

Here are some strategies to ease nervousness leading up to, and in some cases during, a performance from Suzuki Parent Leslie McGann:

- ❖ Deep breathing. Inhale, fill the belly, and then rib cage up with air. Sip in just a little more air and let it fill the upper chest, all the way up to the collarbone, causing the area around the heart to expand and rise. On the exhale, let the breath go first from the upper chest, allowing the heart center to sink back down, then from the rib cage, letting the ribs slide closer together. Finally, let the air go from the belly, drawing the navel back towards the spine.
- ❖ During the performance, let yourself become absorbed in the sound of the music. This helps to take your mind off any thoughts you might be having. To practice this before the performance, choose a piece you know well, start playing and see how far you can get before a thought pops into your mind. Practice this technique to build a quiet and focused mind.
- ❖ Know how performance jitters show up in your body so that you can recognize what is happening and normalize it. Do your knees get shaky? Palms sweaty? Heart pounding? It is different for everyone; these are all normal biological reactions to excitement or stress. Recognize the sensations and tell yourself, "These are OK."
- ❖ Try applying some relaxing essential oil to your wrists, behind your ears, or to any other place that makes you feel comfortable. There are several single oils and blends available that can ease anxiety. The Plant Therapy brand has a line of "KidSafe" oils. This pre-diluted roll-on called "No Worries" may be a good one to try: [https://smile.amazon.com/dp/B07RDMC9BH?ref\\_=cm\\_sw\\_r\\_cp\\_ud\\_dp\\_ARD1J6EY1Y54EZN\\_MYZHJ](https://smile.amazon.com/dp/B07RDMC9BH?ref_=cm_sw_r_cp_ud_dp_ARD1J6EY1Y54EZN_MYZHJ) Please be aware that many pure essential oils must be diluted in a carrier oil prior to applying. Also, please be cautious regarding potential allergens, and consult your physician as necessary.
- ❖ If the outfit you are wearing to the performance has pockets, try slipping in a favorite fidget, worry stone, or lucky token that can quietly soothe you as you watch the other performances leading up to yours, and help you to calm down afterward. If you don't already have a favorite item, you might experiment with different textures. Some folks prefer smooth, some rough, some squishy - see what works for you!
- ❖ Experiment with a positive affirmation or mantra. Mantras can have a calming effect by giving your mind something else to do besides focus on whatever is making you nervous. Find a phrase that resonates with you. Some examples are: "I am strong.", "I have courage.", or "Beautiful sound flows from my instrument."
- ❖ Establish a reward for yourself after the performance. Perhaps you could go out to dinner or get ice cream with your family to celebrate or watch a favorite movie. Having something to look forward to after the event can stimulate positive thinking.
- ❖ Try Tapping or EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique), which only takes a few minutes to learn. The Tapping Solution is a free app available for iPhone and Android: <https://www.thetappingsolutionapp.com>. Included are several free tapping meditations geared towards anxiety or stress relief.

