

Getting your foundation together for brass players!

Imagine this!

You have a building that is 20 stories tall. The building weighs hundreds of tons. All of the steel, plumbing pipes, and the many other components of this building is supported by a single marble. The marble is acting as the foundation of the entire building. Would you want to be in that building? No! The unstableness would scare you, correct? This building doesn't have a secure or reinforced foundation. This is what it's like to play your instrument without using the correct muscles to reinforce your playing with correct habits.



How does this relate to music or playing a brass instrument?

Playing a brass instrument is a physical act. There's no sort of shortcut to playing a brass instrument at a high level. There's only a "best practices" approach. A "Best Practices" approach breaks down into three requirements; the most efficient, clear, and correct way to perform whatever the task or act might be. This applies to your instrument by executing the most efficient, intentional, and using the correct muscles when playing. For example, using pressure for higher notes isn't going to strengthen your corners or your chops. Now you have learned how to play incorrectly from using the wrong muscles to play your horn and the more you do it the more muscle memory you're now reinforcing. All of this to say, there is no shortcut to playing a brass instrument. Using the correct muscles will only help you. Every time you play your horn should be another opportunity to fine tune and reinforce all good and correct habits. This is what the "Best Practices" approach does.

How Do I apply this to a musical situation/ "real world" application?

There's three words I live by when playing the trombone; Awareness, Consistency, and Intention. I'm **aware** of my tone, I am **consistently** making sure that the tone is not being compromised. This is all because it's my **intention** to pay this close attention to detail. Without awareness how do you stay consistent with your tone, articulation, time, feel, dynamics, blend, etc.? You have to always have the intention to be aware and consistent and then you'll start to notice more about your playing's strengths and weaknesses. Before all of this, you need a warm up/ daily routine that will address and make you aware of possible weaknesses. You may work on tone in the practice room but when you approach a passage in a piece your tone isn't what it was in the practice room. This is where being aware and consistent comes in and because you're intentional with it you're now reinforcing good habits which is a form of "Best Practices." Finding a great routine is step one to the many other steps which will help clear a path for you to start your "best practices" approach and improve your playing. Stay aware, be consistent, and do it with intention!