

BEYOND STAGE FRIGHT

Addressing Music Performance Anxiety in Jazz Students

Presenters: Thomas Johnson, Ph.D., HSPP
and John Britton, M.S., MT-BC



Do you know how to breathe?

dread

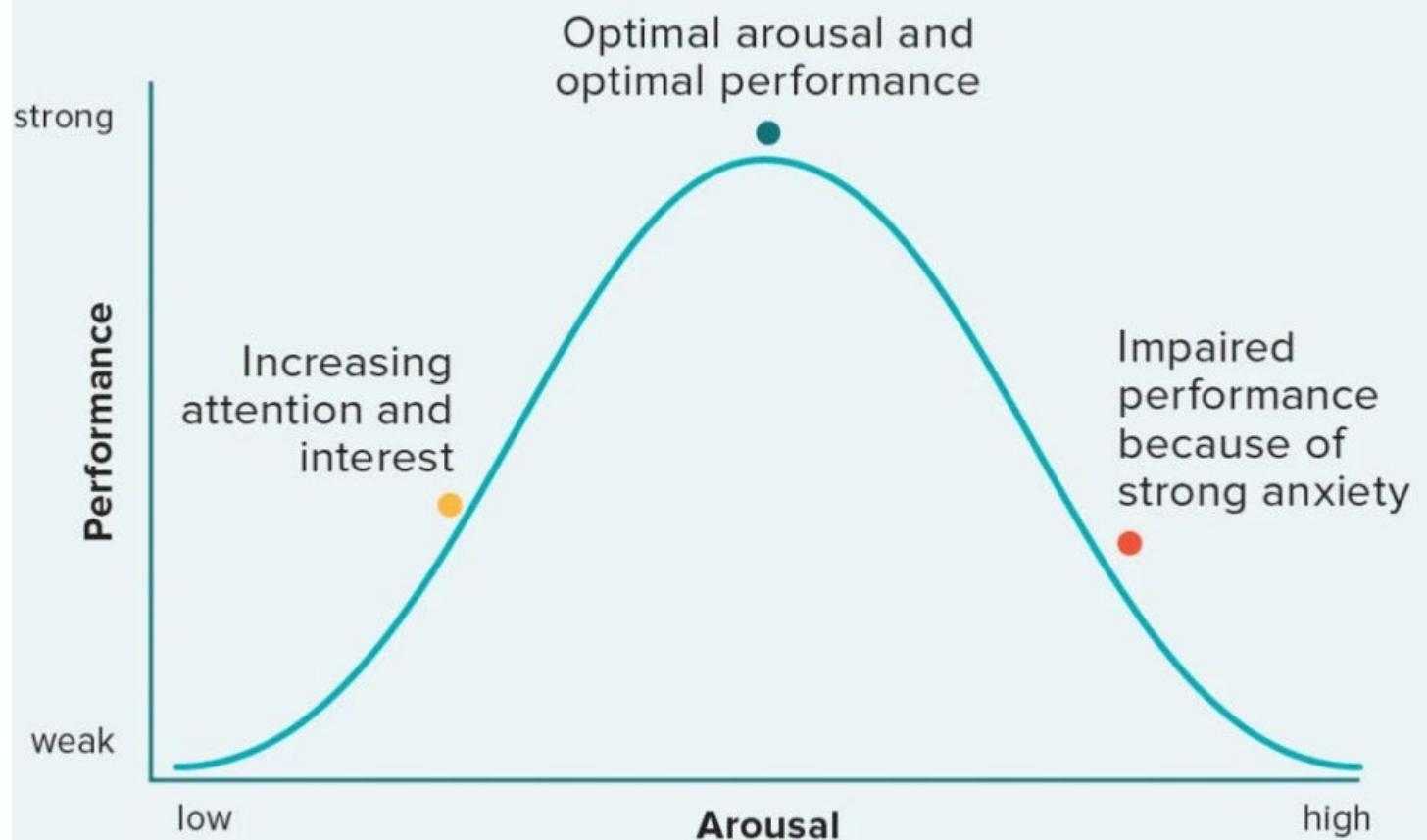
Panic fear
arousal
anxiety
racing heart
evaluation
avoidance

perfectionism
uneasy

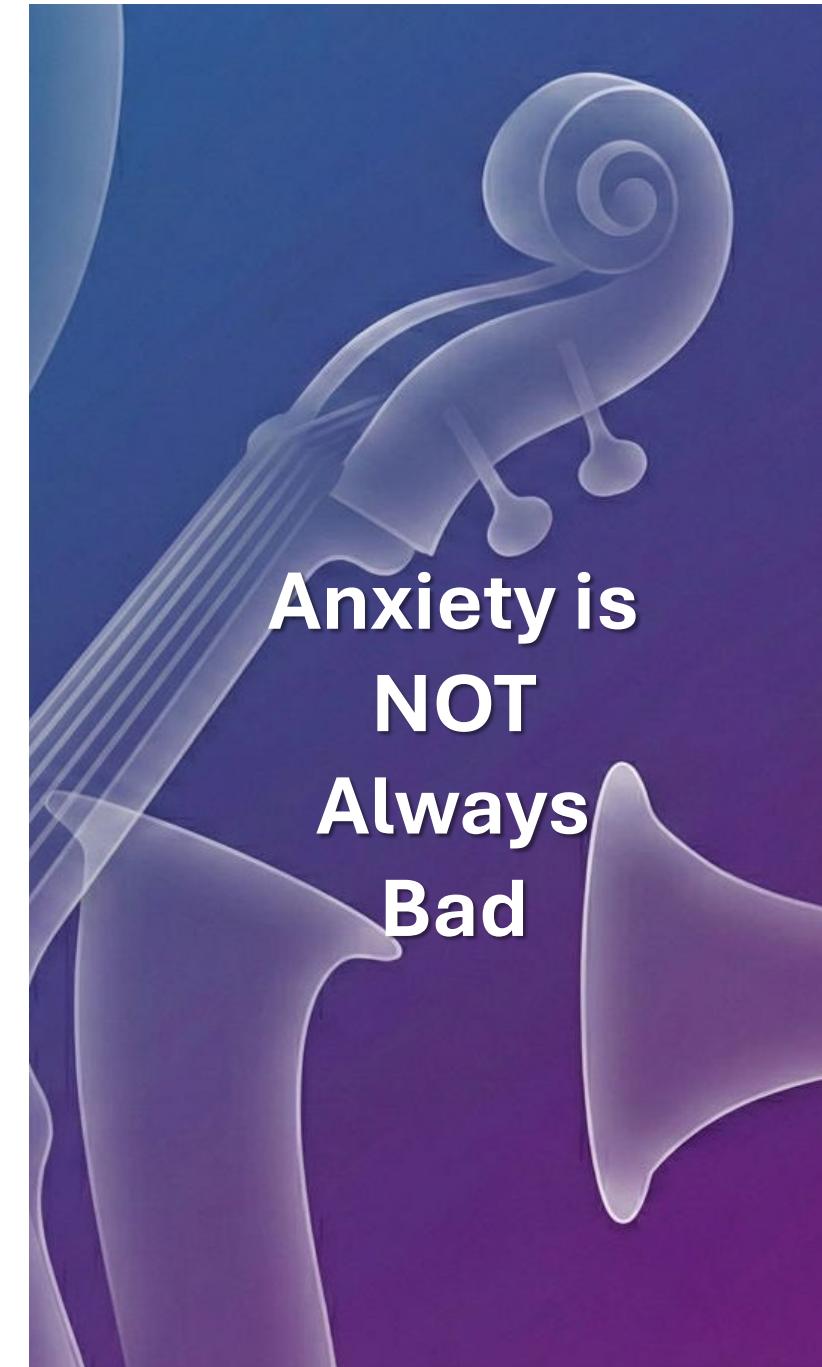
fidgeting
concern
catastrophising
nervous
fretting

worry
angst
terror

YERKES-DODSON LAW BELL CURVE



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Defining the Experience: MPA as a Multi-Dimensional Response

Musical Performance Anxiety (MPA): *An intense fear or apprehension associated with performing music.*

Somatic Response

Physical Reactions



Racing Heart



Sweaty Palms



Trembling

Cognitive Response

Thoughts & Emotions



Fear of Failure



Negative Self-Talk



Catastrophic Thinking

Behavioral Response

Actions & Avoidance



Avoiding Performances



Excessive Rehearsal

Fidgeting, Pacing

MPA is a Multi-Dimensional Response

It affects:



Body

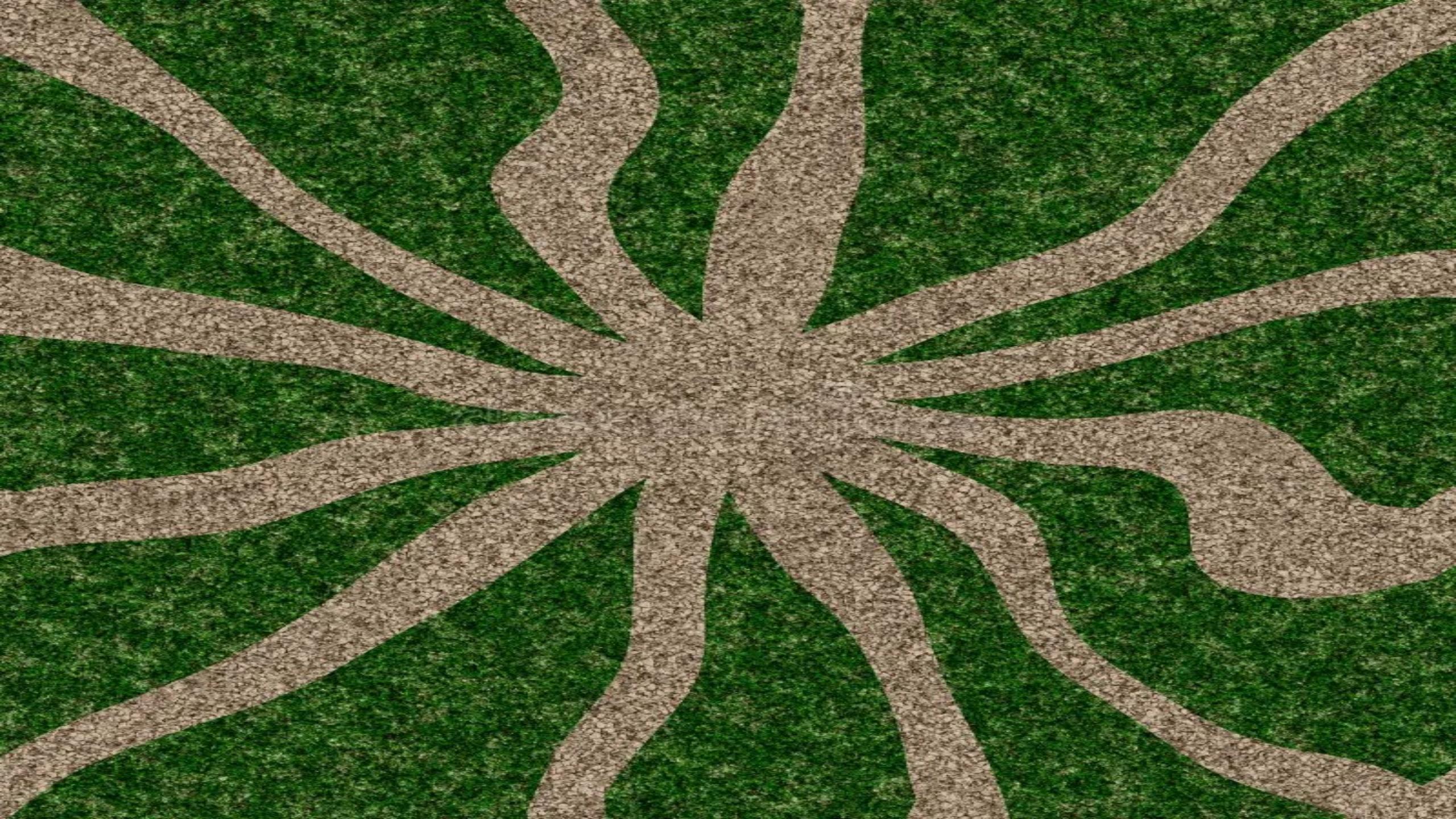


Mind



Behavior

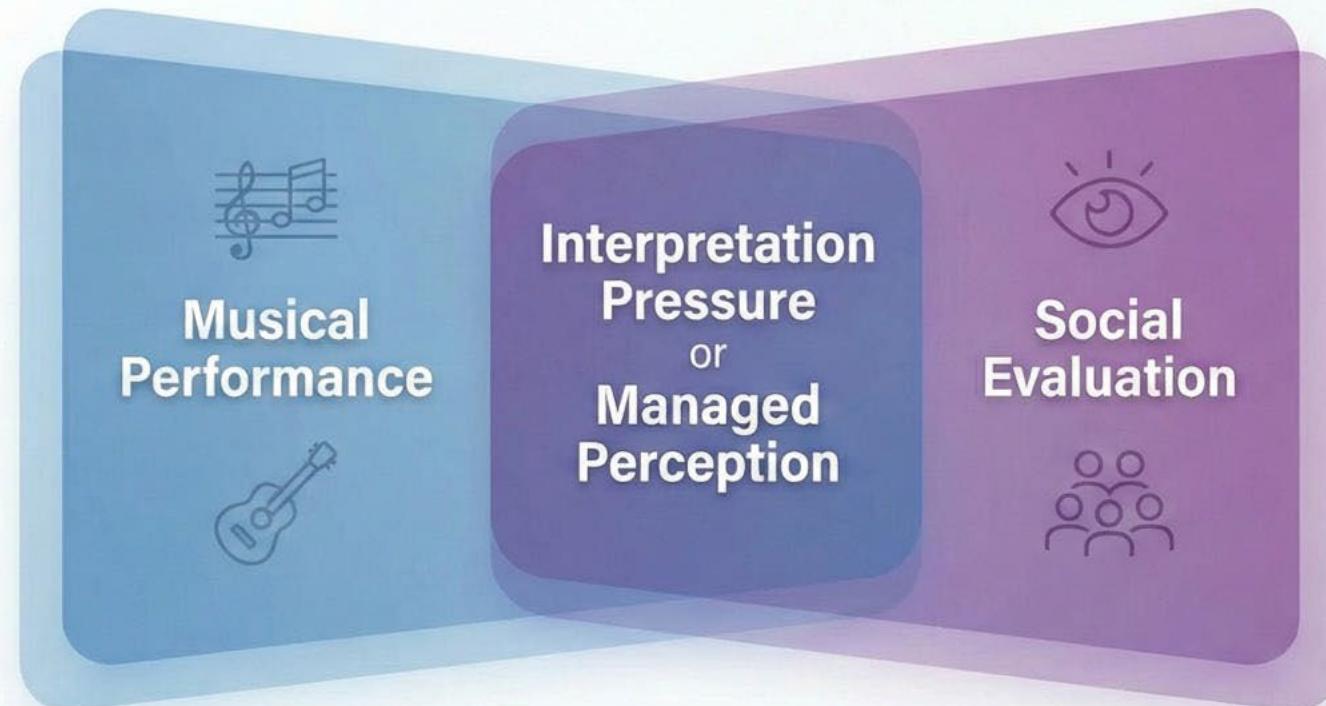
Prevalence?



The Double Exposure Effect

Performance anxiety increases when musicians must manage both execution and interpretation at the same time.

- INDICATORS
- ↑ Cognitive Load
 - ↑ Self-Monitoring
 - ↓ Presence



Some students perform music while also managing how they are perceived.

THE ENSEMBLE OVERSIGHT

VANISHING GENRE DIFFERENCES



Genre-based differences in anxiety levels often vanish within ensemble settings.

THE EXPOSURE GAP



Performance anxiety is frequently overlooked when a student is not performing in an “exposed” soloist role.

DETECTION CHALLENGES

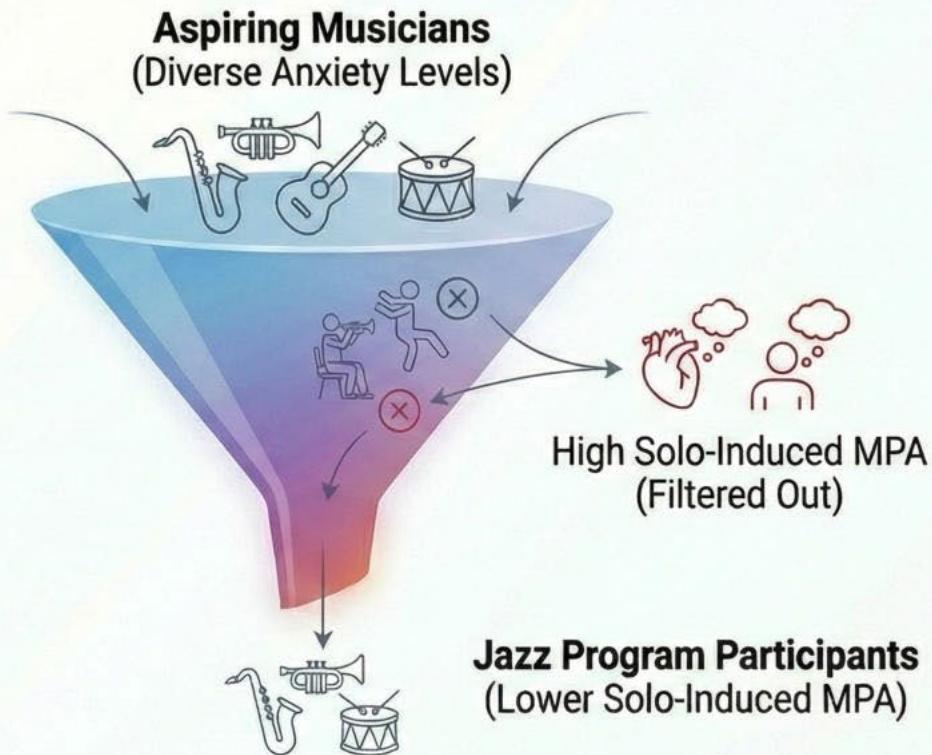


Significant internal struggle can remain undetected while a student is performing within a section.



The Selection Hypothesis: 'Survival of the Chillest'

Students with high solo-induced anxiety may filter themselves out of jazz tracks early.



Hypothesized Mechanisms:

- The Filtering Process:** High solo anxiety may contribute to earlier attrition, potentially occurring pre-college.
- Self-Selection:** Students may preemptively select tracks with lower perceived solo demands.
- Survivorship Bias:** Observed populations might only represent those who "survived" the filter, potentially masking original anxiety prevalence.

Idea: The "chill" vibe of a jazz program may be a result of prior selection, not inherent low anxiety.

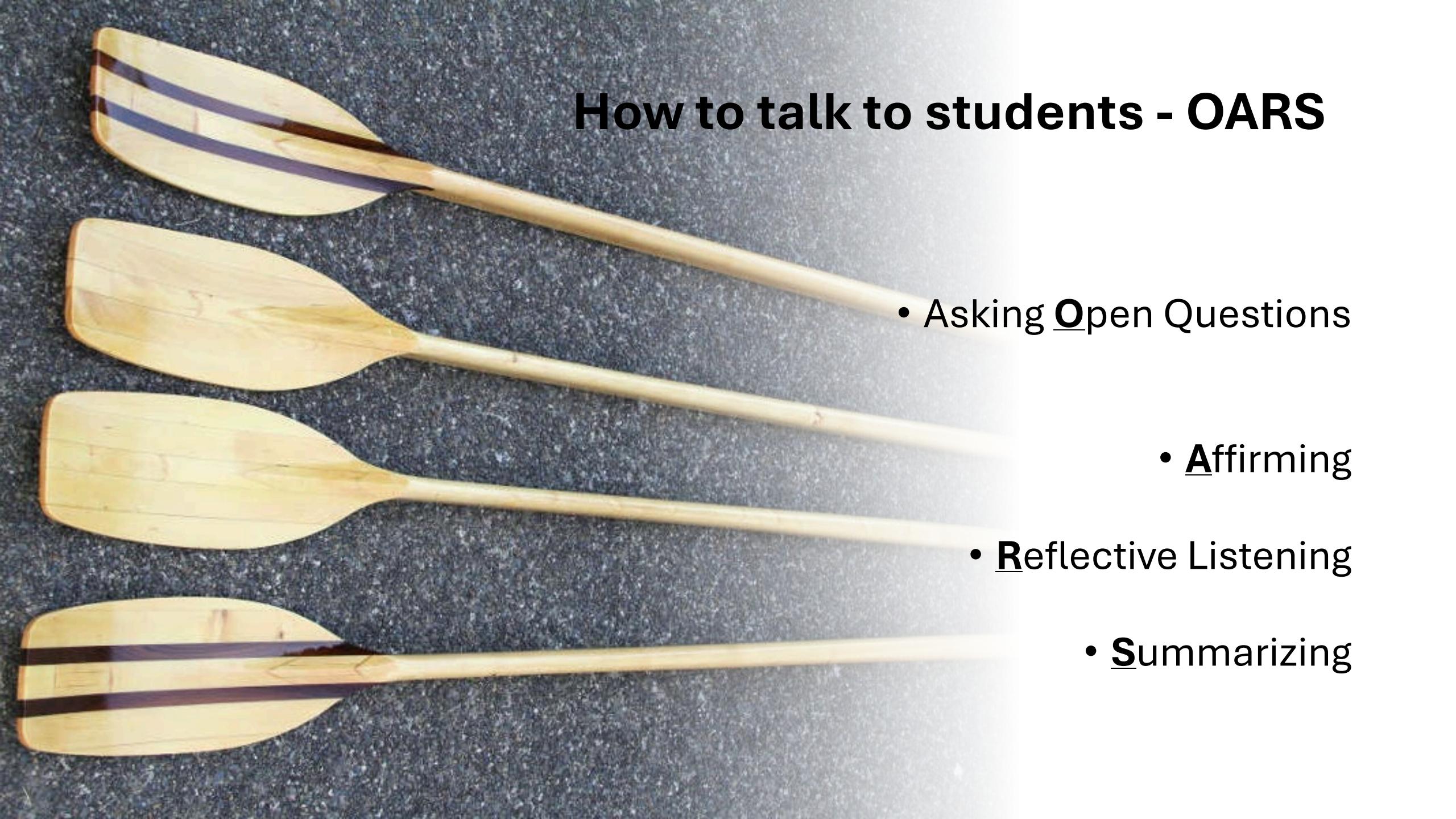
COPING WITH MPA FRAMEWORK: ACCEPTANCE VS. CHANGE

ACCEPTANCE STRATEGIES

-  Cultivating Non-Judgmental Awareness
-  Mindful Listening
-  Reframing Relationship with Anxiety
-  The “Curious Scientist” Stance

CHANGE STRATEGIES

-  Physiological & Emotional Regulation
-  Values-Based Action (Committed Action)
-  Building Competence & Confidence
-  Creating Supportive Environments



How to talk to students - OARS

- Asking Open Questions
- Affirming
- Reflective Listening
- Summarizing



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Martha Davis, PhD • Elizabeth Robbins Eshelman, MSW • Matthew McKay, PhD

CONCLUSION: ADDRESSING THE REALITY OF JAZZ MPA



1. THE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

- **The Experience:** Body, Thoughts, and Behavior cycle.
- **The Approach:** Balancing “Changes” and Acceptance.



2. MPA IN THE JAZZ SETTING

- **A Tangible Reality:** Professional reality, regardless of talent.
- **The Ensemble Oversight:** Often more common in ensembles.
- **Influencing Factors:** Environmental context and identity (e.g., “Double Exposure”).



3. THE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

- **Normalize the Experience:** Acknowledge MPA to reduce stigma.
- **Preserving Participation:** Ensure continued musical engagement.

