



By Chris DeRosa

Today I wanted to continue to talk about drumming health. As previously stated in Part I there are three components to this important balance.

- Physical: eating right and exercising
- Mental: taking time off to refresh and gain clarity
- Spiritual: the need to think outside our problems and world through meditation or prayer

In Part II, I wanted to specifically address the mental and spiritual aspects.

I keep a busy practice and performing schedule day in and day out. Working at this pace especially in a busy place like New York City can force one's mind to become constipated. I find trying to function with an unclear mind slows down my creative juices. Having a clear and unfettered mind can help us drummers to think outside of the box and unleash our creative potential to its fullest.

“It takes at least two weeks of life pattern change for your mind to truly benefit from a vacation.”

I play with many original artists and bands, so coming up with new and interesting drum parts, as well as form and feel suggestions, is par for the course. I need my creativity to flow because as you work and grow with an artist your musical investment also grows. I'm often asked to contribute to the writing and song ideas as well. I have several techniques or regimens I keep as part of my lifestyle that helps me to keep my mental clarity.

I find that getting away from music and even my regular lifestyle pattern for a period of time really helps me recharge. For example, right now, I'm writing this on Tanjung Bira beach in Sulawesi, Indonesia. I don't think I can get any farther from my life literally or figuratively than this. I didn't bring any sticks and have not touched my iPod in two weeks! I try to take at least one trip/adventure per year for several weeks at a time to break out of my daily pattern. A psychiatrist friend of mine said it takes at least two weeks of life pattern change for your mind to truly benefit from a vacation.

When I travel I try to learn some words in a new language and explore the local/native music from the region I visit. Often times I am able to pick-up unique drums and percussion instruments from these places as well. I cannot express how helpful these new experiences and

influences are on my drumming style and contributions back home.

At times my schedule is way too busy or I am unwilling to go away again because I just returned from a tour. I don't like to be away from the city too much, especially since I have obligations to the artists I work with. When this happens I find that going to art openings, local galleries, and museums, allows me to see composition and color from a new perspective.

The third thing I do and have done for as long as I've played drums is photography (ChrisDerosa.net). When I was studying music performance at the University of Miami I minored in photography and even worked at Miami Hurricane campus newspaper. It helped me to balance and broaden my creative outlet as well as to meet new people and see new things. To this day I get called to take pictures of bands and musician friends as well as events and print assignments.

The third and last aspect of drumming health is spirituality.

I think this is as important as any rudiment you will ever practice. Knowing how to speak is useless if you have nothing to say. I feel that the spiritual part of this trinity is the content. I repeat a simple mantra each day: "It's not all about me." Sounds simple to grasp but to put it into practice really is a very hard thing to

do. Simple things like not getting all bent out of shape when you just miss getting the subway as the door closes. Or how about not getting the gig you so wanted to a guy you know you can out-drum... sound familiar? Did you ever think about that guy? I mean, his situation. You may have steady work already and your rent is paid etc. Compassion is a very powerful thing. It isn't all about me.

I am a Christian. That may mean different things to different people. What it simply means to me is that ultimately I'm not entirely in control. I live by faith and don't ask for more than I need. If I am blessed with more than that, I try to help others who are not as fortunate.

When I play, I surrender. I try to let the energy flow through my body and hands to speak in a way that I might not normally play. Some people meditate, some pray, some chant or rub beads. It doesn't matter what you choose; the only thing that matters is you realize that humility and the bigger picture is what's really important. I try to let my drumming be a personal prayer that all who hears can enjoy.

Having a spiritual walk and aspect to your life completes the balance of our place in life. It's like four or five musicians playing in perfect synchronicity. Imagine 4 or 5 billion people in complete harmo-

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ITE MONTH BECAUSE IT IS IN-
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ny. When you think you got it bad and things are not going the way you hoped they would, stop and take a step back because you still have it real good.

Having alternate creative lifestyle options help keep your perspective and mental clarity. Having a sense of the bigger picture will make you smile more often, and, subconsciously, that affects your playing. 😊



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