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## A Sense of Personal Purpose

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**Why do you exist? “What did you say?” What gets you up in the morning? “What?” Do you know why you were born? “Honestly, what is your problem? Leave me alone.”**

**I**T SEEMS THAT MANY PEOPLE do not have answers to the questions just asked? They have no idea why they exist? Either they think that talking about a purpose in life is a meaningless attempt to find out if they have a reason for living or it is a waste of time. Yet, it seems reasonable to me that every person should have a personal purpose; one that gives them hope and a future. Why? Because life is more than going to work and bringing home a pay check, however important.

While life is mostly about getting a job, making money, paying the bills, getting married, raising a family, working and having fun, and many other expectations, the icing on the cake is a person’s dream and the work that goes into it. Together, the years of work and play along with a vision for living gives meaning to day-to-day living. As an example, do you see yourself becoming an entrepreneur and starting your own health care business? Do you want to help other people live a healthier lifestyle?

If you are interested in owning a successful “exercise medicine” business, you will need to prepare your thinking accordingly. This means having a vision that drives you to get the right education to fulfill your dreams and expectations. A vision of something positive and right for you will give you the energy and knowledge to make great things

**For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

**-- Jeremiah 29:11**

happen for yourself and others. But, of course, not every person has a sense of purpose in his or her life. That is why a vision that is linked to your personal purpose in life can make all the difference in living a happy and genuine life.

Happiness is linked to moving forwards and staying the course regardless of how tough and challenging the dream may be. Obstacles are expected and so are problems along with disagreements and challenges. That is why the person with a vision stays positive. Why? Because it is the only logical and right move in helping others (such as ASEP's commitment to accrediting exercise physiology degree programs that help the students gain credibility in healthcare). After all, "doing good works" is the gift to others that fulfills your vision to help others. The ASEP "good works" (such as an exercise physiology Code of Ethics, accreditation guidelines, board certification, and standards of practice) are satisfying (1).

Why not join ASEP? Why not become a change agent for increased fulfillment of the ASEP vision (2)? Why not get beyond the indecision and influence of others and decide on a precise way of elevating exercise physiology to a health care profession? Why not give the profession all you've got? Why not pay the price of the ASEP vision

Live by faith as you  
move through the  
process of vision.

-- Dr. Myles Munroe

along with the other members? Why not be inspired by and fueled by the ASEP 21st century perspective (3) that the exercise physiology undergraduate degree should be ASEP accredited? Why not move on from the failed rhetoric of yesterday and embrace your purpose in living?

Whether you are a recent college graduate, master-prepared, or have a doctorate degree in exercise physiology, it is important that you take the time to reflect on what you think. Unfortunately, for the last four decades, the majority of the academic exercise physiologists demonstrate little understanding of the need for professionalism. Yet, if they were to focus on the guiding principles of change, they would be less visionless teachers. To build a profession of exercise physiology, it is necessary to have a clear vision that guides the professional and its members. Otherwise, without a vision, there is no image of something better, no guiding steps to know what to do or what not to do, and no motivation to change.

It seems to me that academic exercise physiologists see themselves as performing a “job” as a college teacher. That is, they teach and do research as, for example, physical therapists do. But, the difference is that they do not have a vision whatsoever to transform exercise physiology from a discipline of academic researchers to a profession of health care practitioners. Physical therapists, on the other hand, belong to the APTA and are regulated by their own Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. The exercise physiologists’ pre-occupation with research is frustrating since the work of professional development is more than publishing manuscripts. This is a very important point.

Exercise physiologists must grasp the importance of the ASEP work and the ASEP vision and, then, they will realize the need to professionalize exercise physiology. Once they get this understanding, they will be transformed in ways that will increase their desire and ability to act as health care professionals. They will then embrace the ASEP professional infrastructure to ensure that the ASEP vision becomes a reality for all exercise physiologists. They will understand why the ASEP leadership defined “What is exercise physiology?” and “Who is an exercise physiologist?” Then, they will grasp what the leaders have known since the founding of ASEP when they first typed out the documentation of “Where exercise physiology is going?” and “Who will be the future leaders?”

All sustainable passion for change begins with a good plan. Time must be made available to write out the reasons for wanting to change. It begins with acknowledging where you are and where you want to go to make the future a successful journey. The seemingly impossibly begins with what you have where you are and, then, staying the course until the dream is reality. Obviously, it isn’t easy. It requires a lot of work and desire driven by faith and willingness to see exercise physiology as it should be. This thinking is critically important.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

-- Proverbs 20:18, King James Version of the Holy Bible

Staying the course is also critically important. There will be people who will try to stop you from realizing your dream. It is an amazing thing how friends can turn against a friend. The harm that they do is unbelievable and extremely hurtful. But, as Myles Munroe (4) said, “Even if people lie about you or start rumors about you, keep your eyes on the mark, continue

working, and keep on building. Your passion has to be more powerful than the opposition of those around you.” The simple truth is that there are people in the world who are toxic and untrustworthy. It is best to stay away from them. They are weak and visionless. They will do what they can to drag you down to their level. So, be strong and prepare yourself for the obstacles, the opposition, and the challenges because there will be considerable stress and pressure to discontinue the vision.

Perseverance is willingness to pay the price. If you are part of ASEP and you are feeling the pressure to step aside and join status quo, “It is those who endure to the end who succeed” (4). Thus, as long as you keep working on behalf of ASEP, there is hope

**Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength.**

**-- Theodore Roosevelt  
(1858-1919)**

for the students and the profession of exercise physiology.

It is tough promoting and building exercise physiology as a health care profession, especially since no one else has done it before. You can make a difference! This is important because in John 14:13 Jesus Christ says, “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” God will give it to those who pray in the name of

Jesus Christ (5).

Self-discipline! Perseverance! Belief in yourself! Prayer! What do these words and expressions have in common? Success! Your success and, if you are a teacher, the success of your students! The person with the power of belief converts thoughts into actions and dreams into realities. As pointed out in Claude M. Bristol's book, *The Magic of Believing* (6), “Believe that you have it, and you have it.” Simply stated, this means that we are what we think we are. *The power to be what we want to be is within each of us. Think good thoughts. Believe in your personal purpose in life. Believe that it is possible to achieve and it will be done. You will find yourself headed in the direction of success* (7).

***If your ship doesn't come in, swim out to it.***

**-- Andy Tant (1980-1996)**

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