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**From the Heart**

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*To speak honestly with friends is a hard thing to do. You never know who is actually a true friend. In fact, most friends aren’t friends at all. If you don’t know that now, you will learn it.*

*-- Steve Brock*

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| *"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."*  *- Thomas A. Edison* |

What does it mean to open up your heart and let people know what you think? The answer is this: It means talking about what you value. Of course, once you do it, everyone knows who you are and what you stand for. On one hand, it is the right thing to do. On the other, being honest with yourself and others is a scary thing. Often, there are extremely high risks to doing the right thing!

Vision is an interesting idea on paper, but few people have the backbone to act. They find themselves scratching their heads unwilling to trust the change process. If only they knew that people, regardless of their status, must create their future. Perhaps, then again, maybe they do know, but aren’t willing to take the risk. Imagining the future is simply too hard for some people.

The failure to exploit niche opportunities is the failure to maintain a vision. True leaders don’t stop caring for their vision. They understand that making a difference is closely linked to revolutionary social change. They see the big picture, the patterns, and the ups and downs of the change process, and they are willing to stay the course. What they don’t get so well is the behavior of others, especially those who quit. Probabilities are that they aren’t leaders.

Leaders are different. They can’t help but tell everyone what they are thinking. Their dream or vision drives them to share. Why, because they live for something better. They are inspired by the idea of making something happen. Leaders are driven by their thoughts, often without regard for their own safety. Whether it is their self-respect, self-esteem or both, leaders talk about future scenarios and possibilities without thinking about themselves.

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| "*You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something sometime in your life."*  *-- Winston Churchill* |

The ASEP’s vision is an image of what the future can be like. It is forward-looking with hope of something better. It isn’t about today, although important. A vision is all about events 20 years and beyond. Colleagues with aren’t leaders are able to think about the future. That’s why they can’t understand the work that goes into keeping the “big-picture” alive. Also, a major issue is that they don’t understand their past. This especially true for those who aren’t what they appear to be, at least by title.

Simply put, professionalism in exercise physiology requires a commitment to the ASEP vision. Although it is a shared process, individuals must accept that the shared sense of something better requires the backbone to step out of one’s comfort zone. It’s this belief that makes change possible. Those who aren’t willing to dream or to do what is necessary to give life to a vision drop to side. They can’t picture the future. Instead, too often, that is why they commit themselves to what is common or popular because it is easier.

Equally dramatic, and every bit as truthful, is the attitude that many people can’t risk failure. They are easily persuaded by their colleagues to create a culture of divisiveness and selfishness. In fact, often times, they are the first to question the credibility of those who aspire to lead. Why? It is rather simple: because they aren’t capable of going the extra mile for others, although they would be the first to argue otherwise. The high degree of ambiguity and uncertainty are too much for them to deal with. That is why they love familiarity, and why they cling to yesterday’s thinking.

To support change, organizations need change agents. They need bold members who are willing to climb out on the end of the limb and stay there. These are people who have the courage to never give up. They understand that if you fall down, then, you get up and keep at it. Even a major setback is not a defeat when defeat is not an option. In fact, in many ways, the courage not to give up is very much the same prayer. To believe is to pray that the struggle will not be lost from one’s own cowardice.

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On October 29, 1941, U.K. Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited Harrow School to hear the traditional songs he had sung there as a youth, as well as to speak to the students. When he was invited to give a speech, Churchill stood before the students and said: "Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, give up. Never give up. Never give up. Never give up." Interestingly, he also said: “The pessimist sees the problems in every opportunity; whereas, the optimist sees the opportunity in every problem." Are you a pessimist or an optimist? Do you see hope and possibilities in ASEP or do you see problems?

In closing, remember that we become what we think, what we talk about, and what we do. If we think our work is for the right reason, if we think that our actions will bring forth positive results, and if we start living as professionals, we will become our vision.

Do you really want to be a fitness instructor or a trainer? Do you think that it is likely that you will be financially stable as an instructor? Or, would you rather be a credible healthcare professional who is qualified to practice exercise physiology? If you prefer the latter, then, you must walk the same walk as other healthcare professionals have done (and are still doing). That means you must abide by a code of ethics, graduate from an accredited exercise physiology program, sit and pass the ASEP board certification so that society will recognize that you are a credible practitioner in the practice of exercise physiology.