

What To Do When The Performer Next To You Just Doesn't Care?

Fran Kick

There's at least one in every band. The student who just seems to be going through the motions. Sometimes mumbling to his or her section "I'm just not into this today. Rehearsal sucks. It's too hot today. It's too cold today. Something's wrong with my instrument." (and all the other variations on a theme of whining, griping, moaning, groaning, wondering why they're having a terrible time).

Notice how the entire focus of their complaining always seems to surround *themselves*. Or blaming other things for the fact that they're not "into it."

Rather than concentrating and paying attention, they're complaining and perhaps attracting attention, even distracting others from paying attention, and in general making—and sometimes causing—more mistakes in rehearsal.

What can you do to make a difference? Well short of kicking them out of band—which in truth isn't a very good idea. Whether they're the worst player or the best player, we need *everyone* in the band.

Besides, they might not always be this way. It's just not their day. Think about it; they may have failed a test in class. Forgot their lunch, had to buy, and it was Sloppy Joe day in lunch-lady land. Who knows, but we've all been there. Stuff happens outside of rehearsal that impacts even the best of us and especially the worst of us.

Of course the trick is not letting it affect us. Allow band to be an escape from all THAT and focus on making music which mentally can bring us to a higher place above all the riff-raff, the hassles we have, the day to day thick and thin of things.

But what about that person next to you in your section who just doesn't seem to care? How can you help? **Well here are THREE things you can do:**

#1 – Nothing! That's right, ignore them. Don't give them any attention. If we know what gets attention gets repeated, then the last thing you want to do is pay them off with your attention. It only reinforces their negative behavior and you do NOT want them having "another bad day."

#2 – Ask them a performance related question. Say something like:

"Hey, I'm just checking – what count do our horns go to the press box?

When does that crescendo start?

Where is our left hand when we finish that dance sequence."

Now, you might already know the answer, but it's a good way to distract them from their bad day and refocus their thoughts on something rehearsal specific.

Do be careful *when* you ask them—while your director is talking would *not* be a good time—walking back to "do it again" would be better.

#3 – Be sure to be the band member you'd want them to be. If actions speak louder than words, don't get sucked into their negativity. Be the example, the role model, the leader who makes things happen and always KICKS IT IN!

Fran Kick is an author, educational consultant and professional speaker who knows What Makes Kids KICK! Since taking an educational leave of absence from teaching band at Centerville High School (Ohio), he has developed his part-time speaking adventure into a full-time mission. Today, Fran presents programs across the U.S. and Canada to thousands of college/university, high school, junior high/middle school students, plus the many people who work with them. In addition, he has been a clinician at TBA the past two years. www.kickitin.com/tba He has his B.A. in Music Education and a M.A. in Educational Psychology.