

Guided Visualization for Pianists

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“You” Script

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Take a moment to relax. Feel your shoulders letting go...arms letting go...wrists...thumbs...second fingers...third...fourth...fifth fingers...all relaxing more and more. Move any way you like, in order to relax completely: make circles with your head, or shoulders, or stretch your arms or back--anything that feels good. Take a deep breath, and now exhale, pushing all the air slowly out of your body, as you relax your forehead...scalp...face...neck...and now inhale for five counts—1...2...3...4...5. As you hold your breath for a few seconds, concentrate on relaxing your upper and lower body, and let go even more as you exhale: 1...2...3...4...5. Inhaling one more time: 1...2...3...4...5. Hold while focusing now on your legs, feet, and toes, and let them relax completely as you release your breath: 1...2...3...4...and 5.

Feeling very comfortable and loose, and counting from ten to one, you can let go even more: 10...9... very relaxed...8...7...breathing freely and fully...6...5...releasing your shoulders...4...arms and hands are relaxed at your side ...3...neck and head feeling very light, as if they were filled with feathers...2...fully relaxed now...1...feeling a glow inside and all around your body.

Playing the piano is exciting. Every moment spent practicing can be stimulating, especially when you recognize how far you have come as a pianist and artist. Your musical insights are becoming more and more profound, and you are learning to blend together the finest expressions of your body, mind and heart. When you perform, and even in practice, you reach beyond notes, clean technique and even musical phrasing. You draw on all of your life experience and all of your emotions, and carry them into every sound you produce. People are moved when they listen to you, because they can hear the meaning underneath the notes.

Negativity has no control over you. Whether it comes from outside or inside, those voices get no response or emotion, and they pass harmlessly through you. Only positive, supportive voices can occupy your mind and heart. When worry and doubt surface, you wait patiently and calmly while they speak their mind, and then turn with eagerness and enthusiasm to the more colorful, alive voices of creativity and imagination.

Playing the piano is an expression of your love for music. It gives emotions dignity and purpose. Happiness, compassion, grief, fear, anger and laughter all make sense when they are expressed in music. People feel that when you play for them. Think of special moments when you played for someone and it made them happy, refreshed and comforted...you have an awesome gift, and it can be developed more and more, and used for its highest purpose—to bring happiness and fulfillment to you and others.

Every day your artistry is blossoming more fully and your understanding of the music you play is more profound. Imagine that when you practice or perform, time seems to stand still, and you

become completely immersed in the beauty of the music and the physical joy of moving your arms, hands and fingers. Perhaps you remember a time that you felt especially submerged in your practicing...and another time it happened while you were performing in concert, or for a friend, relative, or your teacher.

Visualize yourself becoming more and more relaxed when you play the piano. Your arms, hands and fingers feel springy, and rebound in a loose, light, easy manner. When you play a fast passage, your arm leads your fingers, and the notes are all played in one large movement, as if drawing a long, unbroken line with a pencil. Your shoulders, neck and back are loose. Your arms move independently of your torso. Your torso is still most of the time, except when you move way up or down the keyboard, or need to bear down for extra power.

You can play with feeling and meaning and relax at the same time. You can build up tension in a phrase without becoming tense or tight in your body or mind. The greater the increase in dynamic, texture or tension, the looser you can be. Part of you stands back, away from the thought and the emotion, and just listens and watches. That part of you stays calm, no matter what you are playing, where you are playing or for whom you are playing. That other you has all the answers, and you can become that other you any time, just by remembering how it feels.

The calm and wise you is like a faucet. Tension and fear turn off the faucet. Letting go turns it on. And now, as you allow your body and mind to relax more and more, the spigot begins to turn and the water begins to drip...and now trickle...now flow... more and more, until it is pouring out. Your body and mind are glowing with ideas and creative sparks, and you are becoming more and more eager to sit at the piano and play. You feel as if you could conquer any problem, and play any piece. You feel strong, confident, and excited.

Because you can call on the calm and wise you any time, you don't feel frustrated when facing physical or mental problems in practice or performance. You see them as challenges, and make a game out of trying to find solutions. You let yourself try all sorts of things—even things that are supposed to be "wrong"—because you know that exploring freely will bring you to more interesting answers and deeper understanding.

Now imagine you are seated at the piano, ready to begin practicing...feel the bench beneath you, see the closed music on the note stand, the surrounding furniture, and as many other details as you want...you open the score, your hands descend to the keys, and you begin to play.

But this time you hear the music as never before...the sounds are as fresh as if you had been deaf all your life, and were hearing for the very first time...your shoulders, neck, arms and fingers are so relaxed you are amazed...you look at the music and get a flood of ideas. Everything is so easy and so "right" that you don't want to waste a minute...you are completely absorbed...you are learning faster than you ever thought possible, because nothing is blocking the flow of creative thought. All extraneous thoughts have vanished. After a while, you look

over at the clock, and are shocked to discover that three hours have gone by in what seemed like three minutes!

Now visualize yourself getting ready for a performance. What are you wearing?... See the color and feel the texture of the material. You feel confident. Maybe it's an unusual feeling, but you don't question it because it feels so good—like how it feels when you can't wait to share something with a friend...excited, but in a pleasant way.

Now you are at the hall or room where you are going to perform. You're waiting to play... it will only be a few more seconds. Once again, this feeling of happy excitement comes over you. Think about the parts of the piece or the program that you really love—the parts you have worked on so hard to make beautiful. See the faces of your friends and family in the audience, and imagine how much they will love hearing those parts, and how glad they will be that they came.

You walk toward the piano, listening to the applause. Your mind is alert, calm and clear, and your arms and fingers feel loose and elastic. Everyone and everything in the room looks bright and in sharp focus. You feel very happy to be there—you've never felt such well-being in front of an audience before. You breathe deeply and freely, bow, then smile with anticipation. A glowing, glittering bubble surrounds you, getting bigger and bigger, until the whole room and audience is glittering. Something incredible is about to happen.

You sit down and begin to play. At the first sound, you know things are going right. You know this is going to be an inspired performance. Sounds and movements are flowing like water. Everything is so easy! Listen to the music in your mind (allow a long silence to mentally run through a few passages of music).

The audience is completely still. They are so wrapped up in your music that they forget to cough, move, look at their phones or daydream. Time doesn't exist for them. You are so carried away that you forget there even is an audience. You are only aware of being enveloped by a swirling cocoon of beautiful, colorful sounds. You are hardly even conscious that you are playing—it's more like you're standing in back of yourself, watching and listening.

As you get to the last few seconds of the performance, you wish you could keep playing. You finish, and reluctantly get up. You become aware of the audience once again—they all look ecstatic. The applause is loud and enthusiastic. You bow deeply, and smile once again. You are radiant with joy, because you have given your audience more than just a performance—you have given them a gift of beauty.