1. **Describe how you want to experience your next performance. Imagine walking on stage: How do you want to feel physically? What kinds of thoughts do you want to be having? What emotions do you want to experience?**

The next time I walk on stage, I’d like to have a calm heartbeat and steady, sure muscles. I want to be able to think about the nuance of the performance, and the ways I can best react to my scene partners and the audience, instead of needing to focus on remembering my lines or my vocal technique. Emotionally, I want to feel joy and a sense of gratefulness that I have the opportunity to be on stage, and on a deeper level, I want to connect on an emotional level with my character.

1. **How would you like to come across to your audience? What image do you want to convey through your stage entrances, exits, and bows?**

I want to appear completely sure of myself; confident, yet humble. My entrances and exits should seem purposeful, and as if I know exactly where I am going. My bows especially should appear that I am satisfied with my performance, even if I’m not. Often, I unintentionally tense up or get “in my head” right before I walk on, so I hope to be able to train myself to correct my posture, breath, and take in the moment at each entrance.

1. **Have you recently videotaped a performance and later watched it with a mentor to discuss your stage presence? If not, when might you be able to do this?**

I haven’t, but in my next performance, Legally Blonde, there will be a DVD that I can go back and watch later.

1. **How do you experience performance anxiety? Describe your specific symptoms:**
   1. **Physical:** Sweaty palms, shaky legs and hands, increased heart rate.
   2. **Thought Patterns (self-talk):** Lack of confidence in my knowledge of the material. I will typically run through every bit of my performance over and over in my head.
   3. **Feelings:** I typically have two big fears present: fear of failure and fear of fear itself. It starts with being nervous about making mistakes in front of my peers, and then I begin to feel nervous about my anxiety itself, because I know it will lead to physical symptoms that can affect my ability to perform.
2. **Of the interventions described for handling anxiety in this chapter, which do you plan to work on?**

The four that would be most helpful for me are preparation, desensitization, learning to let go, and taking a deep breath.

Time and time again, students within my discipline are told that preparation is key, and while I’m completely aware of this (and I subscribe to this school of thought), I still end up pushing personal rehearsal time to the side in favor of getting other things with stricter deadlines accomplished. While I still practice during formal rehearsal, I don’t get enough time in outside of it, which can lead to me not being 100% confident in every word and note. One of my biggest fears is forgetting something on stage, so being more prepared would help me to alleviate this.

I already have some experience with desensitization, and so far, it’s been very effective. In my Auditioning class last semester, we were required to perform several auditions. Auditions used to terrify me, but eventually it just became old hat. I still feel some anxiety during big auditions, but for the most part I’ve learned to accept that if I do my best, then the rest is outside of my control. I think that performing solo frequently will also help to desensitize me to that performance anxiety as well.

Letting go of my mistakes is something I really struggle with. During a performance, I constantly find myself zoning out and focusing on my own opinion of myself instead of digging into and enjoying my connection with character and the piece. My inability to accept my mistakes and to ignore my fear of them robs me of the part of performing that I love the most. I want to be able to be in the moment and let that rush of performing course through my body as excitement instead of disappointment or fear.

I constantly practice deep breathing techniques, but for some unknown reason, the minute I stand up to perform, I suddenly forget that I have a diaphragm. Forgetting to breathe is a huge roadblock for me in progressing as a performer, especially when acting. Being a good actor is largely about breaths, and it takes me way too long to get into the groove of a performance and start breathing again.

In all, I need to incorporate all of these things into my personal practice. This means practicing every day, or at least every day that I can, and within those rehearsals, asking friends to come watch every so often, allowing myself to practice all the way through without stopping, and getting into the habit of breathing. In regard to the last bit, I especially want to mark my breaths within my pieces, and create muscle memory of correcting my posture and taking a deep breath before and after a performance.

1. **Have you ever experienced discomfort during or after practice? What have you done as a result of feeling this discomfort?**

Yes, typically if I’m pushing my voice past its limits. Recently, during the rehearsal process of Legally Blonde, I’ve had to push my voice to new heights (literally), and it’s taken its toll. Learning about my vocal mechanism in Vocal Pedagogy has made me more aware of what this discomfort means, and I’m taking it more seriously. If I start feeling discomfort during a rehearsal, I stop- *immediately.* I try to remember that I only get one set of vocal chords, and that if I injure them now, it can affect me permanently.

1. **How often do you take breaks during practice sessions? How long are these breaks? What do you do during these breaks?**

I usually don’t take breaks unless my voice gets tired. If I do, they are typically just until I feel physically ready to continue, and I spend that time reviewing lyrics in my head, or on social media. However, in the future I plan to start taking scheduled breaks to prevent vocal fatigue.

1. **To help ensure a lifetime of healthy music making, what else (beyond taking breaks) can you do to help safeguard your performance health?**

I have mild acid reflux, and for a long time I just ignored it. However, after a talk with my ENT (ear, nose, throat doctor), I’m trying out new medications to manage it. I’m also watching what I eat, and paying attention to the ways my diet affects my voice. In the future, I can hydrate more often and steam when my voice is feeling subpar. Honesty though, knowing when to stop is the best thing I can do for my voice.