



Lesson 5: Self-Assessment As A Way To Improve

Featuring: Leo Blanco, Professor at Berklee College of Music

Welcome to video 5: The Mental Game. The last video of this series, we will talk about self-assessment, how to modify your goals, and how to find your own voice in music. One of the keys ways to improve yourself is to record every time you practice or perform. Nowadays, with technology, that's a very easy thing to do. Recording yourself allows you to assess immediately what you do well, what you need to improve on, and make modifications over your playing. You will be surprised at the improvements you will make just by recording yourself and listening back. When you do your self-assessment based on what you recorded previously and you don't like any particular part of your playing it is important to be specific and write the problem and try to find out how you can improve, maybe you're not familiar with the chord changes or the scales. By making a note you will find quickly what you need to improve. Whenever you do your self-assessment and you cannot find what is wrong with it, it is a great opportunity to bring your notes to your teacher who can help you identify the problem and give you new techniques to improve it. No matter how experienced you are as a performer self-assessment is a very powerful and useful tool.

Let's review a previous recording I did in the Casio performance re-recorder. Alright, right away I notice many things that can be improved. One is that I always play in the same range and the rhythm is not very interesting. So I write down those particular points and then with that information I can access my short-term and long-term goals. My short-term goals would be to learn different voicings without playing with the play-along; my long-term goals would be to apply those new techniques with the play-along. For example, the short-term goals, for my Bb voicings I can literally expand my hands and play the root and the seventh, and the fifth and third. I can also use tensions and then I would go to the next chord.

You practice one by one with the short-term goals and then you practice with the play-along.

Okay, so that's one example on how you self-assess, make notes, and make improvements. Soon you will see that all the techniques you practice will become internalized. So you'll be able to play with more confidence and focus on other aspects of your playing. By listening back to your performance and self-assessment you will discover new ways of doing things and find your own voice, which you'll want to explore further. A good resource to help you on that is the Berklee PULSE D.I.G. Activities. The D.I.G. Activity can be a very useful tool to reshape your dreams, interest, and goals. For example, your dream could be to lead your own band, be a versatile player in many genres or styles and your interest could be a social cause or impact, or collaborations with other art forms. Some considerations to help shape your goals and

dreams could be to choose someone from the music industry you consider a style icon and think about why you admire this person and why they are considered unique, as well as assess their impact on musicians and pop culture, and society. So take all the answers to these questions to help reshape who you want to be as a musician. I hope you enjoyed this last video about the mental game. It's good that you now have all the tools to develop yourself as a musician with your dreams and goals, but remember effective practice is key to improve yourself.