connection between musicians in the room, but also with composer, other cultures, etc.**

DELIBERATE PRACTICE ~ ANDERS ERICSSON

FLOW ~ MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI

WHAT IS FLOW OR A FLOW STATE?

- **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi - "flow" describes a state in which a person is so totally involved in a task that time slows down, enjoyment is heightened, and the task seems almost effortless**

  - **Challenge matches a person's skills (too easy = boring; too difficult = frustrating)**

  - **As people master tasks, they must seek greater challenges and match them with higher-level skills in order to keep experiencing flow**

  - **Extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity (controlling), but some extrinsic motivators can reinforce intrinsic motivation and work effectively (recognition/feedback that confirms competence, rewards that involve more time, freedom, or resources to pursue exciting ideas)**

    - **Feedback must be constructive, non-threatening, work-focused rather than person-focused (Teresa Amabile of Harvard Business School)**

Role of the Teacher

Short, concise instruction

Deep practice

Relevant feedback
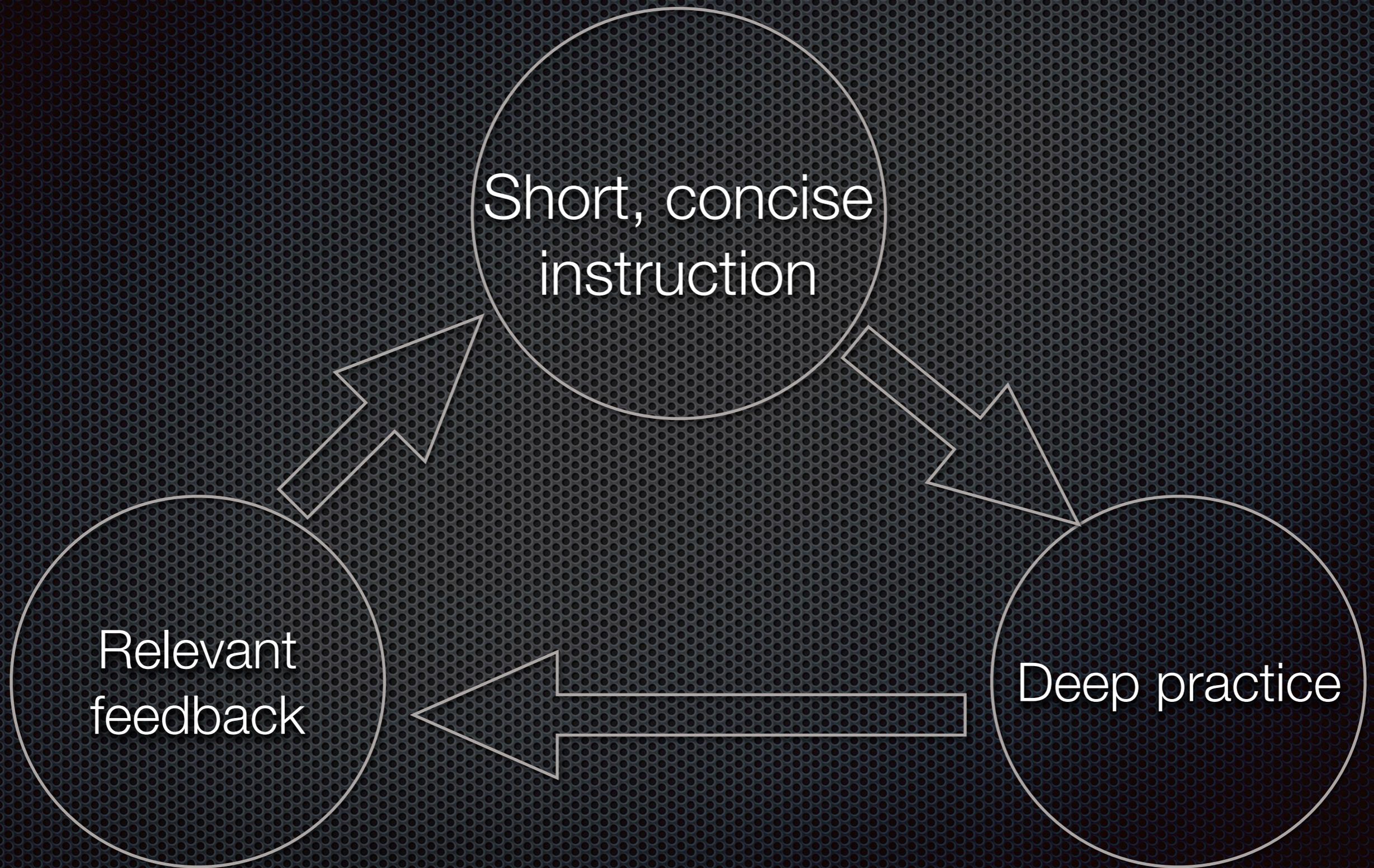
Teaching deep, deliberate practice

* **Neurons, synapses, & myelin - broadband analogy**

  * **Oligodendrocytes - glial cells in the brain that produce myelin. When a nerve fiber fires, the oglio senses it, grabs hold, and starts wrapping myelin around the "circuit," insulating and protecting it**

    * **The more we fire a particular circuit, the more myelin optimizes that circuit, and the stronger, faster, and more fluent our movements and thoughts become**

    * **Struggle is required. Make mistakes and pay attention to those mistakes. Slowly teach the circuit to keep firing (practicing)**

    * **Similar process to muscle development**

* **10,000 hour or 10 year rule of Anders Ericsson & Malcolm Gladwell**

* **Brain tends to transform repeated behaviors into automatic habits (mindless repetition is the enemy of deliberate practice)**

Oligodendrocyte

Nucleus

Node of Ranvier

Myelin Sheath

Microfilament

Microtubule

Axon

Oligodendrocyte

Neuron

Peroxisomes
(oligodendrocyte)

Peroxisomes
(axon)

Compacted
myelin

Myelin
sheath

Axons
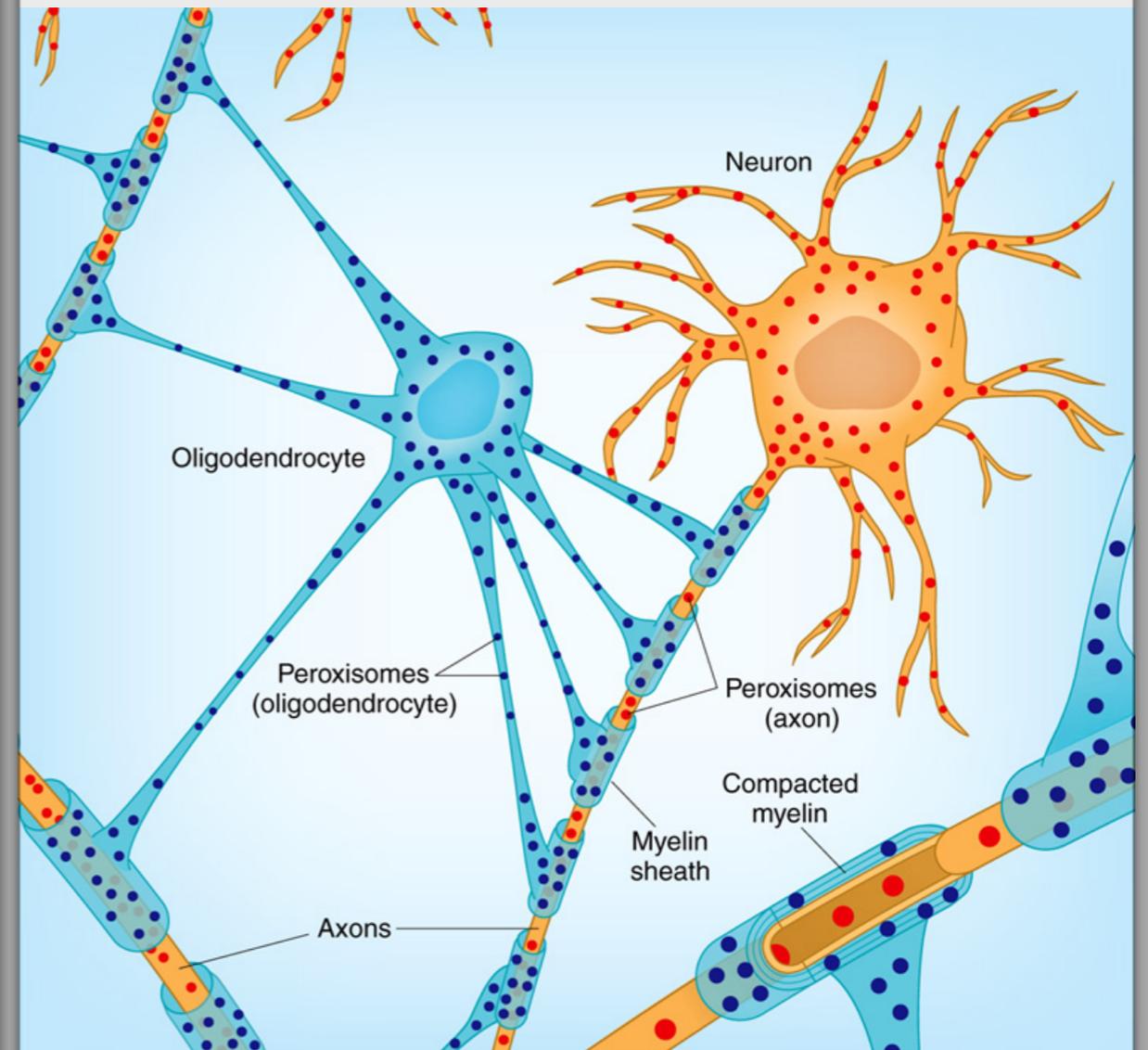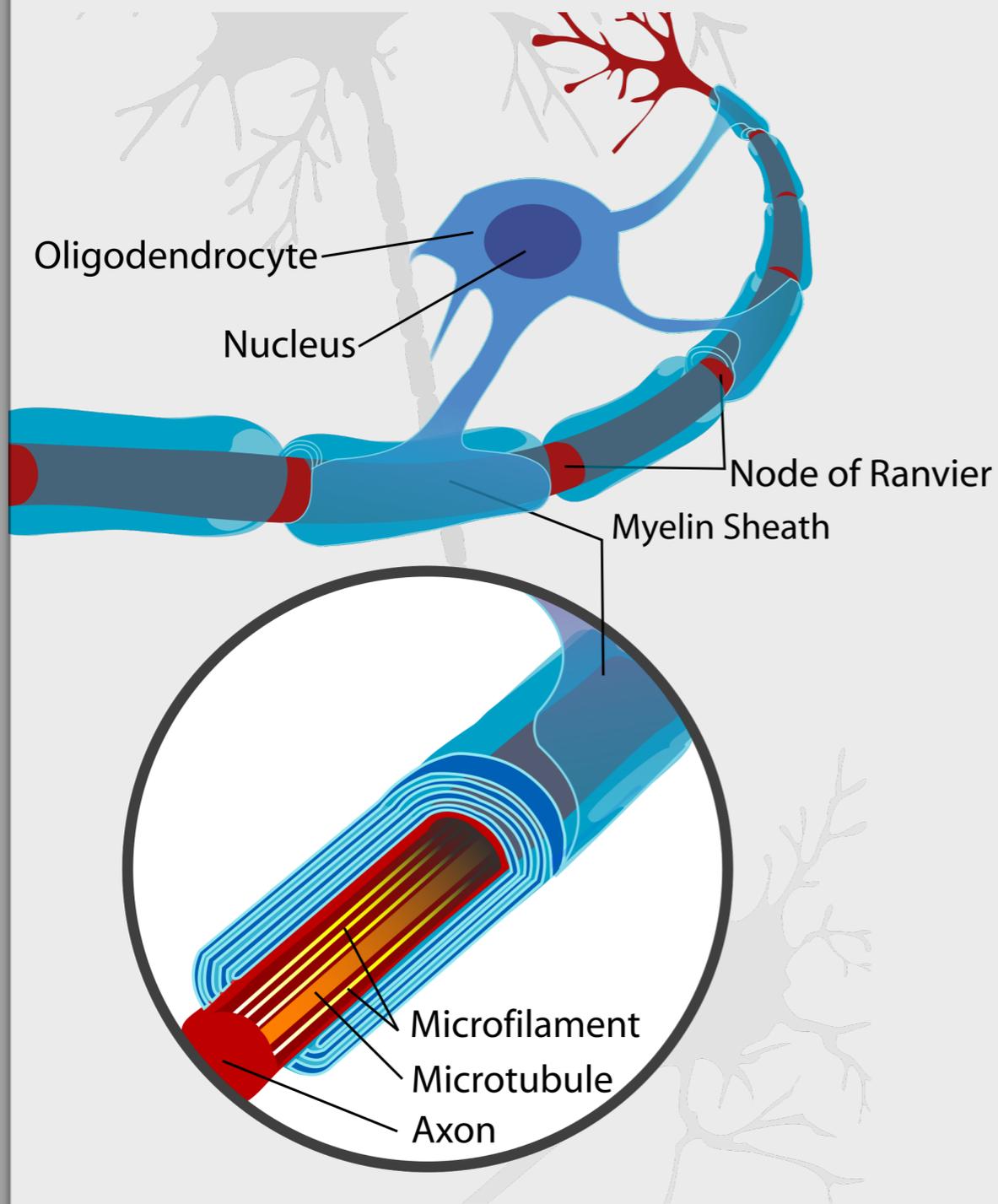
Steps of Deep, Deliberate Practice

1. **Break concept into chunks**

   - **Slow down in order to deliberately make mistakes and learn concept correctly**

   - **Encourage student self-regulation and evaluation**

     - **"Experts practice differently and far more strategically. When they fail, they don't blame it on luck or themselves. They have a strategy they can fix." ~ Barry Zimmerman (Psychology professor, City University of NY)**

2. **Attentive repetition with feedback from an expert**

3. **Struggle & learn to embrace the "(bitter?)sweet spot"**

   - **The most productive, yet uncomfortable terrain, is just beyond our current reach/ability**
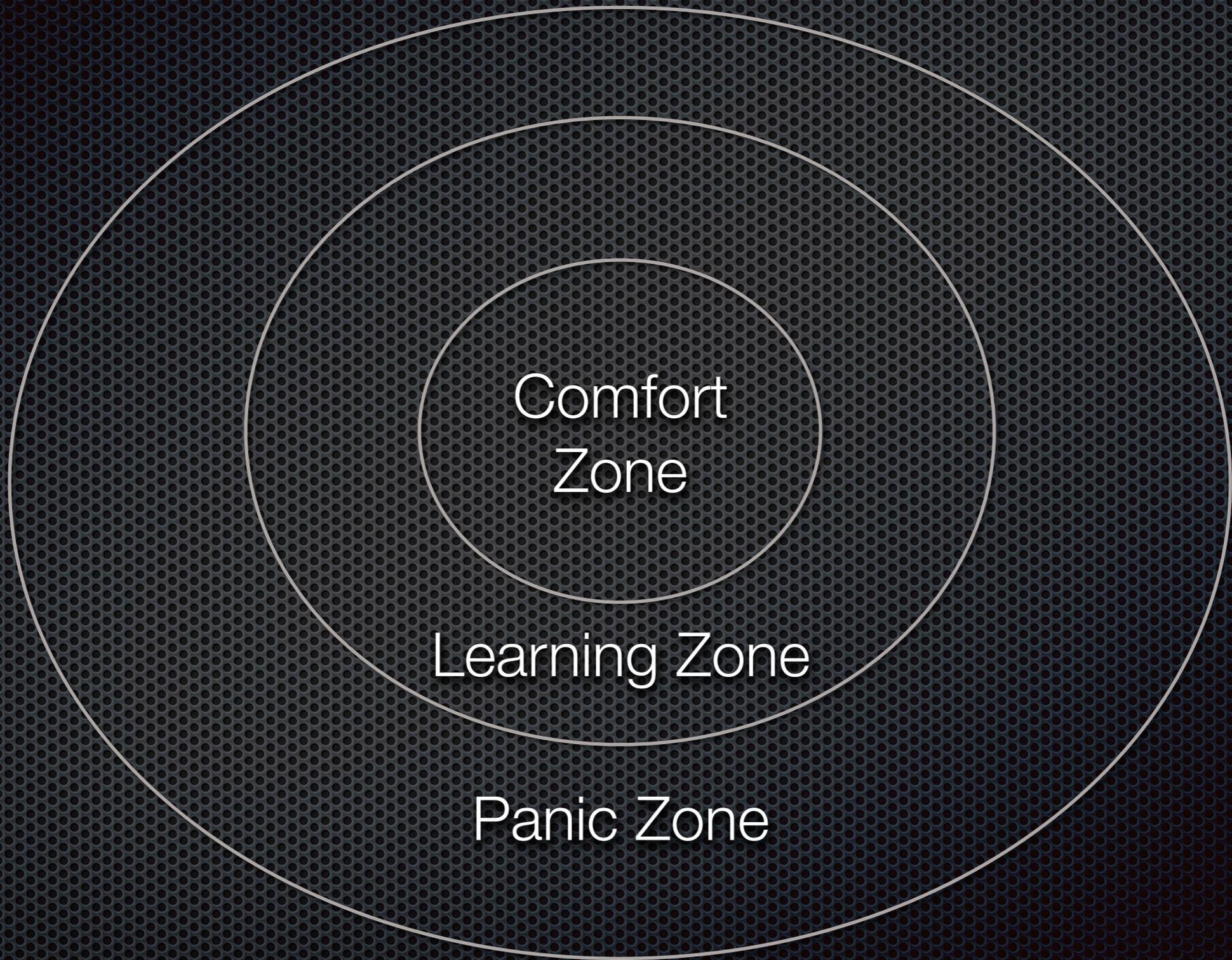
What is Your Mindset?

- **Mastery or Performance Orientation?**

- **Performance vs. learning goals (Carol Dweck, Stanford)**

  - **Getting an "A" in French vs. being able to speak French**

  - **"With a learning goal, students don't have to feel that they are already good at something in order to hang in and keep trying. After all, their goal is to learn, not to prove they're smart."**

- **Fixed vs. Growth Mindset - Carol Dweck**

  - **"When we praise children for their intelligence, we tell them that's the name of the game: look smart, don't risk making mistakes."**

  - **"Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control. They come to see themselves as in control of their success. Emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child's control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure."**

SLIDES, SCORES, & OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

THANK YOU!