



Steve Goss: Taking Control Of Your Performance!



Where to start?

Try to...

separate *you* from *your playing*

Mindset

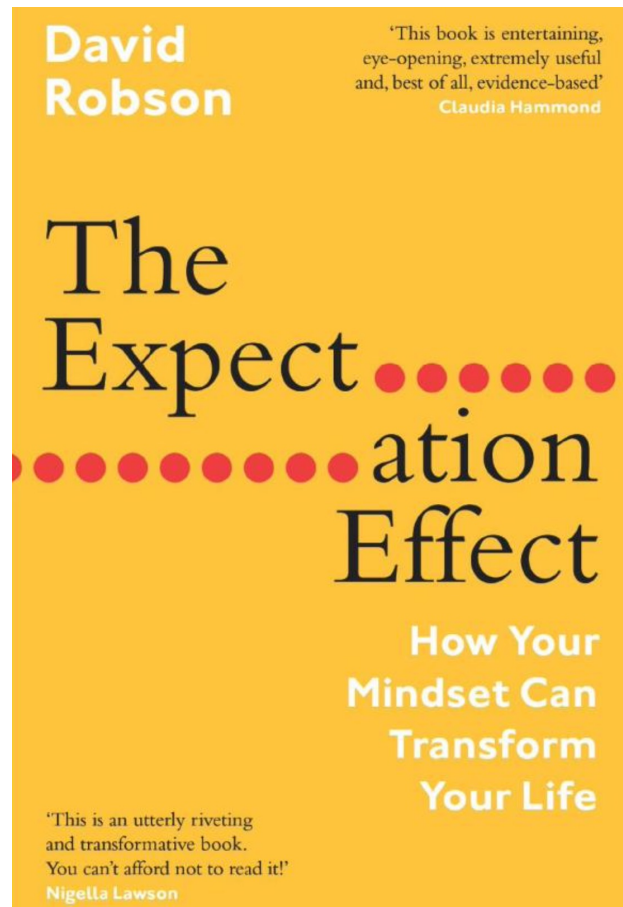
You are who you are

not what you do

Mindset

Your expectations
can
transform outcomes

Book recommendation 1



The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Transform Your Life

by David Robson,
Canongate Books (2022)

Things to remember

- Everyone has performance anxiety
- If people look calm and relaxed on stage, it doesn't mean that they are calm and relaxed on the inside
- The more performing you do, the easier it is to control your performance anxiety

Things to remember

Effective practice

“What happens on the concert stage is a direct consequence of what happens in the practice room. There is no magic and no mystery: good practice results in good performances. Poor practice will produce poor performances.”

Ricardo Iznaola (2001)

What is performance anxiety?

- The experience of persisting, distressful apprehension about, and/or actual impairment of performance skills in a public context.
- Doubting your ability
- Fear of loss of control
- Feeling that you're not fully prepared
- Fear of memory slips
- Doubt that the audience will enjoy your performance
- Even if things go well, certain people may still be disappointed

Physical symptoms

Flight or fight response triggered by an increase in adrenalin in the blood.

Physiological symptoms

- Increased heart rate
- Palpitations
- Shortness of breath
- Hyperventilation
- Dry mouth
- Sweaty hands
- Shaking fingers, arms or knees
- Loss of ability to hear clearly
- Loss of sensitivity in the fingers
- Tension
- Stiff body movement
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Dizziness

Psychological symptoms

- Subjective feelings of anxiety
- Negative thoughts about performing
- Interference from a negative inner voice
- Forgetting words or fingering
- Forgetting how the music goes
- Losing the sense of pulse
- Loss of self-esteem
- Poor concentration
- Diverting attention

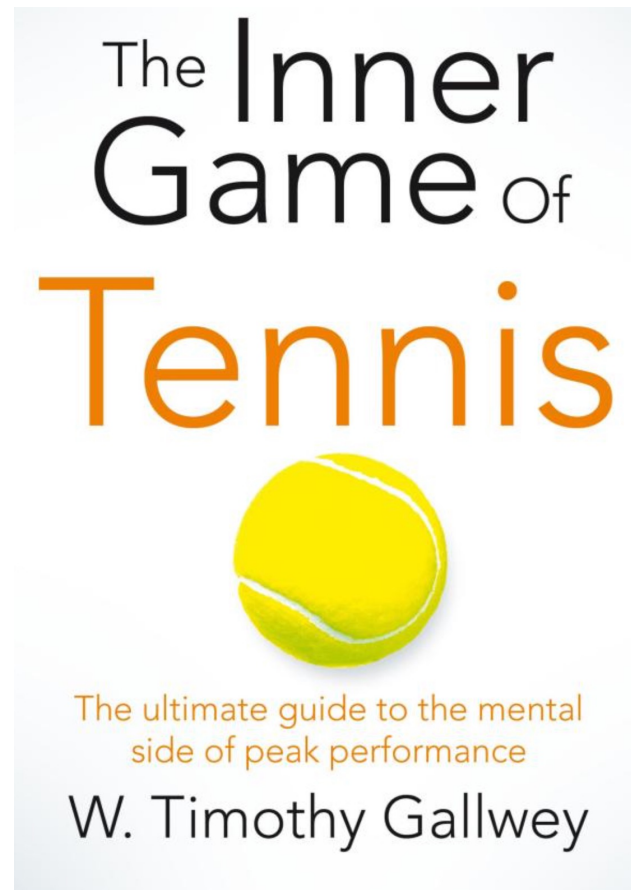
The reasons behind performance anxiety

- The critics (including you)
- The audience
- The performance space

Strategies for reducing anxiety

- **Practising performance**
- **The Inner Game**
- **Visualisation**
- **Intelligent programming**
- Mindfulness
- Alexander technique - addresses the 'startle response'
- Progressive relaxation - selecting muscle groups and systematically tensing and relaxing them, breathing exercises - can reduce heart-rate
- Brain Gym
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Adjusting focus from narrow to wider

Book recommendation 2



The Inner Game of Tennis

by W. Timothy Gallwey

Pan Books, London (latest edition 2015)

Musical memory

- Aural memory
- Visual memory
- Physical memory

Practical exercises

- Visualisation
- Making the performance space your own
- Performance conditions
- Attitude to the music
- Imposing programmatic detail
- Identifying (and welcoming) the stages of anxiety
- Combating interference and loss of concentration
- Best- and worst-case scenarios
- Role play
- Permission to fail

Visualisation exercise 1

- Find inner poise
- Listen to the room
- Look at the first 2 lines of your score and try to hear the music in detail in real time
- Shut your eyes and listen again
- Now imagine yourself on the stage, here in the hall, performing those 2 lines to an appreciative audience
- Expert visualisers who learned whole pieces in this way include Gieseking, Kreisler, Cortot, Gould, Rubenstein and Arrau

The physical performance space

Visualisation exercise 2

- Imagine yourself taking control of the space – it's your space
- Imagine that the audience is really looking forward to hearing you play
- Think 'excitement' rather than 'apprehension'

Practical advice

- Visit the room before the event if you can
- Make adjustments until things are just right
- If the chair is too high, ask for a lower one
- Try not feel rushed on stage
- The audience WANTS you to do well

The mental performance space

- Escaping the tightrope mentality
- Managing your inner performance space
- Maintaining flexibility
- Concentration
- Stage time is different from real time
- Managing risk

Performing is performing

- Having an audience (singular)
- Coping without one
- An exam is a concert
- An audition is a concert
- A competition is a concert
- You are playing music, not the score of the music

The performance persona

- The panther and the monk
- Playing
- Playing a role
- Characterisation
- Try to move your audience, don't try to impress them
- It's normal to feel nervous, but you should appear calm
- No one is counting your mistakes and most people don't even notice them
- Try not to draw attention to your mistakes

The three types of practice

- Building time
- Interpretive time
- Performing time – practising performance

Practising performance

- Find a performance space
- Select a performance time
- Find an audience – real, technological, or imagined
- Wear performance clothes
- Simulate a performance as closely as possible (no cheating)
- Do this regularly – every day leading up to a real performance
- This is the most effective way to reduce performance anxiety

Intelligent programming

The situation

- Heartrate increase and adrenalin boost peak just before you go on stage and for the first few minutes you are playing on stage
- The brain takes in an incredibly large amount of information in the first few minutes you are on stage
- You are at your most vulnerable to performance anxiety at this time

Intelligent programming

The solution

- Start your programme with something short, easy, and familiar
- This will set you up to perform at your best because it reduces anxiety quickly
- Select pieces and tempi carefully

Visualisation exercise 3

- Find inner poise
- Listen to the room
- Look through all the pieces in the order that you are going to play them and try to hear the music in detail in real time
- Take a break
- Now imagine yourself on the stage, here in the hall, performing the whole programme in real time to an appreciative audience
- Take the time to imagine yourself walking onto stage, settling down and preparing to play
- Imagine yourself standing up at the end of each piece, taking a bow, and enjoying the audience's applause
- The stronger the visualisation, the more empowering it becomes
- Remember the Expectation Effect

Takeaways

- Everyone has performance anxiety
- You can reduce it by using a number of strategies
- Embrace a low level of performance anxiety, because it actually helps
- Try to separate *you* from *your playing*

Some useful books

- Andrew Evans *The Secrets of Musical Performance* (Harper Collins, London 1994)
- W. Timothy Gallwey *The Inner Game of Tennis* (Pan Books, London 2015)
- Barry Green (& Gallwey) *The Inner Game of Music* (second edition, Pan Books, London 1987)
- Carola Grindea (ed.) *Tensions in Musical Performance* (Kahn & Averill, London 1994)
- Paule E and Gail E *Brain Gym, Teachers' Edition* (Ventura CA, USA , Dennison 1994)
- David Robson *The Expectation Effect: How Your Mindset Can Transform Your Life*
(Canongate Books 2022)
- Anthony Rooley *Performance: Revealing the Orpheus Within* (Element
Books, Dorset 1990)

https://www.guitarsint.com/article/Books_about_Performance_Preparation_Performance_Anxiety_and_Related_Medical_Problems_An_Annotated_Bibliography

Questions?



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