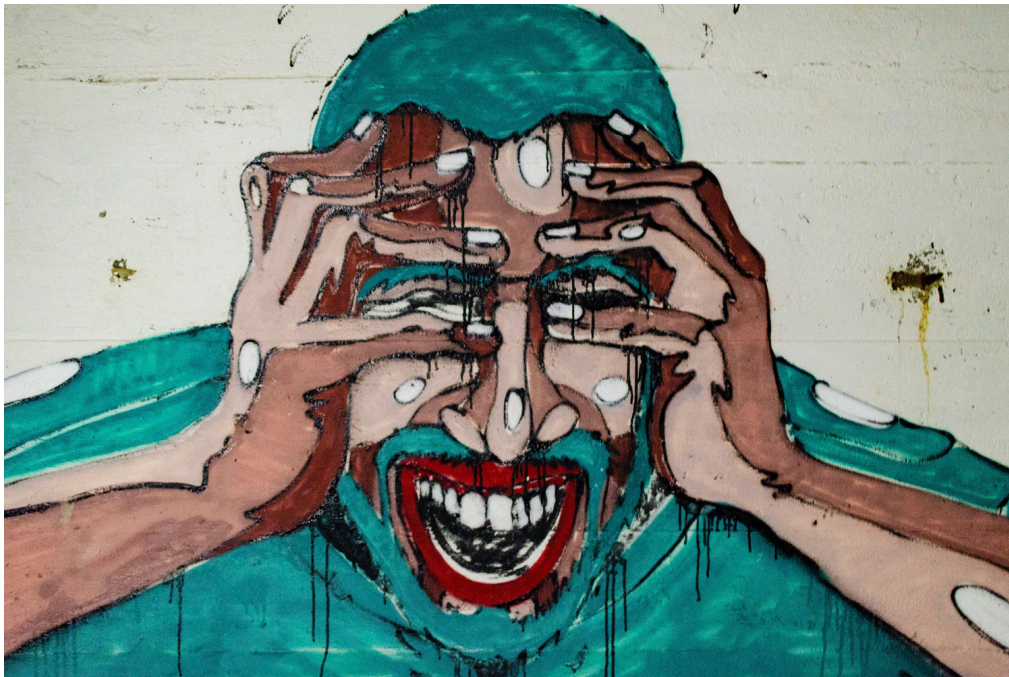


The Joy of Frustration, or Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Progress* (*But Were Afraid to Ask)

Frustration and plateaus are a normal part of growth. The experience of being stuck or making slower than desired progress can sap the motivation of even the most dedicated players. I had always viewed these feelings as negative, and this would usually result in a “frustration spiral” (frustration that expands uncontrollably beyond its original source to include frustration at the the very fact that you are frustrated to begin with). This would continue to conflagrate out of control inevitably leading to anger, self-doubt, and a ticket to a very dark place. The only solution was to suck it up, grind it out, and hopefully ultimately power through.



It was many years before I realized that this “f-word” has no meaning on its own but only the meaning that you assign it. The dictionary definition of frustration is: “the feeling of being upset or annoyed, especially because of the inability to change or achieve something.” The first part of this process is recognizing that a perspective shift will take a bit of conditioning (personal “brain-washing”), and that making any change (even in your conceptualization of frustration) will be...frustrating.

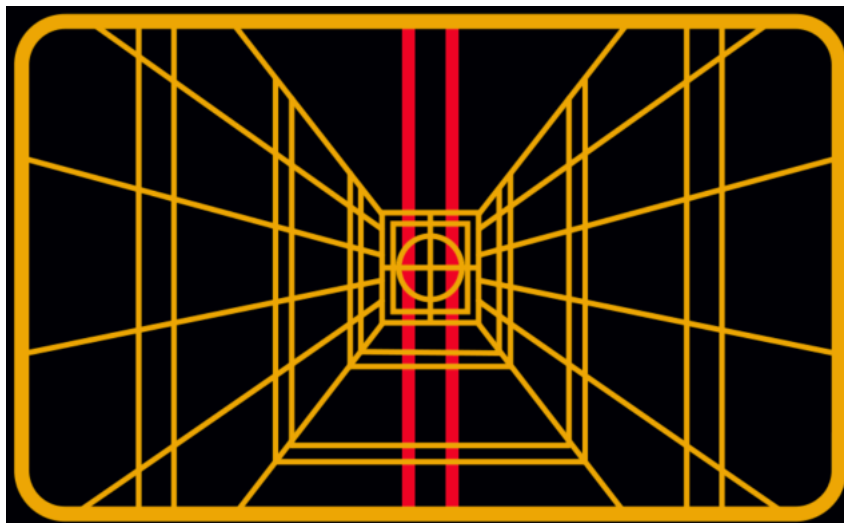
I would propose a different definition of the “f-word” (at least as it relates to growth and progress) that involves a bit of math:

frustration = conception minus ability

or

$$F = c - a$$

The image and interaction that helps me visualize this is the idea that we have 2 gauges (think of mercury thermometers) in our brains: one measures conception, and one measures ability. When they are close or equal, we can execute anything that we can conceive. We are satisfied with our performance, no matter what our level. When you can conceive of something you can't execute, this gap is experienced as "frustration". This assumes that your frustration is arising out of consistent work and/or quality input (if you are frustrated after taking time off or slacking in general, you probably DO sound like sh*t...). Therefore the experience of frustration means you are improving and poised for a breakthrough! Make the effort to condition yourself to this new response pattern to frustration, and soon you will associate the feeling with excitement rather than trepidation. The ideal balance is one where your conception is always slightly outpacing your ability. This gap is something to strive for as it is the space for movement or advancement. However, this is not always possible to regulate. The experience of having our minds blown by a performance, recording, master class, or lesson is the equivalent of having the conception gauge cranked to "11". It makes us acutely aware of a previously unrecognized gap in ability. It can be overwhelming in the moment as the path forward is not always clear, but this improvement in conception doesn't mean that we have gotten worse. Our level of competence hasn't changed; only the perception is altered. Remember, the arrow or slingshot is always pulled AWAY from the bullseye before launch. Stay on target...



FRACTAL FRIDAY TOPICS!

Please submit comments or suggestions for future topics to davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com

WORKSHOPS COMING SOON!

Stay tuned for new dates in October.

FRACTAL BASSIST Channel on YouTube (Coming Soon!)

This invite-only YouTube channel will be a continuation, development and place to share these ideas and principles. Although the entire Fractal Fingering course and samples are available online and at DiscoverDoubleBass.com, this channel will provide a forum for more in-depth content and to address questions on a more individual basis.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas you'd like explored, or inspiration you'd like to share please email: davidallenmoore@fractalbassist.com.

With Love,

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