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Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Practice Makes Perfect

By Lisa Hood

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When my daughter began to play the clarinet, most of the notes she played were painfully off key. Soon the notes were more or less correct, but the melody was lacking as she took long pauses to place her fingers. As she practiced, she was able to play a few simple tunes, with only two or three notes, from memory. Now she can play more complex arrangements, she can read music and translate the little squiggles and bars into counts and beats and twinkling notes, her fingers can find the notes by touch and she is ready to perform to a small audience of family and friends. Someday, she may be able to perform to a larger audience.

If you have ever played a musical instrument, this probably sounds very familiar.

As a writer, have you taken this same approach to honing your skill? Have you learned the fundamentals of grammar and language? Have you applied the basics to practice writings: articles, essays, short stories, journaling, writing exercise? Have you read books, paying attention to the pace of the story, the character development, the integration of plots and subplots? Have you shared your writings with trusted family and friends, soliciting feedback?

No?

To be a successful writer, you must practice and hone your craft.

Please, don't expect your audience to suffer through your learning curve. Write just for the sake of writing. You'll gain competence and confidence and when you decide to perform in front of an audience, of agents, publishers or readers, you'll be ready.

Try these exercises for practice:

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1) Start by writing every day. A journal may be a good place for this. Sometimes it's difficult to clearly articulate your thoughts, whether personal musings or story ideas.

2) Write personal essays. This is a wonderful way to capture special moments, memories and family traditions. Start your essay with "I remember the day..." or "Nothing reminds me of summer like..." or "The thing my Mother/Father/Grandparent taught me..." or "I learned the most about myself when..." I have written essays after family vacations, holidays or memorable events which I keep in a notebook for my children. This is the legacy I will leave to them. Sometimes, I add photos, ticket stubs, napkins, matchbooks or other items to the essays.

3) Write an article to share your experience as a writer. The best thing you can share with others is yourself. Even if you think you have nothing to offer fellow writers, I assure you: Your words will make a difference. There is someone who needs a word of encouragement, or a helpful hint, or maybe they

just need to know they're not the only one who struggles.

These are just a few ways you can practice writing. Don't expect every word to be a succulent treasure to be savored by a reading audience. Every word is not meant to be published: some will be thrown away or shared with a small audience only: your family and friends. However, these words serve a vital purpose. Someday soon, you will be presenting your work to large audiences, and they will appreciate every hour of practice spent.

Lisa Hood is the author of "Shades of Betrayal" and "Shades of Revenge". She has been writing for over 10 years and is presently working on her third suspense novel, "Shades of Jealousy." She is also the Talent Liaison @ BOOKJOBBER.com. Other articles by Lisa Hood can be downloaded from <http://www.bookjobber.com/articles.asp> or mailto:lisa_j@bookjobber.com

Practicing The Guitar – Are You Kidding Yourself?

By Sandy Knoll

Practicing the guitar is no different than doing anything else to improve other aspects of your life. For example, if you're an athlete do you improve your endurance by driving your car? No, you do it by running or some other form of exercise that builds muscle and cardio vascular endurance.

So it is with the guitar. Be sure that when you sit down to practice that you practice. Avoid the temptation to kid yourself by saying that you were practicing by just holding your guitar or by just playing some familiar tune or chord.

If you really want to improve your level of skill, play some new, challenging selections. Or, use your time to work on some exercises your instructor has given you, even if it's working on basic guitar scales and chords. This will truly build your skill when it's time to learn a new tune.

When practicing, avoid distractions such as TV, phone, food and friends. Select a place and time to

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practice when you won't be disturbed. Ask your family or friends to respect this time and to not disturb you until you have finished.

Be sure that what you are working on is correct. If you have an instructor, ask him or her to critique your practice techniques. If you don't use an instructor, be sure to read any reference materials you have to be sure that what you are practicing is being done right. Practice may make perfect, but perfect practice definitely makes perfect.

Before each practice session, spend a few minutes to decide what you want and need to work on. If you have a plan and work your plan, you stand a much better chance of improving your skills quickly. Just sitting down and making some sounds because you're not sure what to do is just a waste of time.

Remember, you want to learn to play the guitar. So, work on the things that will get you to that point quickly. And, even if you are an accomplished guitar player, you can still improve. That improvement can only come by using good practicing techniques.

Sandy Knoll, the author, loves all kinds of music but has a particular affinity for the guitar. Her website, www.sandyknoll.com, is a source for great information on guitars. Please visit her site at www.sandyknoll.com often for great information.



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