

## **Mike Burris' Favorite Teachings**

### **Dreams, Vision, The Why, Focus, Targets:**

- “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined, and meet with success unexpected in common hours.” Remember, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”
- “Without ‘Why’ you have no power and are just another link in someone else’s chain, good at following orders.”
- “The person who knows ‘how’ will always have a job. The person who knows ‘why’ will always be their boss.”
- Inside job: Only when you have a resounding “Yes” inside you, can you say “No” to everybody else’s “Yes” inside them, and to the myriad of distractions outside of you.
- “Without vision, the people perish.” You’ll need that “fire within” to set the world on fire, to push past doubts, and go where few men dare to tread.
- “A task without a vision is drudgery. A vision without a task is a dream. A task with a vision is victory!”
- Aimless people are dangerous – you don’t want to be around them when they shoot arrows without a target!
- Like a magnifying glass focusing the sun’s rays into a beam of fire, focus in your life is fire – focus is power!
- “Whatever you focus on expands – energy flows where attention goes.” Whatever you stare at while driving, you will drive right into – so don’t stare at the side of the road!

### **Purpose, Time Priorities, Plans, Discipline of Practice:**

- “The secret of success is constancy of purpose.”
- “Keep the main things the main things” or you’ll end up “majoring in the minors!” Don’t confuse activity with effectiveness – a rocking chair gets you nowhere.
- “The enemy of the ‘best’ is often not the ‘bad’ but the ‘good’ – anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant.”
- Everybody gets 168 hours in a week – the difference is some have learned how to use it wisely.
- “Killing time murders opportunities – most mis-fortunes are the result of mis-used time.”
- Most people don’t plan to fail – they fail to plan. So plan your practice and practice your plan.
- To relish the mountain peak’s view, you will have to first climb it. Music is glorious, but you first need to get over the “hill of discipline” to create it.
- Just like what’s stamped on pop bottles: No Deposit, No Return. You get back what you give out – boomerang!
- Out of sight, out of mind – if you don’t keep your goal in view, you will start minding everything else you see.
- “A man shall reap what he sows” – unless you sow seed for a harvest, by default, the field will grow weeds. “Where there’s no gardener, there’s no garden.”
- Soon or later, you’ll have to realize that “if you don’t paddle your own canoe, you won’t move.”
- Life abhors a vacuum – if you don’t purposefully fill it, the “dirt” of distractions often gets sucked in.
- By physics’ law of entropy, left by itself everything falls apart – it takes purposeful effort to make something beautiful.
- Will you be a spectator on the sofa watching other people really live or will you be the one “Making it so?”
- “Today’s decisions are tomorrow’s realities” and so “The best way to predict your future is to create it.”

- If you just want to “go with the flow,” just like water, you’ll go downstream, likely washed up on the shore. “Even a dead fish can float downstream!” Remember that “Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it,” so “No decision is a decision.”

### **Gifted? Habits make or break you, so practice:**

- Your gifted not because you have faster, stronger, more coordinated muscles – there are plenty of people who do who will never make beautiful music. The real gift is if you find great pleasure practicing for hours doing something others would give up after 5 minutes.
- Since we are all creatures of habit, choose those that will pay off, those that lead you toward your dreams.
- “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”
- If you don’t want to be a slave to the “tyranny of the urgent” or the “mood of the moment,” you have to become a slave to your own dreams and the habits necessary to get there.
- 21 days in a row can make anything a habit!
- “Great thoughts reduced to practice become great acts.” Remember, “Success comes when preparations meets opportunity” but “Practice doesn’t make you perfect; it makes you prepared.”
- You can’t “cram” skill into your body like school erroneously teaches. It takes regular exercise to build muscle memory for coordination, speed, and endurance, so everybody has to pay the same “dues” to get to the front of the line! “There is no one waiting in line to go to the top if you are willing to take the stairs!” You will get further in music by practicing 15 minutes a day than 2 hours once a week!
- Being accountable to a teacher and keeping your own practice schedule dates will keep you steering straight!

### **Start and Stay in Motion:**

- Even the most powerful rocket will stay on the launch pad unless someone lights the fire!
- “It doesn’t matter how much horsepower a car has – it can’t make one move forward until it is put into gear.”
- It’s the start that stops most! “The secret to getting ahead is getting started” and “It’s a job that’s never started that takes the longest to finish.”
- Once you stop moving, Grandpa Inertia keeps you sittin’, but Uncle Momentum keeps you moving! Use the power of physics to your advantage.
- People who stop moving, rust like the Wizard of Oz’s “Tin Man” and crumble into pieces. “A man will rust out quicker than he will wear out.”
- “The winners never quit and the quitters never won.” So, “Never give up – never surrender!”

### **Keep feeding your dreams:**

- Out of sight, out of mind – keeping feeding your dreams with “the right stuff.” Remember GIGO – Garbage In, Garbage Out.
- If you don’t water even the strongest plant, it will wither and die. “The grass is not always greener on the other side of the fence. Fences have nothing to do with it – the grass is greenest wherever it is watered!”
- If you stop putting wood on a roaring fire, it will surely die out.
- “Stopping at 3<sup>rd</sup> base adds no more to the score than striking out.”
- As powerful as the front rows of a concert are, the energy on stage is a 100 times greater. Playing music with even one person is a 100 times more fun and motivating. Get in a band and you’ll practice!

### **Take the short cut – break it down into bite sizes:**

- “Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what we see clearly at hand.”
- Success doesn’t happen searching for big blocks of time, but when you seize the “wasted scrap” blocks of time. Henry Ford said, “Most people get ahead during the time that others waste.” Napoleon said, “The reason I defeated the Russians is because they did not know the value of five minutes.” I have a practice pad in my bathroom, and sticks next to my coffee table and in my car. Where are yours?
- Simply model excellence – nobody has time to take the “scenic route” by “reinventing the wheel.” Take lessons! Even Mozart said: “I have never made the slightest effort to compose anything original.” Michael Jordan said: “I built my talents on the shoulders of other’s talents. I evolved from them.”
- “How does anybody eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” Break your “mountain into mole hills” – “It’s hard by the yard, but cinch by the inch.”

### **Watch your language:**

- Be clear: Say what you want, not what you don’t want. Don’t count/sing rests loudly or you’ll play them!
- Self-criticism is self-defeating! “What comes in a CAN is success, but failures settle for can NOTs.” Remember, “Whether you think you can or whether you think you can’t, you’re right!”
- You say, “This is too hard!” Remember that diamonds are valuable because they are extremely hard, and that “the only place you’ll find success before work is in the dictionary.” However, a good teacher can show you easier ways – the straight path instead of the “scenic route.”
- Mental coordination precedes physical coordination – “if you can ‘see’ it and say it, you can play it!”
- Move your mouth to move your mind: Counting and singing uses more of your brain to program your body – soft makes small but loud makes large. Think for your mouth as a “fifth limb.”
- The greater the contrast between soft (rests) and loud (notes), the greater the memory.
- Groove is king: Speak the groove, but think the Time: Say the bass drum & loudest snares while thinking the Time-keeper(s).

### **Make it musical – Music is an “inside job”:**

- “Music is love in search of a word” and a note to sing it by! If the notes sound good singing them, then they will be playing them.
- Turn every note into a song: Move from the left-brain counting of “math” to the right-brain singing of “art.”
- Choose sounds like the drums (Boom, Cha) or instruments you are Supporting (Goong, Chink).
- Get the tempo in mind before count-off by first singing the hardest parts or the Chorus, if a song.
- Play everything to music – “use it or lose it.”
- Get your head out of the music stand: Practice seeing the parts with your mind’s eye, so you can keep your eyes on the drums, your technique, other players, and the audience.

### **If you S.E.D it well, you’ll stay out of the D.E.S.**

- Play music from the ground up well and you won’t have to visit the **D**epartment of **E**conomic **S**ecurity – **Keep It Simple (K.I.S.)** if you’re new to the song or the band, and best in this **S.E.D.** order. It’s like shaking hands before you get around to hugging:

- 80% **Support** – mimic or lock-in to key “meat & potato” rhythms, especially chord changes and bass grooves.
- 15% **Embellish** – add a little “spice” by thickening out the notes with drags, flams, buzzes, and ghost-notes.
- 5% **Dialogue** – call & response with other players, selectively filling the “holes” in their conversation.
- It’s about good time: To have a good time in music, keep good Time for the music. Most of drumming is keeping steady Time for the band, especially if others aren’t, and then **Supporting** the groove. Limit **Embellishment** and **Dialogue** – leave holes in the music so it can “breathe” because most people can’t differentiate too many notes, so it becomes noise. Don’t “hog the ball” – leave holes so others can fill them.
- The reason we have two ears is to listen twice as much: “The first step to wisdom is silence; the second is listening” and “The road to the heart is the ear.” Before you jump into playing, really listen to the music while singing the groove and air-drumming. Otherwise, you’ll only be playing what you “think” it is saying!

### **Be different – don’t practice mistakes:**

- The definition of insanity is to repeat the same things that caused the mistake but expect different results. If you want different results, you have to do different things or things differently!
- The fastest way to end up faster is to start slower – give your brain a chance to build muscle memory! YouTube and many music apps can slow the music down – that’s how I make drum charts!
- When you make a mistake, go slower, break it down, watch your technique, count, and sing.

### **Seeing is believing for good technique:**

- A mirror will be your best teacher: Continuously correct your technique by seeing yourself like a teacher does!
- Tension is evil: Relax every part of your body and you will play longer and ultimately faster.

### **Nail each part and then rebuild the whole:**

- To strengthen the whole chain, focus on the weak links, the bottlenecks on the assembly line. Zero in on your weaknesses first.
- Take the whole apart, perfect each part, and then put it back together again.
- Start with the essentials and bring in the Embellishment or nuances one by one: Get the overall rhythm right, then add sticking, dynamics, ghosting, rolls, buzzes, flams, etc. In a drumset beat, play the melody or groove first between the limbs. Then get the Time-keeper(s) going and add each limb of the groove separately, and then in combinations.

### **People hear with their eyes – the show is more than the music:**

- Dress appropriately to present the your (and/or band’s) image – people sum you up in 30 seconds, like the lobby of a hotel being inviting or not.
- Get your head out of the music stand as soon as you can to create chemistry with the band and audience.
- Use showmanship to catch their attention and keep it. Project confidence to engage the audience.