

Listen to Your Body

Eliminating Physical Tension

Learn

- To identify sources of physical tension in your body.
- To heighten self-perception of what your body feels.

Feel

- Playing the cello should feel comfortable. If you feel tight, stiff, sore or awkward, you have not found your answers.
- Investigate and identify the source of the discomfort; experiment with multiple ways to relieve the tension.
- If you are too loose, you can always increase muscle tension. If you are too tight, release is not so easy.

Think

- Sensing and evaluating your body's messages requires inward observation. Pay attention to muscular tension and release; seek balanced, fluid motion. As awareness develops, you will likely feel tightness or awkwardness that was not previously perceived. Identify the tension point and discover its release.
- One does not learn good physical habits and then forget about them. Your daily, life-long goal is the continual further release of muscular tension and search for physical comfort. Be vigilant. If you ignore your body, over time it will progressively tighten from daily use and the aging process.
- Watch yourself in the mirror and ask others to observe your playing. Another cellist or musician may observe points of tension that you have accepted as normal.

Listen

- Every sound you make, memorable or lamentable, is created by physical gesture. A jerky string crossing or shift, an uncoordinated bow change or fingered passage, can most often be solved by a subtle change in body balance, muscular tension or refinement of the motion. Let your artistic search and your ear's need to be satisfied lead you to an appropriate physical gesture.
- Listening to your body is the road to mastery of the instrument. Playing the cello well while living deeply in the music requires simultaneous physical awareness and perception.