



SCHOOL OF MUSIC | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Addressing the Negative Effects of Weight-Loss on Trumpet Performance

Presented by:

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The Positives:

-Taking the steps toward better health is one of the greatest decisions you can make. These steps can provide a reduced/decreased risk of:

- High Blood Pressure
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Etc.

Better health can also improve:

- Personal/ Social Confidence
- Sleep Quality
- Stress Level
- Etc.

Taking your First Steps:

-The first step in embracing the weight-loss process is often the hardest as it involves both a physical and mental lifestyle change. This change of habit can take several weeks, or even months, to fully embrace a new way of living, but that commitment is the most crucial to establishing health conscious habits in your routine.

-A weight-loss process can be very personal and unique as each individual can have different chemical, physical, and nutritional needs that must be met in order for his or her body to embrace this shift in lifestyle. You NEED to speak with your Primary Healthcare Physician or a Dietary/Nutrition specialist so that they can assess your needs and help plan a strategy that is both effective and safe for you.

-This is not a short-term process – results (and effects) can often be seen as early as 1 or 2 weeks. However, significant impact on your process is often felt 4 to 5 months into a consistent regimen.

-Mapping your progress is key to keeping your physical, nutritional, and even playing documented. Not all players will feel effects on brass performance from weight-loss, especially small fluctuations in BMI or weight, but large adjustments can have an impact on numerous elements in the performance apparatus (more information found later in the packet).

-Utilizing tools such as fitness apps or trackers can provide a helpful window on your progress from the physical and nutritional lens. Applications such as “My Fitness Pal” by Under Armor is a free app that allows users to track their caloric intake and physical exercise throughout the day. The application will allow users to assess their total caloric count for a given day to ensure they are maintaining a healthy level that was provided by their health-care professional.

Effects on Trumpet/Brass Performance:

-Significant Weight-loss can have a negative impact on your playing. These issues can often affect players who are losing small amounts of weight (<15lbs), but are rare.

Potential Issues in Performance due to Weight-loss:

- Loss of precision in attack
- Loss of articulation control after release
- Noticeable reduction in range
- Imperfections or more frequent “double buzzes” in the sound
- Equipment feeling incorrect
- ...and many more

-You should take notice if you:

- Feel bruised after sessions.
- Are having consistent limitation in performance that wasn't an issue previously.
- Have trouble maintaining basic elements of playing.
- Are having (significant) negative thoughts about your playing.

If any of these effects (or others) are noticed on a consistent basis...

STOP – ASSESS – REACH OUT

These effects and issues can have a deeper impact on your playing that compound upon themselves and leave you, more often than not, in a dark place in regard to your performance. As a musician, take the skills and assessment tools that you already use in your practice sessions to analyze and formulate a specific plan that can address each issue impacting your performance.

Assessing and Correcting the Potential Effects of Weight-Loss on Brass Performance:

The three physical areas that most often impact trumpet performance due to weight loss:

- Breath Support or Sustainability
- Aperture Response/ Control
- Strength/ Stamina/ Endurance

Area One – Breath Support

- Practice breathing exercises and drills that allow you to stretch and maintain a consistent pressurized release of air through the aperture or instrument.
- It is often more beneficial, during this assessment and recovery process, to do this exercise through the assembled instrument to better allow you to feel the instruments resistance.
- Once that process becomes “easy,” performing these same exercises through your mouthpiece (to remove elements of resistance) can begin the strengthening process.
- This step can be very personal, but it is encouraged to explore multiple method books or exercises that can provide a more structured approach to refining your breath control (i.e. *The Breathing Gym*, or *Caruso Studies*).

Area Two – Aperture Control

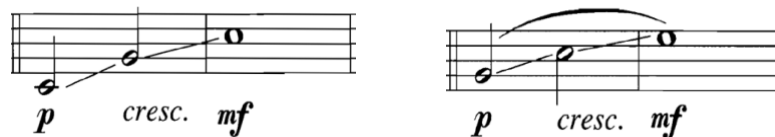
- Using various method books can provide you with pre-written exercises to assess your issues and potentially help to correct them through established methods.



*James Thompson The Buzing Book (Editions Bim, 2001)

This exercise should be used to address your response and control of the initial release of air, the initiation of vibration in the aperture, and the expansion and relaxation of the aperture at various dynamics. When performing this exercise, make sure to switch between varying registers, rather than playing in a scalar fashion. Always maintain a direct focus on clarity and response, and on the “sound” you are producing.

**The focus on sound should be a primary level of assessment throughout every exercise presented in this presentation.*



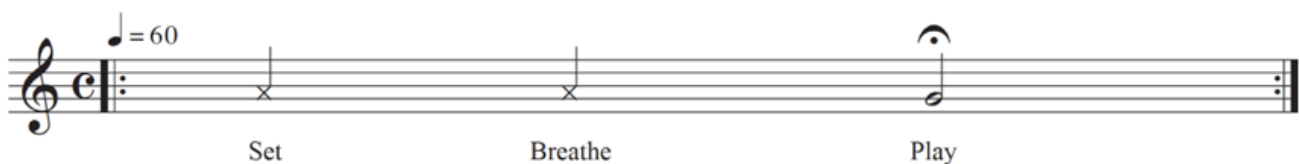
*James Thompson The Buzing Book (Editions Bim, 2001)



*Max Schlossberg Daily Drills and Technical Exercises for Trumpet (qPress Music Pub., 2014)

- Begin to integrate slurs that allow you to assess your air speed increase/decrease control through your aperture’s “grip” of that air.

Area Three – Articulation Control



Controlling the aperture after articulation can be a highly impacted aspect of your performance during your weight-loss process. Maintaining strict refinement on the various levels of activation (either through the breath or articulation) can better assess how your body now functions.

- Follow the procedure of “**BREATH – POO – TONGUE**” can better establish the exact activation point for each note throughout your performance register.



*Edwin Goldman Practical Studies for the Cornet (Carl Fischer, 1921)



*James Stamp Warm-Ups and Studies for Trumpet (Editions Bim, 2005)

Again, utilizing established methods like these from Edwin Goldman or James Stamp, can help maintain effective control over your aperture, breath, and articulation throughout your weight-loss process. These exercises are designed to help overcome specific obstacles in a player's technique, but they can also be used to outline inefficiencies that arise from your weight-loss process.



Focus on the "front" of the attack and its consistency throughout the various tessituras. Be sure to listen to the "sound" and use it as a guiding light to determine where you may want to apply a more refined focus using other exercises.

The “Slippery Slope” of Adjusting Equipment:

Throughout the process of weight-loss, you will see your progress taking physical shape, but often you will also feel your body begin to carry itself in a different way. This new “feeling” can often manifest itself in a need to adjust your equipment to maintain a sense of stability in your playing. This change comes from your body’s loss of mass and cushion on specific (and sensitive) areas of your body. The loss of “lip mass” can encourage players to seek smaller rim sizes, adjustments to both the throat and backbore, cup depth, and even alpha angles.

- These adjustments, even in players not undergoing bodily changes, can take several weeks/months to fully become acclimated to one variation in your equipment.
- Players often “muscle” their ways through equipment changes to force a result, rather than allowing your body to find the balance between its equipment and its new self.
- Take your time!
- Adjust one element of the mouthpiece or your equipment at a time – be methodical and understand the change you are making for your desired result.

The most serious and unexpected side effect of weight-loss on trumpet performance is...:

...navigating and overcoming the mental or psychological impact!

Mental or Psychological effects can come from..

- Consistent negativity in a performance setting/mindset
- Loneliness- thinking you are the only one experiencing this problem
- Fear of performance, rejection, future stability, etc.
- The metabolic release of toxins stored in your body’s fat during the weight-loss process that can cause a chemical reaction and encourage negativity in your thought process.
 - Polyvagal Theory, PTSD, etc.

Seek help and reach out to professionals, colleagues, and others around you. Perform and play with others so that you can model their sounds, and you can have them listen for key elements you are assessing in your own progress. This team effort will potentially allow for a faster recovery time.

KNOW THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE! - REACH OUT TO OTHERS! – ESTABLISH A SUPPORT GROUP!

TL;DR

1. Know you are not alone!
2. Take your time through this process – You’re playing the “long game.”
3. Reach out to professionals/colleagues for guidance and support.
4. ALWAYS be guided by your sound!

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