



Supporting parents

Anxious parents waiting outside examining rooms is a very common occurrence, just as common as anxious teachers! Research suggests that anxious parents cause anxiety in candidates, but even more importantly, the parent-child relationship can suffer leaving the student feeling isolated and reducing their investment in achieving, so it is an issue worth addressing.

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, or nervousness about something with an uncertain outcome.

Teachers can't make the outcome certain, however they can give the parent and candidate more control during preparation. Understand the position of each parent and how much control they need to feel. If they never learnt an instrument themselves, then everything you are doing is a mystery. Define how the parent and candidate can feel that they have some control in the process and the outcome by removing unknowns and ensure that they understand:

- What elements make up an exam.
- What is the basic benchmark standard for each element and what constitutes 'outstanding'.
- How their child is measuring up.

- Sight reading and aural are the only 2 areas of the exam that have a mystery element – they are in control of everything else.

Invite parents into lessons – they can see how their child is performing, help at home, and the process will no longer be a mystery.

Most importantly, the candidate must be able to perform under pressure. Performing regularly in low pressure situations such as small studio concerts, reduces performance anxiety and:

- Desensitises the performer and parents to performing in front of an audience.
- Teaches how to prepare and wait for a performance and
- When students learn to present themselves well and keep their cool regardless of the outcome, parents

become much calmer about their child performing.

At exam time the following are helpful in reducing anxiety:

- Run practice exams.
- Have distractions available on the exam day such as magazines and fiddle toys and engage in conversation.
- Give the candidate a chance to move away from an anxious parent.
- Reinforce the concept of the exam as one learning experience and just one challenge on a long musical pathway. It is not a final life altering experience!

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