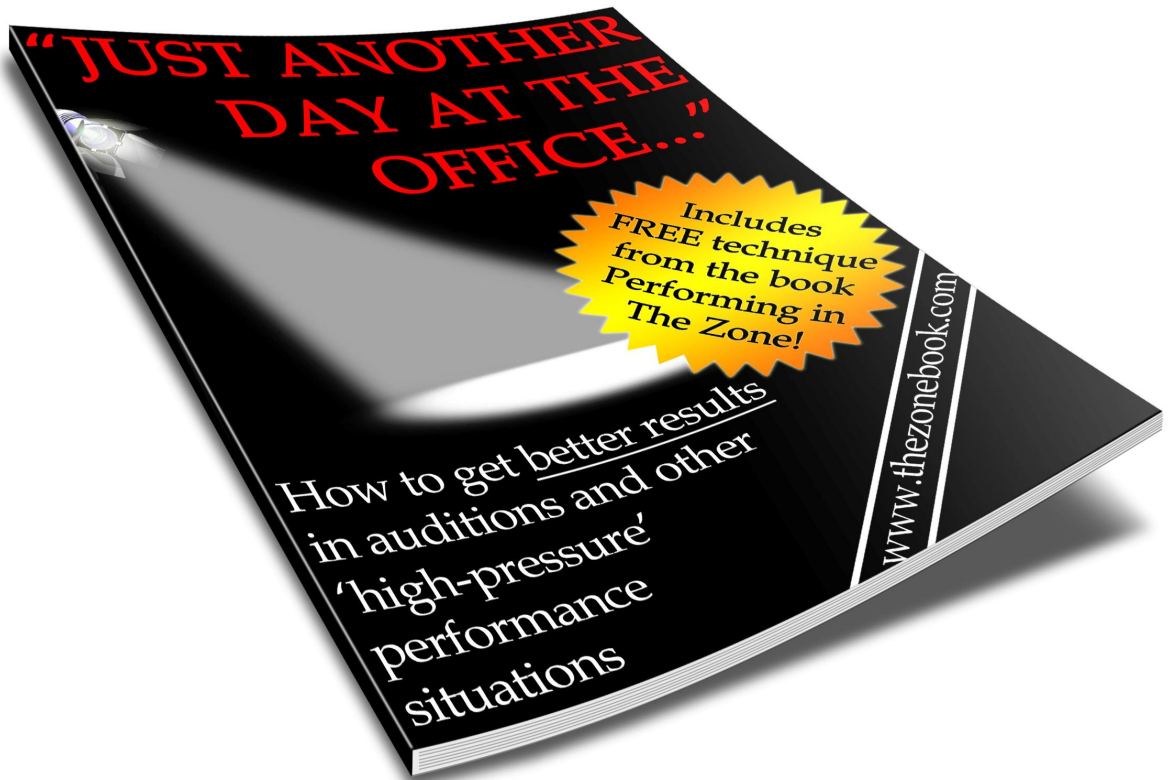


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# Welcome!

*“Just another day at the office...”* was originally written for classical musicians as an aid in preparing for auditions and other solo performances.

However, the information in this eBook can be applied to **anyone** in a ‘high-pressure’ performance situation!

## Introduction

Throughout the course of your performing life, opportunities to audition for jobs or perform in solo recitals don’t usually come along too often.

If you’re an active job-seeker, you may have the chance to attend four or five auditions per year. As a student, you might perform one or two sixty-minute solo recitals per year. And as a full-time professional orchestral musician or choral singer, solo performances may be very few and far between indeed.

Auditions and other solo performances are ‘under the spotlight’ events, and are often experienced by many performers with high levels of **performance arousal**.

*“Performance arousal? What’s that?”*

You’ve no doubt heard of or even experienced feelings of anxiety before and at times during performances. This anxiety, or **performance anxiety** as it is commonly referred to, **is the negative form of performance arousal**. Performance anxiety can affect you negatively in performing situations.

**Excitement** on the other hand, or the feeling of looking forward to a performance, **is the positive form of performance arousal**, and can have a positive effect on your ability to perform.

But this is only true if the level of excitement you experience is **appropriate** for your particular performing situation.

In other words if the level of excitement you experience is **inappropriate** (i.e. too much or too little) for your performing situation, then this excitement will have a negative effect on your ability to perform.

So in short, the term “performance arousal” describes the **excitement** or **anxiety** you may feel before and at times during performances.

Performance arousal can be particularly strong in ‘under the spotlight’ events, or other performing situations that you perceive as ‘high-pressure’.

*“Ok. So how much positive performance arousal (excitement) do I need to get the best results?”*

As a classical musician or singer performing in a recital or audition situation, high levels of excitement may make you feel like you are out of control. Likewise, performance anxiety can also make you feel out of control, and in addition may be accompanied by unpleasant physical sensations such as muscular tension, hyperventilation, sweaty palms, nausea, and so on.

So, in traditional recital or audition situations, **a moderately low level of positive performance arousal (excitement) will in most cases allow you to achieve your best possible results.**

*“That sounds like it should work in theory. But how do I actually make it happen?”*

In this eBook you’ll be shown the simple yet powerful technique of **Intense Positive Visualisation**<sup>1</sup>.

This technique has been specifically designed to help you obtain an ideal state of mind for your performing situations, regardless of your field of performance.

Using Intense Positive Visualisation, you can achieve better results in auditions, and see how other ‘high-pressure’ performance situations may be perceived as easy, comfortable, and dare I say, even **a joy to experience!**

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<sup>1</sup> Intense Positive Visualisation is just one of over 20 powerful techniques designed to help you achieve an ideal state of mind for your performing situations, *regardless of your field of performance.*

All of these techniques are presented in the book *Performing in The Zone*, available at [www.thezonebook.com](http://www.thezonebook.com)

# Familiarity

To begin with, let's take a situation quite apart from a musical one. Let's imagine for a minute that you are an office worker beginning your first day at a new job.

As with a recital or audition, this is a situation that can put you in the **stressful** position of **not knowing exactly what will happen** throughout the course of the experience. You might have a certain amount of information, but there are still many **variables** and details that are either **unfamiliar**, or completely **unknown**. You are also quite naturally aware that the outcome of the actual event is significant, especially given the **importance** placed on first impressions.

What are some of the physical and mental responses that you might experience before and/or during your 'ever-important' first day at the office? Perhaps you might have sweaty palms, shallow breathing, a churning stomach, or possibly mixed feelings of **excitement** and **anxiety**.

However, after experiencing your new environment for a few days, you begin to perceive being at the office as no big deal. When this happens, the heightened excitement or anxiety (performance arousal) you experienced on your first day starts to disappear.

Now, compare the number of times you've heard of the phrase

“I'm starting my new job today. Wish me luck!” with the phrase

“It's my 30th day at the office today. Wish me luck!” and not to mention

“It's my 2,623rd day at the office today. Wish me luck!”

It starts to sound ridiculous, doesn't it?

So therefore, and this really is the crux of the matter, what is the difference between the ever so slightly ridiculous sounding 2,623rd day at the office and the 1st day at the office?

The answer is **familiarity!**

And it is a special sort of familiarity that helps us feel at ease, calm, confident and in control.

This sort of familiarity can be referred to as **positive conditioning**.

# Riding the Roller Coaster

To explain positive conditioning in plain English, picture this...

You are at a theme park and are very nervous or anxious about riding that big, scary roller coaster for the first time. Even thinking about taking the plunge starts you off on a serious **emotional roller coaster!**

*“Should I? Shouldn't I? I don't really want to after all. But I do want to try it, and all my friends are doing it. I can do it. I can't do it. It might be fun!? But what happens if we crash? Maybe I should have just stayed in bed this morning!”*

Eventually you decide to board the roller coaster, and experience the ride.

Riding the roller coaster turns out to be a positive experience – you survived and even enjoyed it in some weird way! This makes your brain suddenly say *“Hey! That wasn't so bad after all!”*

The next time you think about riding the roller coaster, you are perhaps only a little nervous or anxious. You make the decision to ride the roller coaster again, and again it turns out to be a positive experience – you even had your eyes open this time!

Your brain now says to you *“Hey! That was actually kinda fun! I wanna do it again!”*

And so the next time you think about riding the roller coaster, you are looking forward to it, because you know it will be a fun, enjoyable experience!

This is basically how **positive conditioning** works.



However, what if your experiences are negative?

For example, what happens if the first time you ride the roller coaster you get stuck at the top of the ride and are forced to dangle upside-down for 6 hours because of a technical problem?

If this happens, your brain is probably going to say to you the next time you think about riding a roller coaster, *“Oi! Remember that last roller coaster experience?? It was horrible! I don't ever want to go through that again – get me outta here!”*

This is **negative conditioning** in action.

# “The Routine” – Part 1

So, how do we ensure your brain tells you that auditions, recitals, and other ‘high-pressure’ performing situations are **easy and fun**?

How do you achieve **positive conditioning** when you only get one shot at something???

We’ll answer these questions very soon! But for now, it’s back to the office!

After 30 days at the office, you know the routine...

- Wake up with the alarm clock, hit the ‘snooze’ button, and sleep for an extra 10 minutes
- Get out of bed when the alarm rings for the second time
- Eat breakfast
- Have a shower and get dressed
- Brush teeth
- Shoes on
- Leave the house after locking the door
- Walk to the bus stop. Aim to arrive there in time to get on the number 85 bus that you know always leaves 2 or 3 minutes earlier than it’s supposed to
- Board the bus
- Get off the bus at the appropriate stop
- Walk up to the building and in through the main entrance

# “The Routine” – Part 2 A

- Greet the receptionist
- Sign in
- Walk up the stairs, bidding a fellow colleague a good day on the way
- Greet the other office workers as you pass them on your way to your desk
- Arrive at your desk, sit down, and start the day’s work
- Lunch break for 45 minutes
- Work through to the late afternoon
- When it’s time to leave, walk back down the stairs, out of the office, and out of the building

All of these small but necessary actions are completed each day as part of your **routine**.

Thinking back to your first day at the office, you didn’t have this routine – your first day was **completely unfamiliar!**

This is the reason why you may have been feeling anxious or even over-excited (high **performance arousal** level), and the reason why you asked your partner, flatmate, friends, or family to “wish you luck.”

Now, if it feels like we have wandered from the path of an ‘under the spotlight’ performance situation, read the bullet points in “**The Routine**” – **Part 1** again, and then skip directly to “**The Routine**” – **Part 2 B** below.

# “The Routine” – Part 2 B

- Walk around to the stage door of the venue
- Greet the receptionist at the desk
- Sign in
- Walk up the stairs and along the corridor to warm-up room marked ‘Soloist 1’
- Take out your instrument, and begin your warm-up routine
- After some time, your accompanist enters the warm-up room
- With 15 minutes until your audition is scheduled to start, you rehearse entries and certain problem passages
- The stage manager knocks on the door, and asks if you are both ready
- You follow the stage manager to the wings in the off-stage area
- You walk confidently on stage, with your accompanist following closely behind
- You acknowledge the audition jury
- You begin the audition calmly, and confidently
- The performance begins, and continues in the most musical way you can possibly imagine
- You finish the last audition piece, acknowledge the jury, and finally walk off stage

So, if you’re a performer, and get the chance to be ‘at the office’ for 30 days (performing in recitals or auditions every day for 30 days) you can get to know the routine, and become quite comfortable and familiar with it.

**But wait a second!**

You might be thinking:

*“Ok, but the office worker has the opportunity to learn the routine and get familiar with it as they are in reality at the office every weekday. I’m not doing a recital or audition everyday. I **only get one shot at this!**”*

# What?!?

You're right! You're not performing in a recital or audition everyday...but you *should* be!

*“What?!? Auditions and recitals don't come along everyday!”*

In reality, no they don't! But in your mind, you can perform auditions and recitals as often as you wish!

*“What do you mean?!? How does this work?!?”*

By using specially designed **visualisation techniques**, you can use your mind to rehearse any 'one-shot' performance as many times as you wish!

Therefore, you can become familiar with your 'one-shot' performing situation, well before it even happens!

So, if you practise visualisation techniques, when you walk into your performing situation in reality, you're just like the office worker going to work on their 30<sup>th</sup> or even 2,623<sup>rd</sup> day at the office!

**In other words, you can feel, calm, confident, and in control in any performance situation!**

# The Proof

*“But wait just another second!*

*Surely there is a vast difference between experiencing an event in reality and experiencing the same event in your imagination?*

*After all, the office worker **actually** is at the office every day, and if I use visualisation, I’m only going to **imagine** myself being at ‘the office’.*

*Can this really be the same thing?”*

The short answer to this question is **YES!**

According to many studies on visualisation in the field of sports psychology, the subconscious mind doesn’t know the difference between actually experiencing an event, and simply imagining an event in vivid detail!

**Look at this example:**

One study on visualisation in sports psychology involved the members of three basketball teams of approximately equal skill level, practising shooting ‘3-pointers’, for a period of 30 days.

One of the teams practised neither physically on the court, nor in their minds during the duration of the study. Their improvement at the end of the study was not surprisingly 0%.

Another team practised physically – that is, on the basketball court – for a period of one hour each day. After 30 days, their improvement was measured at 24%.

The third team did not practise physically at all but was told to mentally visualise the game for one hour each day. At the end of the thirty day period, their improvement was a remarkable 23%.

What was the reason for this?

The sports scientists concluded that **the subconscious mind cannot differentiate between what is real and what is imagined.**

Therefore, since the subconscious mind has a large influence on how you perform, positively conditioning your subconscious mind using Intense Positive Visualisation can have a huge effect on your success as a performer!

Find out how to practise Intense Positive Visualisation in the next chapter!

# Intense Positive Visualisation

Visualisation techniques can help you **positively condition yourself** to achieve an ideal state of mind, helping you to gain optimal results in your performing situations.



In short, when visualising, you train your mind by entering a relaxed state and **imagining** the exact results you would like to achieve.

By regularly practising visualisation techniques, **you can condition yourself for success!**

In the book *Performing in The Zone*, three different types of visualisation techniques are explained:

- Snap Shot
- Intense Positive Visualisation
- The 5 Sense Visualisation Method

Here in “*Just Another Day at the Office...*” you’re going to see exactly how the simple yet powerful technique of **Intense Positive Visualisation** can help you in your performing situations!

Read on!



## **Different points of view**

Intense Positive Visualisation can be carried out in the 1<sup>st</sup> person or 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective.

Using the 1<sup>st</sup> person perspective, you put yourself in the centre of the visualisation. For example, if you are a concert pianist, you would imagine yourself performing on stage from your own eyes, seeing your hands and the piano keyboard in front of you, taking in the experience as if you were actually carrying it out in reality.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective, you would see yourself from a distance, possibly from a seat in the audience, the back of the room, or even a position up in the ceiling somewhere above, behind, or beside you.

Some performers find a 1<sup>st</sup> person visualisation to be more powerful and real, whereas others may find a 3<sup>rd</sup> person visualisation to be most effective. Experiment using both viewpoints, and discover which one works best for you.

## Intense Positive Visualisation explained

To practise Intense Positive Visualisation, you will need to be undisturbed for a period of anywhere from ten minutes to an hour, depending on the length of the performance you are about to visualise.

Intense Positive Visualisation is best carried out lying down on your back with your hands resting gently on your solar-plexus. You may choose to lie flat on the floor or on a yoga mattress. Lying down on a bed can be an acceptable alternative, and is at times preferable if practising this exercise just before sleeping. It's important to keep the body at a comfortable temperature throughout the duration of the visualisation, and therefore covering yourself with a blanket might be necessary.

To begin Intense Positive Visualisation, gently close your eyes, and lightly touch your tongue to the front part of the roof of your mouth, just behind the teeth. This is a Qi Gong technique which forms an 'energy bridge' to allow freer flow of energy in the human energy system.<sup>2</sup> Try to keep the root of your tongue relaxed at all times. If you have trouble with this, simply let your tongue sit in its natural position and come back to this Qi Gong energy bridge technique at a later stage.

Whilst in a horizontal position, allow the floor to take your weight. Feel your limbs becoming heavier the more relaxed they feel. Trust the floor – it will hold you. Give in to the support from underneath. Trust, relax, and let go. Breathe gently through your nose. Allow your body to breathe as it needs to.

The next section is designed to help you understand how Intense Positive Visualisation works. It is an example of one possible visualisation, taken from the perspective of a musician giving a recital, requiring a performance arousal level of +1 before the

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<sup>2</sup> Qi Gong and how it can help you prepare for performing situations is explained in *Performing in The Zone*, available at [www.thezonebook.com](http://www.thezonebook.com)

performance, +2 for the majority of the recital, and +3 for the climax of the concert.<sup>3</sup>

After reading the following example and understanding the process of Intense Positive Visualisation, you can then create your own personal visualisation to meet your specific needs. When creating your visualisation, remember to visualise events exactly as you want them to be.

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<sup>3</sup> For a complete description of performance arousal, and the different amounts required for various performing situations, refer to *Performing in The Zone*.

**Start of Intense Positive Visualisation example:**

You begin by imagining yourself at home, taking your performance clothes out of the wardrobe. You check to see that everything is in order with your clothes and your performance shoes. You put your performance clothes and shoes in a suit bag, pick up your instrument case, check to see if you have your keys and wallet, and leave the house, locking the door behind you. You walk down the stairs and out on to the street in a relaxed pace. Arriving at the metro (underground train/’tube’) station, you use your ticket to pass the barrier, and board your train. It’s going to be a great show. Your performance arousal level is at +1. You feel relaxed, positive, and calm.

Getting off at the right stop, you stroll towards the recital hall, taking in the scenery on the way. Perhaps a seagull is calling in the distance? How do the trees look? Are there other people out walking? You take out your Cue Card and slowly read over your key words. Your performance arousal level is at +1. You feel relaxed, positive, and calm.

You arrive at the venue and greet the receptionist on the way in. After signing in, you head to your warm up room where your accompanist is already waiting for you. You ask your accompanist for 15 minutes by yourself so that you can prepare yourself and warm up. You unpack your instrument, and begin your warm up routine.

It feels fantastic to start warming up. You know your accompanist is going help you put on a great show. You know that the venue has a warm acoustic. Your performance clothes are ironed and your shoes polished. You are ready. You are about to share part of yourself with some people who want to hear you – they want to be touched by you. It’s going to be a warm, giving, rewarding experience for both them and you. It’s going to be great! Your performance arousal level is at +1. You feel relaxed, positive, and calm.

After 15 minutes your accompanist walks into the room. Before you begin to rehearse, you check your Cue Card again, and go through

your Pre-Performance Ritual, “C3” – calm, controlled, confident – the “C3” and “+1” on your Cue Card gives you a familiar, friendly reminder.<sup>4</sup> You rehearse the beginning of the first piece with your accompanist. It’s easy and free.

The acoustic in the practise room is dry, but you know that out there in the hall the space will take care of you – the warm reverb will beautify every nuance and add to the experience for everyone. Your performance arousal level is at +1. You feel relaxed, positive, and calm.

When it is time, you are called to the wings of the stage. You take one final look at your Cue Card and go through the “C3” exercise again. You can hear the chatter of the audience, and see the stage in front of you. You walk calmly, securely, and with purpose on to the stage where you are greeted by applause. They like you and you haven’t even done anything yet! This is going to be a fun performance! Your performance arousal level is at +1. You feel relaxed, positive, and calm.

Whilst your accompanist adjusts the piano stool, you look out into the audience and make visual contact with the people you are about to touch with your performance. Your body language exudes confidence and assuredness. You greet the audience, introducing yourself and your accompanist, and begin to talk about the evening’s programme. Your voice is stable, powerful, and reflects the perfect +1 state of performance arousal that you are currently in. Your voice resonates effortlessly to the back of the hall. You are in The Zone.

After your brief introductory talk, you look to your accompanist who is ready to work with you. This is going great! You begin your performance, and your performance arousal gently rises to a +2.

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<sup>4</sup> Cue Cards, Pre-Performance Rituals, and “C3” are explained in *Performing in The Zone*. “C3” is also introduced *First Aid! For Controlling Performance Anxiety*. Both publications are available at [www.thezonebook.com](http://www.thezonebook.com)

(At this point in the visualisation I strongly suggest that you visualise your entire performance – that is, see and hear yourself giving the most musical, fantastic, controlled, inspired, moving performance you can possibly imagine. Use either 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspective. In your visualisation you are doing everything right – it feels fantastic and sounds amazing. You are at an ideal level of performance arousal for this performing situation, and totally in The Zone.)

Just before the climax of the final piece, you turn the page, and see the familiar figure of “+3” that you wrote earlier at the top of your music. You step it up a notch, and raise your performance arousal level to +3. The music takes on a new life and energy and this is felt by you, your accompanist, and the audience. Finishing the concert at a +3 level your audience erupts in cheers and applause. You did it! It was great!! You were in The Zone!!! You acknowledge the audience, and walk off stage.

**End of Intense Positive Visualisation example.**

When you feel ready, slowly begin to move your body again. How did it feel to give that amazing performance? You were great! Everything just ‘clicked’. You were totally and completely in The Zone throughout the entire process.

Intense Positive Visualisation can be practised every day before a performance. By doing so, you can condition yourself to perform in The Zone. Intense Positive Visualisation is highly recommended to all performers about to give important performances, auditions or recitals. The earlier you begin Intense Positive Visualisation the better, but at least one week prior to the performance event should be the minimum.

In your own visualisations, remember to assess how much positive performance arousal you need at various moments: +1, +2, +3, +4, or +5. Do you need to be at the same activation level for the entire event, or does your performance arousal level need to modulate at various times? Remember that imagining yourself calm and relaxed probably isn’t going to give you the best results if you are preparing for an intensely physical, fast-paced performance situation. Likewise, visualising getting yourself psyched up and exploding out of the gates isn’t going to help you if you are preparing for a more delicate +1 situation, such as a slow movement of a concerto.

**Visualising performing with an ideal level of performance arousal is important!**

By using Intense Positive Visualisation, you are using **positive conditioning** to become familiar with as many elements of your performance day as possible, and become used to experiencing these always in a positive light.

Notice also that Intense Positive Visualisation goes into as much detail as possible, both before and during your performance. This is to help take away as many surprises and unknown factors on the day of your performance as possible.

It may help the accuracy and intensity of your visualisation to do some reconnaissance by actually visiting the performance venue prior to your performance event. This is easily possible for students giving final recitals for example, or sportspeople playing at a local venue.

Try to also incorporate some variations in your visualisations. Perhaps the audience isn't ready and takes an extra 5 minutes to get seated? Perhaps your accompanist arrives later than expected due to traffic problems? Maybe the stage curtains are blue and not red? Perhaps the warm up room is bigger or smaller? Regardless of what happens, you are prepared, and you stay in your ideal level of positive performance arousal. You are completely stable, and in The Zone, always.

By using Intense Positive Visualisation every day over a period of one week, you have in effect carried out your performance successfully 7 times. Practise this visualisation 3 times per day for a week and you've completed 21 successful, positive, great, fantastic, easy, ideal performances, and have been in The Zone every single time!

Remember that your subconscious doesn't differentiate between what is real and what is imagined. Therefore by using Intense Positive Visualisation diligently, you are **conditioning yourself for success** by becoming familiar with performing in The Zone!

**By using the technique of Intense Positive Visualisation, you can experience your next audition, recital or 'high-pressure' performance as just another day at the office!**



# Conclusion

Intense Positive Visualisation is just one of over 20 effective techniques fully explained in the book *Performing in The Zone*.

These techniques can help you to become secure, confident, comfortable, in control, and successful in your performing situations.

With the book *Performing in The Zone*, you get more than just techniques. You get:

- To find out what really goes on inside your mind and body in performing situations
- To learn about The Zone, what it is, and how you can get there
- A complete explanation of performance arousal, and how it can affect you positively or negatively in performing situations
- **Over 20 techniques specifically designed to help you get better results in any field of performance**
- The 12 Week Performance Success Programme to help you incorporate the techniques from *Performing in The Zone* into your performing life
- An introduction to additional sources of advice and information to further aid you in your journey to The Zone!

By reading *Performing in The Zone*, you can:

- Perform at an optimal level
- Achieve better results when under the spotlight
- Become a master of yourself and your performance environment
- Realise your true performing potential
- Become a better performer by learning to perform in The Zone!

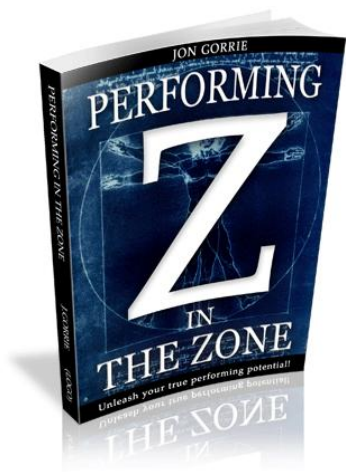
In addition, at [www.thezonebook.com](http://www.thezonebook.com) you can get:

- The very latest techniques for controlling performance anxiety and over-excitement
- One-on-one coaching services – in person, via chat, or via video conferencing (limited number of places available)

“*What should I do now?*”

- 1) Visit [www.thezonebook.com](http://www.thezonebook.com)
- 2) Order your copy of *Performing in The Zone*
- 3) Read *Performing in The Zone*, **apply** the information in the book, and enjoy the results!
- 4) Visit [www.thezonebook.com/blog](http://www.thezonebook.com/blog) regularly for news updates, interesting articles, and inspiration!

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*Performing in The Zone –  
Unleash your true performing potential!*

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