



#2.7 - August 17, 2022

Plateaus Happen

Did you respond to the survey I sent last week? There's still time as I will be finalizing my fall presentation ideas in the next two weeks.

Here's the link if you haven't yet.

[Survey Link](#)

What I'm Thinking

I've been trying to figure out the best ways to discuss the idea of plateaus vs. being stuck. Let me start with thinking about my trumpet playing, which is where my whole exploration of mastery and the blueprint started. After I started with a new attitude and plan for practice, I noted a number of helpful and even significant changes in how I was playing. Tone, rhythm, endurance, comfort all began to improve. Need less to say I was excited. Nothing like this had happened before in my 50 years of being a musician, even when I practiced. I was learning that if you don't practice with intention, a goal, and feedback one often ends up just practicing their mistakes.

But, and you can probably see this coming, I would periodically get to a point where I didn't seem to be getting better. I wasn't going backwards, I was just at a point where little new was happening. I would begin to get discouraged. I would ask the question, "Have I gotten as good as a guy my age can get?" (I was already in my mid-60s.) But I kept at it because I was enjoying the enhanced skills. I thought I was stuck at the end- things weren't going to get any better. But I was enjoying where I was at, so I kept going.

Eventually, within a few days or a week, I would notice that I was improving again. New things were happening. I wasn't stuck! Yay!

*That was a plateau. It could have become getting stuck if I had believed my old thinking, the non-growth-oriented mindset. I ignored it and kept practicing, because the goal was no longer to just get better. The goal was to play trumpet. I **had been stuck** in that for many years. I didn't go back. I was moving ahead, even when I didn't know I was.*

I remember those times in my early recovery. I also remember those times even as recently as the middle of the pandemic. When I would begin to ask myself, "Is this as good as recovery gets?" I was on the edge of getting stuck. If

I believed that- *and did nothing about it-* growth would have stopped. I would have been stuck. I wouldn't necessarily have gone back to using, although the longer one is stuck, the greater the risk. In the most recent time a year and a half ago, I didn't even know it was happening until confronted about it by my wife.

Mastery can always be there to help us keep moving along the plateau, or to break through the place where we are stuck. The more we enjoy our recovery, the more we continue to flow with it, the more we practice, practice, and practice, the better our odds of moving forward. That's what the path of mastery helped me do.

Just when you think you've gone as far as you can go, a whole new vista can open up in front of you.



Facing Challenges - Building Recovery

Digging deeper into how mastering recovery helps us get unstuck.

[First week] Definition: Mastery- the mysterious process during which what is at first difficult becomes progressively easier and more pleasurable through practice.

[Last week] Basic Idea #1

- The most successful path to mastering anything is to practice for the sake of the practice itself, not for the result.

Basic Idea #2

- All significant learning is composed of brief spurts of progress followed by long periods of work where it feels as if you are stuck on a plateau.



On the blueprint for mastering recovery, the middle stage is called "Flow." That is where we build and practice our plans. It is also where we can hit plateaus. Plateaus are places where we can work at the growth without having to push hard. It is how we do the work of rewiring our brains and actions to accommodate the habits we are building. We've gotten into the actions, they are not as strenuous, but now we just have to keep at it.

[James Clear](#), summarizing author George Leonard says:

- On the path to improvement: the general progression is always the same. To take the master's journey, you have to practice diligently, striving to hone your skills, to attain new levels of competence. But while doing so, you also have to be willing to spend most of your time on a plateau, to keep practicing even when you seem to be getting nowhere.

We think we are stuck, but in reality we are not. The barriers to our ongoing growth are that fear of being stuck, that we've gone as far as we can. Dangerous, but not the end of the world. Learning to lean into the possibilities will make a big difference.

[Link to a copy of the *Mastering Recovery*](#) Roadmap to download.

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Quote and Picture of the Week

All things are difficult before they are easy.



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