



BACK TO THE MUSIC

GOING FOR WHAT YOU WANT, INSTEAD OF FIXING WHAT YOU DON'T

BY DAVID GORMAN

Transcribed and edited from a workshop session taught by David Gorman

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NOTE: This is a narration of a session that took place during a 4-day LearningMethods workshop. The names of the people as well as some of the details have been changed in consideration of everyone's privacy.

I have slightly edited the flow of the spoken words to improve readability. Here and there, I have added some explanations of the LearningMethods work and its tools which the participants had received at earlier points in the workshop. Aside from these edits, this article is almost verbatim from the actual session.

As such it is a long article, though if you stick with it, you'll share the profound discoveries this student made. As you read through the whole piece you'll get a good idea of the actual arc of a LearningMethods session — from the initial lack of clarity of the beginning explorations through to the investigation gradually zeroing in on the heart of the issue.

As you read, remember that the whole session only took just over an hour from start to finish.

A professional trumpet player, band director and music teacher wanted to work on an issue about breathing. We started off by having her describe the situation.

Mila: Well, I am a trumpet player and I wanted to bring up something about breathing. I tend to do chamber work a lot which is much different from orchestral stuff, but recently I've been doing some orchestral playing. My early training was with a "point and shout" teacher: "*You do this, and you do it my way*".

David: Excuse me, what did you call that teacher?

Mila: A "point and shout teacher".

David: "Point and shout"! That's good! Hey, I know some of those...

Group: [*laughter...*]

Mila: So, I actually had these two people who I respected, or thought I respected, who were telling me different things about breathing in seventh grade. I dealt with it by trying to make them both happy. When I was in Mr. Hollerin's presence I would do his breathing thing, and when I was in Mr. Insen's presence I would do his breathing thing. And, I would just go, "*Well, it can't be that important. You know, these two people have two different things, they gotta be wrong.*" [*laughter...*] A seventh grade kind of thing...

So, what they were telling me had to do with where I would breathe. I actually ran into Mr. Insen later and we talked about it, and he said, "Well, I was afraid to touch you". Because with breathing, you have to touch someone to find out. Mr. Hollerin wasn't afraid of anything... so

this was about where I would breathe, and you know, this was about 30 years ago and I'm still dealing with it. I've never been sure whether I'm breathing right.

So, now as I am trying to play more orchestrally I can see that my lack of understanding about how I breathe on this instrument is coming back, because orchestral playing needs a much stronger, much fuller type of breathing than generally in my chamber work.

What I feel is that I don't have the control over my breathing in orchestral playing in the same way that I have control over it in a chamber situation. In a chamber situation, if there's five other brass players, or if I'm playing a solo with an accompaniment, then I feel I have control over it. In an orchestral situation, I feel that someone else has control over it and I have to fulfill that expectation, and I don't feel that my breath control — that what is coming out of the instrument — would meet the expectation. And this goes back to how I am calling on the air and the breath work I spoke of.

Teacher's note:

There was a possible pathway of exploration here about the expectations she feels from others and her sense that she has to fulfill those expectations coupled with her suspicion that she would not be able to meet them. However, since she stated she wished to work on something to do with breathing, I chose not to go down that road at this moment, though she does want to address it another time. As we will see here, the path we did take also led to some important insights regarding what was really going on with her breathing and tension, as well as leading to huge changes for her in the freedom of her playing.

David: So, just to clarify again, you said that there are different demands on you in the orchestral work, and these different demands have something to do with the number of people you are playing with?

Mila: Right... ..and the type of musical literature, but definitely the number of people...

David: Again, just a clarifying question here, what is the actual difference in numbers of people between your chamber and orchestral work?

Mila: Well, in my quintet, which is my main form of musical playing, there are five of us. But I'm also playing in two different orchestras. One has a full wind section, that's about 20 people, and the other orchestra has maybe 12 wind players. The larger orchestra also has about 24 strings, so there's a lot more to play through.

In the smaller orchestra they've asked me to play first [*trumpet*]. In the larger orchestra I'm just a substitute. I come in when they need another part or I'm a substitute first [*trumpet*]. And, unfortunately, the director of the smaller orchestra has a tendency to stop listening to passages. He won't talk to the wind players about what they're doing unless you go up and ask him. I've been pretty proactive to go and ask him what he wants, and because of that he's been willing to talk to me, but I have to go up and pull it out of him, which I don't mind.

So, I will play and not really get a sense of whether I am doing what I need to do. I'm not getting feedback the way I would like to have, and the music is a lot of classical period stuff so it's not really brass intensive. Sometimes I'm doubling a timpani, that sort of thing, as opposed to being a solo line in a chamber group or a supporting line.

David: So there is a different demand or need here in orchestral playing and you feel there needs to be a different sort of breathing?

Mila: Well, I'm more aware of the breathing in the orchestral situation because the sound is more sustained and so any type of poor control is going to be obvious. If I'm playing a lot of fast notes it might not be so obvious, because the technique is taking over. I know that I'm probably not breathing as well in my quintet as I should be — as I need to be and as I want to be — but I notice it more in the orchestral playing.

So I'd like to get a handle on the breathing, I think that will help me in my orchestral situation and help me in my chamber and solo stuff as well.

David: Okay, that last statement seems to sum up what you are after here. Let's see how it plays out as we begin to explore it.

We have some information already here which shows you are noticing certain symptoms, or certain things, about your breathing — and do tell me if I'm not hearing you accurately — that your breathing is not working quite as well as you would like and that this happens more in the orchestral playing than in your chamber playing, plus, of course, that you would like to change this for the better.

So here's another question to get out on the table as much as possible. In those situations in the orchestra, or for that matter in those situations in your quintet, are you already doing anything with your breathing to change things for the better? That is, is there some sort of breathing technique that you are up to already?

Mila: Yes, just recently someone gave me some instruction from a book by someone who has some breathing exercises. But when I do the exercises, the doubt comes in. I read the book, I went up on the Internet and googled him, but the doubt is, "*Am I doing this accurately? Am I doing what I physically need to do?*" Because I don't feel the results that I want. I don't feel that I have the power that I need in an orchestral situation. And I often feel that I don't have the control to sustain things the way I want to.

David: These exercises, are they something that you are doing while you're playing or before you play?

Mila: They're warm-up exercises.

David: And you have been doing these exercises recently?

Mila: Yes.

David: It's good to have this out on the table, and it may turn out to be relevant but we still haven't quite got the full answer to a previous question, so let me rephrase it. When you are actually playing, are you going about any kind of breathing technique?

Mila: No.

David: Here's a process comment... If you were doing this investigation on your own, this is also something you'd want to be asking yourself: when you notice that you are feeling something going on with your breathing are you then, as a consequence, trying to do something about your breathing while you are playing?

Mila: When I am sustaining something, if I have an eighth measure, you know a whole note type measure then, yeah, I'm thinking about the sound coming out, I am dissatisfied with the sound that's coming out.

You know, I would like to get to the point where I'm not focusing on the breathing while I'm playing, I want to be focusing on the music. And maybe that is getting in the way of it, but I don't want my musical experience to be breathing — that I'm breathing this way or that way.

David: So then does this mean that you *are* focusing on your breathing? This question is just to get things as accurate as possible...

Mila: In the orchestral situation, yes, very much so.

David: And to be even more clear, is that focusing on your breathing because you actually notice something about your breathing, or is that focusing on your breathing because you're trying to get it to do something that you want it to do?

Mila: Yes, the first one, because I notice it's not doing what I want it to do. So I don't think I'm doing something to my breathing, but I feel that I need to.

David: But you're not actually doing anything...?

Mila: I'm trying to, trying to listen to what's coming out of the instrument. Maybe I'm not answering this well...

David: It's not that, we're taking the time here to be as clear as possible, and if you were doing this on your own you'd want to be making sure that you were being as accurate as possible. That is, we're now seeing if we can accurately ascertain whether you are just noticing something about your breathing — even if you do feel that you need to do something about it — or whether you are, in fact, actually doing something about it.

Mila: I am noticing it in my playing, I'm noticing that I don't have the power and my perception is that it goes back to my breathing. And I'm noticing this when I'm playing in the orchestral situation because there's less to deal with technically, and I am trying to get it to sound the way I want it to sound, and I guess I would have to say that's going back to my breathing.

I'm trying to stay more relaxed and let the air do what it should do.

David: Well, when you find yourself "trying to relax" in playing does that mean you've been noticing that you're not relaxed?

Mila: I'm trying to relax my body so that the air can do what it needs to do.

David: Okay, we may need to explore that a bit more to get a clear answer, but it does sound like you are saying that you are noticing something in your playing, and you are interpreting that this has something to do with your breathing and then you are trying to stay more relaxed.

Here we have what I have come to call a code phrase: "*trying to stay more relaxed*", and "*trying to relax my body*". What exactly does that "*trying to stay more relaxed*" mean?

But just before you answer that, let me explain a little bit about what a code word or code phrase is. When you're investigating an issue you have you will, of course, be describing in your own terms what is happening. If you pay close attention to what you hear yourself saying, hopefully you'll notice yourself using some familiar-sounding words or phrases that you use as a kind of short form to describe a collection of actual details of your experience or some actual sequence of activities you do — in this case the phrase is "*trying to relax*".

Years ago, when you first ran into this bad sound experience you were probably in touch with the all details of that experience and what you started to do to deal with it. But after going through it a few times, it is natural for you to think of it as one whole phenomenon and find yourself giving it a name or a term that encapsulates it for you — "*trying to relax*". That is, you have encoded all the details of your feeling, thinking and actions in that short catch-all name. Gradually, you end up using the name or code more and more as a short form in your own thinking and so you can end up less and less in touch with the actual details that are being referred to.

Normally, of course, using this kind of coding is perfectly adequate in daily life since we know, more or less, what we are referring to and there is no problem. That's why we do it — it works in daily life.

But, when you are investigating an issue and these code words or code phrases pop up, you'll want to recognize that you've stumbled over one of them so that you can look under it and see what it is actually referring to. Only then will you know whether the details you find are relevant to the issue you are exploring.

So, let's do that here as a bit of practice and see what we find.

The question was about when you are playing and you notice that you don't have enough power, what exactly do you start doing when you are "*trying to stay more relaxed*"? What

exactly is going on under that phrase? Or to put it differently, precisely how do you "*try to stay relaxed*"?

Mila: I feel a tension, particularly in my shoulders and I want to make sure that they are not carrying tension so I drop the shoulders, plus I want to make sure that the posture is alert, but not rigid and not sluggish.

David: Does this mean then that as you get into the playing you start to become aware of some tension?

Mila: Yes.

David: And then you are trying to relax it?

Mila: Yes.

David: Even while you are in the middle of playing.

Mila: Yes.

David: This is what I meant by finding what is under a "code phrase". Once we unpack it, we get a lot more detail than just "trying to relax".

Notice that already in the first few questions we are uncovering lots of detail under the phrase about what sort of relaxing you are trying to do. It isn't just a vague and generic "*trying to relax*" as the code phrase suggests. It's not, for instance, a "chant-a-mantra" kind of relaxing, or "drink-a-double-whiskey" kind of relaxing. It is a "drop-my-shoulders" kind of relaxing.

The code phrase includes that you first notice that there's a tension. In fact, you even notice where the tension is — in your shoulders.

It also includes that you have some criteria — you want to make sure your shoulders are not carrying tension. And it includes some actions you think are appropriate — to drop your shoulders (this is presumably the "*trying to relax*" part...)

In addition, it also seems to be connected to some other criteria to make sure that your posture is alert, not rigid, and so on.

Since you are "*trying to stay more relaxed*", the code phrase also includes that you are probably assessing as you are going along how well you are doing — not relaxed yet, still trying, etc...

So there's a lot of specific detail in there under that code phrase. Now you can look at all this information out on the table and say: "Ah, so this is what I'm doing under the name of '*trying to relax*'. These are all the things that I'm actually up to, which over time I have come to encapsulate in that simple shorthand phrase."

Or to look at it the other way around, only when you get all that detail out there can you look at it and begin to call any of it into question: "Is it what I think it is? Am I being accurate here? Do all these things happen in the order I think they do? Is my "*trying to relax*" strategy actually working — do I actually get relaxed?..."

So, now that we do have all this material out on the table, let's begin to look at it closely and call it into question. We can begin with that first part of the situation which appears to start when you notice a tension.

Notice that it sounds like you're saying — and to make sure we are being accurate here, I will ask this as a question — that you notice the tension first, or something in your playing first, and then you interpret this as having something to do with your shoulders and breathing which is getting in the way, and then you start your trying to relax it. Is this right?

Mila: Yes, I think that this is what is happening.

David: So, it seems that much of the issue you are raising here about a need to control your breathing while playing only comes up because of how the tension is interfering...

Mila: I think I'm misunderstanding your terms here, because breath control is so important to my instrument...

David: Exactly. And does being tense help you...?

Mila: No! [*laughing.*]

David: If you find that you're getting tense while you're playing, is that interfering with your breathing and your playing?

Mila: Yes...

David: Okay, we can use a tool here I call "contrast moments". As human beings we are very good at noticing contrasts or differences so one very easy and direct question is to ask yourself, "*Are there any times when I don't have the tension while I am playing?*" This is a real question, so there may or may not be.

Mila: Well, I think there are, but, of course, I tend to notice the times when I do have the tension, so I would say there are times when I'm not tense because there are times when I don't notice it... so, yes, there are times.

David: Before we proceed, let's step into a process moment about the tools of doing this for yourself. When you ask yourself a question like this about your past experiences you may or may not find that you have answers right now. But that doesn't matter because even if you don't, you'll be able to get answers in the future. Now that you know what you are looking for, the next time you play your instrument and ask yourself, "*was I tense or not?*", if you found that there were times when you are not tense you could look at those moments and get whatever information was there.

But, since you think you already have moments when you're not tense we can go directly to see what information you might already have. So, between those two types of moment — when you do get tense and the moments when you're not tense — is there a difference in what is going on that might give you some clues as to why you're getting tense in some moments and not in others?

Mila: Yeah. I notice the tension most when things are not going the way I want them to. So, for instance, when I'm playing with the orchestra and I don't like what's coming out of my instrument because it feels tense, it feels tight, it feels weak...

David: Just be clear, what's the "it" that you're speaking of when you say "it feels tight or weak"?

Mila: The sound; the sound that's coming out of my instrument, the tone quality. So I notice the tension and I don't like what I hear. So, I know the tension has been there beforehand... it doesn't happen just like this [*she snaps fingers*]... Well, it's probably a feeling loop in that I hear that...

David: Did you hear the red-flag word there?

Mila: *Probably*...? Okay, it *is* a feeling loop...

David: Well, it may or may not be, but you really would want to look closely to see whether it really was or not. That's the point of running up that little red-flag when you hear words like that — to wake yourself up enough to register that you just said "it's probably" something. If you hear this and register that the "probably" in there signifies that you're not sure if it is or if it isn't, then you can look at it more closely to find out.

Mila: Well, when I do look at it now, I know it *is* a feeling loop because it sounds bad and that causes tension that I then have to deal with.

David: Now we are zeroing right in on the moment that the tension and sound happen, so at this point it gets very important that we are accurate. We can use another tool here which would help us do that — a tool that I've come to call "doing a *sequence*".

By the way, it would also be appropriate to do a sequence if the situation was slightly different than it is, that is, if you'd caught the red-flag word — probably (or possibly, maybe, could be, might be) — and realized that you were not really sure if it was or wasn't. Then doing a sequence to investigate more deeply would help you find out.

But in either case, how does one do a sequence? Well, you need to track through what was going on strictly in sequence, moment to moment to moment, to really see exactly how things do happen. Let's do that now and you'll get a feeling for how to go about it on your own.

So, there you are. You're playing your trumpet and you begin to notice that the sound is not what you want it — it sounds tight or weak. That's the first thing that happens but in that very first moment it seems that the tension isn't there yet. Is that accurate?

Mila: Umm... No. Hmmmm... I have to think this through...

David: Good. Take your time and be careful so we get as accurate a sequence is possible about what happens and in what order it happens.

Mila: Okay, can you ask me that question again?

David: Yes. You begin the sequence with the very first thing you notice that alerts you that it's one of those moments again. So what's the very first thing you notice?

Mila: A tension in the sound.

David: So you're noticing something isn't quite what you would like in your sound?

Mila: Well, it depends on where I am. If I'm at home just practicing privately, I can stop and adjust... physically. This isn't sounding how I wanted to sound, so I put my horn down and take a big breath and consciously relax.

David: So you are already tense then?

Mila: Yeah. I think that for me the sound is a reflection of what's inside of me. If my sound is tense or my sound is tight, I know that I'm tense.

David: This is a really important moment because what you just said sounds like an interpretation of what is happening and we want to check out if that is really what's going on. This is one of the reasons why we want to do a sequence and make sure it is very systematically and rigorously carried out.

Let me paint several scenarios here, and I could be getting ahead of myself relative to what has already come out on the table, but for the purposes of making clearer the use of the tool, I'll take a chance and go ahead.

Scenario one, is that as we explore this it could turn out that you heard your sound and didn't like it and then got upset about that, and the physical tension only came after your reaction to not liking the sound. Of course, that would only be true if our systematic exploration in the sequence revealed that this is what actually happens.

Scenario two, which sounds a bit more like what you're saying, is that you notice the tight or tense sound and then you notice that you are physically tense, and the physical tension is what makes the tight or tense sound and they go together, but you don't notice the physical tension first just how it shows up in your sound.

Mila: That's how I see it. And what you're saying in the first one, that's where the feeling loop happens. If I'm in a rehearsal or a performance and I hear that I don't like what's coming out of

my instrument, my reaction is, I know that the sound is that way because of the tension in my body. But if I can't stop and regroup then it causes more tension.

David: So, you have a bit of reaction in that moment and then get more tension because of the reaction?

Mila: Yeah.

David: Because, if so, that would be important to know. Does it make sense to all of you listening that things could happen that way? That people could work like that, getting tense because of their reaction to a sound they don't like...?

So there you are playing — let's assume that you're in a performance situation here — and you hear the sound is tense or tight. According to your interpretation this means that you have probably already become tense which is why you hear it in the sound, but then in reaction to the bad sound you end up getting even more tense.

Let's carry on with our sequence and see if this is actually what happens. You are in a performance situation and you notice the tight or tense sound, and as you notice the tight or tense sound are you just assuming that you are already tense or are you actually feeling tense?

Mila: Am I tense right when I hear it? No, not always.

David: So the "tension" or tightness is still just in the sound so far and not actually a physical feeling of tension. But then as you react to the bad sound do you then feel the tension?

Mila: Often.

David: And then what happens next?

Mila: It depends on where I'm going. I do consciously try to relax at that point.

David: So that's the point when you would do your "*trying to relax*"?

Mila: Right.

David: And does it work when you do the "*trying to relax*"? Some of the time? All of the time? None of the time? That is, how successful is your "*trying to relax*"?

Mila: Sometimes. Again it depends on the situation.

David: And in those "sometimes" does that fix everything up? You're no longer tense, and the sound has changed?

Mila: Sometimes, if I can bring myself to relax, yes. If I can't, then no.

David: So this is kind of an interesting sequence, at least as far as we have come so far... It appears that in the very first moments you don't notice any physical feelings of tension, you just notice the "tension" in the sound. But it also seems that you *assume* that you are physically tense and this is what is causing the tight sound. And I say "assume" here since so far we haven't yet found a moment in our sequence where you are actually feeling physically tense.

Mila: It can happen that I'm physically tense, but that doesn't happen often. Usually only if I walk into a situation where there's a lot of tension and I'm getting tense, then I can go, "*oh yeah, there it is*". But that doesn't happen very often, not as much as what we've just been talking about.

David: But we do have out on the table this added wrinkle where you react to the bad sound which causes even more tension and then you definitely feel it, and you try to relax the tension. Is that right?

Mila: Yes.

David: As a strategy, you could keep on doing your "*trying to relax*" and hope it works, though it sounds like it only works sometimes or only works to some degree.

However, from what is out on the table it sounds like we have two moments in here. One is the moment of reacting after you hear the bad sound and that reacting appears to make the tension and/or playing worse. We could ask if there is something you could do in or around that moment in order not to react so that the tension wouldn't get worse. That might be worth looking at.

But, there's still this preceding moment we are exploring in the sequence about whether you got tense in the first place. According to your current interpretation, this is the moment where you've already become tense though you do not normally feel it in yourself but rather you hear it in your sound. Remember, we still have this contrast moment where there are some times you get tense and some times that you don't. And the main contrast between the two moments that popped out is when your sound isn't quite what you would like.

Mila: Uh huh...

David: And your interpretation is that somehow you've already become tense and that's why your sound is not going the way that you like. So perhaps, to be as systematic as possible, we can look at it from the other side for a moment — at those times when your sound is going the way you do like. What's going on at those moments?

Just to keep everybody on the page here with our process, we're keeping it focused around that moment of the bad sound, the moment of getting tense.

I suspect at some point here we may need to get a little more detailed in our sequence about the tension and trying to relax moments, but for now we can jump for a moment and use the sequence tool to explore that contrast moment we started to open up earlier.

So the question is at those times when you *don't* hear anything bad in your sound — when all is going well and you have *not* become tense — what's going on at those moments?

Mila: What I think, and maybe I can't answer this from the right spot, but I think that when I'm hearing what I want — when I'm playing what I want to play — there's a wholeness to what's happening, a wholeness of mind and body that's happening, because what I want and what I'm getting are the same.

But I think that when what I want and what I'm getting are different, that's when I think, okay, there's tension.

And it could be... Hmm... I noticed that red-flag word there: "*could be*".

[*Thinks for a moment...*] Now looking at it, the question for me is: "When is that break that the tension causes, when does it happen? Does it happen because of the tension? Does it happen because I noticed it and came in? Does the tension happen because I'm not getting what I want and I hear it? Or is the tension there to start the process?"

Does that make sense?

David: Yes indeed, and it's a very important set of questions. This is what I mean by calling into question the information and experiences which you get out onto the table.

It would be very helpful if you could find an answer, since each of those alternative possibilities you've posed are actually different situations — if it's one of them then it's not the others.

But notice that one thing at least that does seem to be happening is that once the tension comes in, and/or the sound isn't what you want, you tend to get more caught in it all and start to do things — so-called good things like "*relaxing your body*", "*dropping your shoulders*" — and therefore are definitely not in that state of wholeness.

While on the other hand, interestingly enough, when everything *is* going well you *are* in that state of wholeness — mind and body, you and the music.

Then wherever it comes from, something breaks that apart and you are not in that wholeness anymore. You are instead definitely engaged in things that are not about wholeness — you are relaxing parts and so on — all done in the hopes of getting back to the wholeness and good sound.

Mila: Uh huh...

David: And we have the interesting situation which is that when everything is going well you say you are whole. That is, in the times with no problem when everything is going well you don't have any of those details. As you just said you're not so aware of the times when you don't have the tension or the bad sound because there's no bad sound or tension to wake you up. You are not aware of any wonderful non-tense feeling in your shoulders, mostly because you're so whole you don't even have separate parts called shoulders.

There is something quite important here. Your own system, your own perceptions, are telling you that when things are working well you are whole. That is, wholeness goes together with working well. On the other hand, parts seemed to go with moments when things are not working well.

Mila: Okay...

David: And if we take in the implications of this, notice an odd thing. When things start not working well, you begin to notice parts — things about the music, things about your body, or breathing, or shoulders, but then it seems that what you do is to proceed to get *more* into parts — with all the best intentions, of course. You actually start to *actively do things* with parts — relax your body, take a big breath, drop your shoulders, and so on.

Notice that you begin to adopt a means of working with or manipulating parts in order to gain the end of becoming whole... Usually this only works sometimes, and often doesn't work very well, but you keep on doing it.

Notice how easy it is when you operate that way to not take in that your strategy isn't working tremendously well, and rather than questioning why it isn't working you seem to just keep on trying to get better at it.

At moments like this we are missing the fact that the symptom, your tense shoulders for instance, are always part of an entire whole-body pattern of functioning of which the symptom is simply the part that you notice. However, because you do notice something negative in one area of that entire pattern, it seems to make sense to you (and most everyone else) to try to make a change in just that part of the pattern.

In the meantime, you're missing the significance of the fact that when things are working well you're in a state of wholeness — there are no parts.

In other words, if you do take this in, it opens up another possibility for meeting those moments. It allows you to see a fork in the road and take a different pathway than you usually would at those moments.

Now, which moments, we can ask here? And the answer is that your own experience shows you that you are already aware of the earliest possible moment when you could make a different choice — that first moment when you notice that the sound isn't what you want.

Normally it seems, unfortunately as far as we been able to tell so far, that you often meet that first moment with a bit of a reaction.

Mila: Uh huh...

David: ... which appears to actually make the tension and/or sound worse ...

Mila: Uh huh...

David: ... whereupon you do actually notice it more, and want to do something to relax and get rid of it. There are some big implications of there being no parts in wholeness which we'll return to in

a moment, but to give you a bit more experience at using these tools, let's just store for future use everything we've gained so far from exploring the contrast moment. Instead we can go back to looking closely at a specific moment in the sequence in the moment of the reaction to hearing the tight sound.

It may seem like we're popping around a little bit in and out of various routines, that we are switching various tools, and it's true, we are. But this is often what exploring a piece of work is like, especially when you're doing it yourself on your own and don't have any idea where it's leading. You just need to follow the threads as they come up, hopefully as systematically and thoroughly as you can. And systematically and thoroughly means keeping track of what thread you're on and where it's leading, as well as which other ones you were on so that you can find your way back to them when you're finished exploring your current pathway.

As I said yesterday, many people find that it can be very helpful when they are exploring their own issues on their own to write it all down so they don't forget things and don't lose track of where they are. If you do write things down it also means you can easily come back to it later if you don't have time to fully explore the issue right now.

So at this moment here we are making a choice to park for a moment the possibility of a new way of approaching that moment of the bad sound, and instead we'll finish our sequence and explore a little more fully what normally happens before we start looking at what we could do differently.

You said that when you hear the bad sound you have a reaction to it. "*Reaction*" is another codeword here. What exactly is it that is going on there under the name "*reaction*" when you hear a sound that you don't like.

Mila: Okay, well intellectually I hear it, I hear, "*Unnnnggh, tight!*". I hear the sound and it's not open, it's not free. And then, "*Unnnnggh*", you know, I go, "*okay, okay*", and I look, as it were into my body and I can feel the tension, I can feel, "*Unnnnggh, the breathing feels constricted*". So the first thing I notice, for lack of a better word, is I feel *disappointed*. "*Oh, damn, I have to deal with it.*" So I have to come in and deal with it.

And it's not a consistent reaction. I can just... It can just change, depending on what's going on... musically. I can just, by noticing it, my reaction will fix it. I noticed the sound is not what I want, and it just goes where I want it to go.

David: Which is where?

Mila: A big, free, open sound.

David: Okay. And where are *you* then when this big free open sound goes where you want it to go? When "it" goes, where do "you" go?

Mila: Back into the music. I'm happy, I hear it. It's not there anymore, the sound is opened, the tension is gone, and I get back to the music. My brain can go back to playing the music.

David: [*smiling...*]

Mila: The problem comes when I hear it ... *you're smiling...* when I hear it and the reaction is to tense up, and I go with the tension rather than going with the music, and the pitch goes up and the tone constricts and my fingers slow down and I can't wait for that rest to come up so I can breathe and get rid of this feeling.

David: Why I'm smiling is because we now have all this information out on the table and I think it shows a lot... so let's take a moment to look it over carefully to appreciate the significance of it all.

Notice the way that you have expressed things: "The sound" is tight and constricted, and probably that means I am also "a bit tense." And sometimes when the sound gets tight you go one way toward reaction and more tension which leads to you trying to relax and all the other

stuff. But sometimes it goes another way, seemingly "all by itself" where the "it" — the sound — opens out and becomes free and coincidentally then you find yourself back in the music and in wholeness.

Just notice that the way you are phrasing it, which presumably is also how you are thinking of it, is that here is this thing called "the sound" which can become tight and weak or open and free, and is somehow connected with your state of being tense or being whole. Almost as if these are two different things — the sound goes tight which you think is because of your body tightness so you try to relax your body to change the sound. Or the sound goes tight and then the sound opens and somehow your tension is gone and you are back in the music...

Mila: Uh huh...

David: Notice that in those times when you are in the music and have this freedom in yourself and the sound, all these go together — being in the music, being free and open and having the sound open and free all go together.

Then, out of the blue, you notice something bad about the sound, but suddenly "it" goes back out to being open and free and you are back with the music and freedom and wholeness. If I re-phrase this what it seems you are actually saying is that in those times *you* have gone back out to the music. *You* have opened. Well, opened to what? Opened to the music. *You* are free. Well, free from what? And free to do what? Free from reaction and details of shoulders and relaxing and breathing... And free to just play again in the music.

And, of course, *you* are whole since you are just there, back with your whole self and back with the music in the present moment rather than hooking onto parts like shoulders and breathing assuming they are already tense and trying to relax them to make them better later.

As you put it, your brain can go back to playing the music... instead of being so busy with everything else. But it isn't so much your brain that is going back to playing music — *you* are going back to playing music, back to focusing on the music which is what you said you want to do instead of focusing on the breathing... And, of course, the sound changes too when you are back in the music, open and free.

But then there are those other times when the sound gets tight and you get a more caught in it. You have a reaction and disappointment and anticipation of difficulty — "*Unnnnggh, damn, now I have to deal with it*" — which takes you more away from the music and away from the moment. Which makes you less whole and free and so you notice more about the physical. Which sucks you into shoulders and body and breathing and trying to relax. Instead of playing the music, you are now playing your shoulders and your breathing.

Whether all this time spent trying to relax actually changes anything in the moment seems to be rather hit and miss, but one thing it does seem to do is to reinforce this separation between the sound and your body and you. That is, it reinforces your idea and your experience that something about body has interfered with sound and thus you have to do something about body to get sound working again. And since this doesn't work all that well, it also reinforces that it is difficult and you need to learn more breath-control or more about relaxing techniques...

Mila: Hmmmm...

David: Now also notice the significance of those other times when you say "it" just opens and frees and becomes big and you find yourself back in the music and wholeness. From the way you said it, it appears that those are not things you've chosen to do. Instead, they are things that have happened *to you*.

Mila: Hmmmm... yes.

David: And, it appears that what happens is that right away you simply end up right back out into the music and your sound comes back, big and open and free. You haven't reacted to the sound, you haven't become more tense, you haven't gone in to try to relax it all... you just went directly to what you want.

Now that is kind of interesting when you think about it.

Mila: Yes...

David: Plus, we could ask another question about that contrast moment. In those moments when you notice that the sound is not what you want and you just go right back to the music, does the bad sound seem as problematic as the bad sound at the moments when you react and get caught in trying to relax?

Mila: No, not at all. I barely notice the sound has gone off when it is returning back to what I want.

David: That too is kind of interesting when you think about it, eh?

Mila: Yes, it is...

David: You haven't so far, at least, been choosing a response of immediately going back to the music when you notice your sound get tight, you've just found that it happens... sometimes. However, when it does happen notice that it appears to be both quicker and better, that is, more successful. There is less stuff to do and it gets you back to what you want more easily compared to what we saw happens when you go into your other more habitual way where you react to the moment, feel the tension of your reaction and then get more caught up trying to do something about the reaction to the reaction.

There is that old nursery song that you may know about the old woman who swallowed a fly and it wriggled and squiggled inside her, so she swallowed a spider to catch the fly and it wriggled and squiggled inside her, so she swallowed a bird to catch the spider, and then a cat to catch the bird...

Whoever wrote that knew what they were talking about. When you operate that way you end up with layer upon layer of things to do, everything gets more and complex and difficult, and it draws your attention away from the music into all that fiddling with things. Things, notice, that do not normally need any attention at all.

It is, literally, taking you directly in the opposite direction from what you want.

So, up to now, you didn't choose to take this other quicker and better pathway, but if you are quite clear what does occur when it happens, what if you were able to choose that path?

[*To everyone...*] Just to go back to a process moment again with what we have been doing in this piece of work. We have been using various of the LearningMethods tools here to investigate what is happening in those moments when Mila noticed the problem. These tools allow us to get a lot of information out on the table that she was not so in touch with before. Sometimes we had to be willing to take time to investigate closely to pry out the details and really find out what Mila noticed and what she didn't and in what order she things happened. But it was time that was necessary in order to be accurate about what is going on and to make sense out of it all.

As a result our investigations focused a light on specific moments and illuminated a previously unnoticed fork in the road. Normally Mila sees things in a way that steers her down one path, and though it doesn't work very well she hasn't see any other way. And it appears neither have the people she has gone to for help.

However, now with the clarity of information we have uncovered she can see that there is another possible way to go if she uses her new point of view to recognize that she is at a fork in the road with new possibilities. And if she can meet that moment in a different way than she normally does, she can take that other pathway.

By the way, Mila, this is not a brand new path we just made up as a solution for you. It is a path that our investigation showed that you had already gone down often enough before. It was just that you had not been seeing that experience as a path you could actually choose. In a sense you have been doing it already but just didn't know it was you doing it. It isn't so much an "it" or

the sound that opens out and becomes free; it is "you" who doesn't react or try to change anything in your system and who goes back to the music so you become open and free.

Interestingly, your interpretation that when something goes off in your sound it means that you've gone off too is actually accurate. You have gone too, because you and your sound are one functioning entity not two separate causally-related different things. And if you don't get caught up in seeing them as if they were separate you can just as quickly and directly go back to the wholeness.

After all, why not? You didn't directly make that bad sound. It appears to have just happened and *then* you noticed it. You don't even know why it happened except for your assumption that you somehow got tense. But you also didn't directly get yourself into any state of tension so why should you change it? In fact, when we look ever so closely it doesn't even appear that there is any noticeable tension until *after* you react to the bad sound. So the tension appears to have happened later more as *a result of your reaction* than earlier as *a cause of the bad sound*.

In other words, it appears from what we uncovered that you have been *mis-attributing* when the tension comes and where it comes from. It only appears after the bad sound and only then if you get caught up in reaction. The tension appears to be, in fact, *your experience of the reaction*. And your reaction of disappointment appears to happen to the degree that you are taking responsibility for that bad sound having happened — "*there's that bad sound, damn, it's because I'm tense, now I have to deal with it...*".

A feeling loop, as you called it, is right — a way of thinking and a way of interpreting feeling that gets you caught in a loop. Your assumption that your tension caused the bad sound draws you into trying to change the tension. This is hard to achieve because you have misinterpreted things and are now just digging yourself in deeper. It takes time and interferes more with your playing. So it makes the bad sound seem a bigger and worse problem than it is those other times when you just go back to the music. Since it now seems a worse problem you are bound to react more and feel more disappointed when it happens which creates the tension which gets you into trying to change it by fiddling with parts, etc., etc., round and round...

However, our investigations show that when things are working well you are whole. You have no parts and you are not doing any breath control. You are in the music as a whole being, an open and free player. At the same time, of course, the sound of the open and free player is also open and free. And, of course, you register this as good.

Now, if you recognize how this wonderful thing works, do you think that you could actually make that choice in those moments?

Mila: That would be interesting to find out. I think, as you talk about it, yeah, it can be exactly the same spot in the same piece of music in rehearsal. Two different takes and I can have a different reaction each time. I can be going along and the sound will come out and have the tension in it and I can go either way. So it would be interesting to see.

David: Because, notice the way you normally have it framed is that if the sound isn't what I want it is because I have become a bit tense and I get disappointed and then I get even more tense and then I have to do something about the tension. The whole framework pulls you away from what you really want — the wholeness and being right there in the music — and gets you involved in trying to change yourself which doesn't even work all that reliably. The way you see it, your normal frame, makes it seem to make sense to react and try in the way you do.

Mila: Mmm Hmm... Wait a minute, say that again?

David: It makes sense to go about it that way if you assume that your tension causes the bad sound, of course it makes sense to try to relax the tension so you'll have good sound.

Mila: Mmm Hmm...

David: But by looking at it closely we have seen that what you really want is to be wholly there in the music. And, interestingly, we've also seen that you have an early warning signal there to alert

you that somehow you've gone off. That early warning signal of the bad sound starting to happen can wake you up to make a choice of which way to go from here... into reaction and all the fixing-up stuff, or simply come directly back to the music with the whole you as you are at that moment.

Mila: Yeah...

David: The operative bit there, when we look closely at those moments when it just happens that you come back to the music, is that you didn't try to change anything about your structure or your state, you just found yourself coming back in the music right as you were at the moment, and then you noticed that you were open and free.

Mila: Hmm...

David: So, whether there was a bit of tension or not in those moments when you just come back, you didn't do a single thing about it, and even if there was some barely noticeable tension there before it sure doesn't seem to be there after when you are back in the music.

Instead, what you did, though you didn't do this consciously or as a choice, was just come back to the music and then found that you and the sound were open and free and whole. That seems to be about as quick a change as can be...

Mila: Uh huh...

David: ... since nothing needs changing... Whereas in those others moments not only do you get caught up as if something happened that shouldn't have happened, but then you get further caught up by having to deal with it.

So, would it be possible, just as an experiment, to see if you can make that choice?

There's no guarantee that if we go at it here and now that the situation will come up where you could make that choice, but that doesn't matter since the main point here is that you get clear about what the experiment is so that you could carry it out on your own later too.

Mila: Well, I will have many opportunities to try it out this coming week!

David: Yes, and of course, the easiest opportunities are the ones that happen at home in practice so you can get fluent with what it means to make the experiment of choosing in practice before you meet the challenge of doing it in performance.

So, how would one go about making such an experiment? Well, the first thing is that you'd need to be aware that it is one of those moments when there is an opportunity to bring in the experiment. So, what is going on that would show you that it is one of those moments?

Mila: The sound changes.

David: Right, that is your earliest wake-up call.

Next, you'd need to *not* go down the old path, that is, you'd need to meet that moment of the bad sound *without* any reaction or disappointment. And that is easy because within the framework of an experiment you actually *want the bad sound to happen* so you can see if you can make that choice and so you can find out how it works out. In other words, instead of going into it with damn and disappointment, you'd be going into it with interest and curiosity.

Now, let's get very practical here. There are two possible things you could do if you do catch the wake-up call of hearing your bad sound start.

The first one you can only really do at home when you are practicing, and that is to have the curiosity to wonder, "Hmm, the sound has changed, is there something I have gotten into here, or something that I was just doing, or some way I was just distracted, that might have resulted in a change in my sound?"

You could stop for a moment and look at that to see if you can identify anything that may be causing the sound to "go bad" in the first place. That would be worth exploring and moments like these are your opportunities to explore. You might find something and you might not, but if you did and if you could change that, then your sound would not go bad so often and you wouldn't have many chances to make the experiment of what you do when it does go bad.

The other thing you could do is to actually make the experiment as we are about to do now. Hopefully, you are able to meet that moment of the sound getting tight and recognize it without any reaction, and instead just go, "*Oh, here it is, what's the best thing to do about it?*"

Then the next step in the experiment is to remember what you do want to do instead of your old habit. In this case, what you want to choose is to open right back to the music regardless of the state you are in.

Mila: Uh huh...

David: ...and to do that *as you are at this moment* without trying to change a single thing. In other words, the whole you as you are, even if that whole you at the moment of choice is in a different state than when the whole you is very free.

Mila: Okay...

David: What is going on when things are working well? Well, it is just the whole me, as I am, right there in the music. So, is it possible to choose to live that whole me right then and there back into the music, immediately and directly?

Do not pass GO. Do not stop to collect \$200 after getting out of tension; just go directly...

Mila: Yeah... [*laughing...*]

David: In other words, by making the experiment, you'll first of all see whether you *can* make the choice. If you can, then you'll *not only* see if it works to get you right back into the music with a free and open sound, but you'll also find out more about whether the tension is, in fact, caused by your reacting.

In a way, the choice really comes down to this. If you get tense shoulders, do you first want to have free shoulders? Or do you want to get directly to wholeness where you don't even have a separate part called shoulders?

Mila: Right.

David: Because if that last one is the one you want, why not go for it directly rather than spend time in your "body" trying to correct shoulders which apparently does not even work all that successfully? At very best, that just gets you back to where you could have gone directly without having spent all that time and without getting caught in all the details.

Mila: Absolutely... That will be interesting.

David: Yes, and this sort of habit goes on in a lot of different situations that most everyone has experienced. I'm not just speaking now of performance but also in daily life. In those moments when everything is going along wonderfully, what's happening during those moments? Well, we are whole. We are free. It is easy. There's nothing to do. There are no parts, let alone parts to fix up. We are in the flow of what we are doing. It is all just happening.

If we really take that in, there is incredibly important information there. When I am whole it's all working well and I don't have any parts. How frequently do we try to get that by getting better and better at doing the right thing to parts hoping some day we are actually going to become whole? Nice idea, but you just have to ask yourself, "*How long have I been doing this, and have I actually become whole yet? Or am I just getting better and better at techniques for correcting the parts and at exercises for improving things?*"

How many spiders have we swallowed to catch the flies? And how many teachers have taught us new birds to swallow to catch the spiders? And how many doctors have prescribed cats to catch the birds we invited in to catch the spiders we'd hoped would get the flies?

On the other hand, what my own system shows me is that when things are working wonderfully, there are no parts and nothing to do. It's easy. It's easy to just be myself in the moment, for the simple reason that I already am.

My experience also shows me that in these moments there is a big openness and freedom. When I am just my whole self in the moment I am open, that is, expanded (instead of tight or constricted) as I open up to take in the moment as it is, and I am free from all the stuff I thought I had to do, and free to just go along with the music.

So if I take that in and recognize that this is what I want, then why not practice that? And why not practice it right now?

Does that make sense? How about it?

Mila: Yeah, I think it really does.

Oh, right now? You mean do it right now? Ohhh...

Group: *[laughter...]*

Mila: Okay... What do you want me to do?

David: We'll go into the experiment now and we'll see if the opportunity comes up where the sound gets tight so you can choose to go right back to the music. Of course, the worst that might happen is that you play wonderfully and open and free so the opportunity never even comes up.

But the advantage of trying out the experiment here is that you'll get a little practice at what it means to do the experiment when there is someone here to help you rather than have to work it all out on your own.

Mila: Okay. I'll play a warm-up, because I haven't played for a while. And even in the warm-up I guess the experiment would be that if I notice the tension, I just go back to the music.

David: Exactly. And I presume here you mean that "if you feel the tension *in the sound*", since it appears from our investigation that you do not actually feel the tension in your body until after you have reacted to the sound.

Mila: Yes.

David: Then the experiment is this: you just start playing and if you notice the sound start to go somewhere you don't want, right at the moment of noticing it see if you can have the clarity that what you want is to go right back to the music, as a whole, that is, just as you are at the moment, as much as possible without any reaction. You'll be recognizing that what happened with the sound is just what it is and not a disappointment or a bad thing that one should react to, since you don't even know yet whether it is a bad thing or anything that one should react to.

In its simplest form, in other words, can you meet that moment and immediately make the choice to simply go straight back to the music as you are and carry on?

Mila: Okay. Here I go. I'm going to face out that way as I play.

[She plays for about two minutes...]



You can hear the actual experiment by playing the sound file — double-click on the speaker icon above

Mila: Well, actually I did get tense on the one right before the end, and I think it works, although I ran out of air again.

David: Whenever you are making an experiment like this, the first step is always to see whether you were actually able to carry out the experiment before looking at any results. So, just to be clear here, are you saying that you did notice that the sound became tense?

Mila: Yes. And I was *able* just to not react. Just to say... I didn't say these words because it would take too long... but just to say, "*There's some tension, aaaaah, and just let it go.*"

David: And the "it" you're letting go, is what?

Mila: The tension. Okay, I noticed the tension and I let go of getting involved in it and I went back to what I was doing, back to the warm-up. I recognized the tension was there in the sound and I just went right back to the music.

David: So this time, subject to further proof of making the experiment again in other times, it does appear that you can recognize that moment and that you did make that choice, that you were more or less able to make the experiment this time. You were able to notice the tension in the sound and not react and not change anything, but just come back to the music.

Now we can look at the results of that experiment. What happened when you managed that?

Mila: It felt like a non-event, I guess, if that makes sense. I would define "event" as I hear the tension and I deal with the tension which takes me out of that moment. But this time I heard the tension and I just kept moving back into the moment... so it is a "non-event".

David: That's great. That's exactly what you wanted, isn't it?

Sometimes it can help to be aware that there are often two aspects of experimental results.

One is how did it feel or how did it affect you to be operating this new way? Were you still as tense or as much in parts? Were you whole and open and free? Were your shoulders tight, etc.?

And the other aspect is about the result musically? What happened to your sound during and after the experiment?

Mila: It became what it was, the music again.

David: Well, that is kind of interesting. Before, those just happened to you by chance, but it does seem like they are, in fact, choosable.

Mila: Yeah.

David: At least this time anyway, subject to further proof other times.

Mila: But the idea that it is a choice, and obviously it is a choice whether it is a conscious choice or not... I don't know. Sometimes in a less controlled situation I can have a non-event, other times I have to deal with it. Obviously, somehow I'm choosing, some part of me...

David: Did you hear that red-flag word there?

Mila: No... I'm not sure...?

David: "Somehow"

Mila: Yeah, I don't know how...

David: Yeah, so how can it be "obviously" there *is* a "somehow I'm choosing" when you don't even know if a choice was made...

Mila: Well, to me there are two different ways of going, so somewhere in me something is making the choice to go this way or that way. I'm not consciously making the choice; my wholeness is not making the choice.

David: Yes, you are right. You're not consciously making the choice. And you're right too, presumably something in you is determining which way you go. However, I don't think it makes sense to speak of this other part of you, as you put it, making choices, since only human

beings make choices. But for our purposes here, the main point is that you are registering clearly the distinction as to whether you, the conscious person, are making a choice or not.

Whether it would make sense to speak of any moment as "making a choice" would only be clear by looking closely at the moment to see if you were actually aware of any choice facing you and if so, that you then chose to take one path instead of another.

In that sense it doesn't appear from what we uncovered that there were any choices made in any of the moments.

For instance, in relation to those habitual moments when you react and try to relax we did not find any moments when you were aware of more than one possibility and then chose to go ahead with one of them. It appears more that you just reacted your way into it because that was the way you were interpreting the moment at the time and had already pre-judged it as "*oh, damn, one of those, now I have to deal with it*".

Similarly with the other moments when "it" opened back out to the music, you didn't make any choices. It all just happened to you and you found yourself there.

Of course, you can use the word choice in any way you want, but here we are using it in this simple straightforward sense of an actual conscious choice made by an actual person between two or more actually perceived possible pathways. Not because that is the way it "should" be defined, but because that is the actual situation you are faced with in those moments when the sound goes bad.

If, and only if, you wake up and become aware that it is one of those moments, and if, and only if, you remember what the possibilities are, only then do you have an actual choice. And the actual choice is to either carry on in your familiar habit of assuming you are tense and then trying to relax the tension, or to simply come immediately back to the music as you are without changing a thing. That takes a conscious person making a conscious choice, especially in the beginning, in the face of the habit. Like you just did in your experiment.

Only when you have gone down both pathways a few times and have been able to take in the consistent experience of what happens to you in both, do you have enough information to make an informed choice about which you'd actually prefer, about which works better for you.

But back to the matter at hand... So far, having just made one experiment you found that you *can* make that choice. It is dead easy to make. You were right back in the flow of the music. The sound was again what you wanted without any controlling, and you were open and free and didn't need any relaxing...

Mila: It sounds very easy...

David: It was easy, wasn't it? It is literally the definition of easy because there is absolutely nothing to do and nothing to change. It all does itself given that you are able to make the choice.

Mila: The next thing to do is to see why I go one way, why it happens, I guess.

David: Yes, as I mentioned earlier, that is the other option you have available to you at those moments. You have the possibility, if you can stop for a moment, to ask yourself what you may have just been thinking, or what you were just up to that might give you some clues as to why the sound is going tight in the first place.

But, even if you don't find anything — and I'm not saying that you won't because you might — at least now you do have an option open to you that was not there before. Now you can consciously choose that simple and fast way right back to things working, whereas before it seemed to be purely up to chance whether "it" went that way or not.

As you make further experiments if it does you are able to make that choice and each time get more or less the same results — our "subject-to-further-proof" — then it would appear to prove

that there really isn't any separation between you and the sound, and, even more interestingly, it would be showing that it doesn't appear to have much at all to do with your breathing.

Mila: Wow, yeah...

David: Though, when you do get caught in what you get caught in, there does certainly seem to be an interference and a negative effect on your shoulders and breathing.

So, subject to further experimenting, you have this to take away and play around with...

Mila: Thank you!

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### Feedback from Mila two months later:

"I have used the idea of 'coming straight back to the playing (or better yet the music)' a lot. It has made a huge difference in the enjoyment I get out of performing, practicing and rehearsing.

I have used the ideas from that session quite a bit in my teaching as well as my playing.

I hope to learn more about LearningMethods as it has made my teaching so much more fun, fascinating and enjoyable for both the students and me. It is quite revolutionary, yet obvious."

### About the Author



**David Gorman** developed the LearningMethods work out of over 30 years of research and teaching experiences. His background is in science and art and a fascination with exploring human structure and function. In the mid-1970s he spent many nights dissecting in the lab and drawing furiously. In 1980 he published a heavily

illustrated 600-page work on our human musculo-skeletal system called [The Body Moveable](#) (now in its 5th edition) and in 1966, a collection of articles, [Looking at Ourselves](#).

He happened upon the Alexander Technique in 1972 and was immediately intrigued by its power for change; and has been teaching that work since 1980, becoming well-known worldwide for his innovations to the work and notorious for challenging the orthodoxy of the profession. He has been invited to teach all over the world in universities, conservatories and training colleges, at conferences and symposia, and with performance groups and health professionals.

In 1982, his teaching was revolutionized by his discovery of a new model of human organization — [Anatomy of Wholeness](#) — with its profound implications about our in-built natural tendency toward balance,

ease and wholeness. He extended these insights into a new way of training teachers of the Alexander Technique and from 1988 to 1997 in London, England he trained 45 teachers.

His experiences with his own students and in other training groups made it clear that a huge part of our chronic problems lay not in the 'body' but in our consciousness and habitual way of seeing things and how we misinterpret our daily experiences and then become caught in reaction to these misunderstandings. At this point it also became apparent that his discoveries revealed new premises which in turn implied new teaching methods, so David developed the LearningMethods work to teach people how to apply their in-built intelligence and clarity of perception to their daily experience in order to understand their problems, solve them and successfully navigate their lives.

Since the beginning of this new work in 1997, David has trained a growing number of LearningMethods Teachers, many of whom are now teaching the LM work in universities and conservatories, and he is now planning a new Toronto-based [modular training program](#) for LearningMethods, Anatomy of Wholeness and the Alexander Technique. He continues to [write more about the work](#), and give workshops to performers, teachers and the public in North America, Europe, and Asia ([see his teaching schedule](#)), as well as raising another young son.