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Passion

I am often asked how I got into this field. A quick summary involves me browsing through a college catalog at San Francisco State University and seeing a class titled, “Exercise Physiology”. In all truth, a light went on and I never looked back. I love this field and have a passion for it. I believe my passion for Exercise Physiology enables me to maintain a high level of energy as I teach both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as maintain a current line of research. I also believe that this same passion I bring to the classroom excites others and generates interest in the field. I am not alone.

Many (actually most) of my colleagues have a similar passion for Exercise Physiology. It is true that we all have our little specialties such as cardiovascular physiology, or environmental physiology, but overall, we carry a torch for this field of Exercise Physiology. I am not sure why and I certainly cannot speak for others. I suppose part of this passion stems from the fascination of the human body and the way we react to different stressors (i.e., exercise). Another part could be the inevitable health outcomes of a regular exercise program and how that figures into our health and longevity. Of course, sport performance and the incredible competitions we see on a regular basis (sub 5 minute miles for a marathon…really?) as some individual sets a world record or accomplishes an unbelievable feat. Or perhaps our passion is one associated with moving our field forward in the venue of professionalism. Maybe, it is summed up in a common response when someone asks me what area I am in as a professor in higher education: “Cool”! Cool indeed. A common thread that runs through these individuals and their general and specific passions within the field of Exercise Physiology is…The American Society of Exercise Physiologists.

The organization was founded by academics, researchers, teachers, and professionals. It has gone through many transformations and had its share of the proverbial ebb and flow over time. There have been moments of shared visions and moments of discord. This is to be expected from any association where strong individuals play a role. But through it all, the individuals associated with this organization carry a passion that is second to none. Yet with passion, comes emotion. There is nothing wrong with emotion but it can sometimes be misinterpreted. An emotional statement born out of passion can be taken the wrong way. Ensuing emotional statements and responses can soon lead to a destructive discourse and total misunderstanding by all parties involved. The outcome in this case is not positive. Yet this is a real possibility when passionate individuals interact. I have discovered that when this does occur, the program or organization tends to move forward. Call it, “growing pains”. I prefer to call it adaptation. Of course we, in the field, understand that adaptation results from stress. Therefore, stress is good. And in this instance, passion, stress and the ensuing possibilities of adaptation are all good.

I have found myself in scenarios similar to that described above. I can honestly say that it is not an infrequent occurrence. I question why it continues to happen, and I am convinced that an underlying fuel is my passion. I have a passion for this field and will argue or discuss or become emotional about many related aspects associated with Exercise Physiology. In my classroom, it is not unusual to hear me going off on the latest high intensity workout plan, or best-selling fad diet, or defending the place of Exercise Physiologists in the preventative health care system. I call them “rants”. I do go off on rants on a fairly regular basis.

I bring this up because I recognize many individuals in the ASEP organization that also are passionate about their special areas and go off on their own rants. In so doing, they are not good or bad or right or wrong…they are just passionate. It is our passion that ignites others. It is our passion that brings tough issues to light. It is our passion that allows for venturing down those paths less taken. It is also our passion that leads to misunderstandings and destructive outcomes.

I want to finish this ASEP Newsletter by appealing to the passion in all of us associated with Exercise Physiology. An invaluable contribution that each of us can make to this field is to participate, with our students, in professional meetings. By so doing, it is an expression of our passion for Exercise Physiology. I have been tasked with setting up the itinerary for the October ASEP Conference in Oklahoma City. I want to make a passionate plea: send me your abstract to present, and come to the meeting. I can honestly say that I have never attended one of the ASEP meetings that was not informative, positive and yes, passionate. Can I guarantee you will take something home by attending? Absolutely! You will experience the passion I speak of in this Newsletter, as well as the understanding that another’s rant is an expression of the passion they have for Exercise Physiology. See you in OKC!