

## Parting With the Past

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We must become the change we seek in the world.

-- Gandhi

**E**xercise science will always be with us. Really, is this what the academic exercise physiologists have come to believe? If so, is this the reason that everyone (perhaps, without thinking) accepts that it is good regardless of the problems it has created for students and their parents? And yet, in some sense, students and their parents, the academic exercise physiologists, and society believe the future is already determined.

On the other hand, imagine a world where academic exercise physiologists think differently. Picture this: First, students and their parents are talking to college counselors and faculty members who are helping them making decisions that are consistent with the ASEP point of view. Now, imagine faculty members with the guts to take the risks of believing that change is possible. “Nonsense,” some will say. “Tommy, you and the ASEP comments are just plain nonsense. Get real, stop daydreaming. Join sports medicine and be like everybody else. Nothing is going to change.”

Actually, the ASEP leaders have received such responses many times. And yet, they remain convinced that exercise physiologists don't have to be shackled to their past history. They believe that parting with the past isn't just possible, but

absolutely inevitable. In fact, they are convinced of it just as cell phones were once an idea only. No one actually believed every person would have his or her own phone with them wherever they might be. It is similar to using the microwave or undergoing laser surgery. Decades ago both were just dreams. Today, just imagine what it would be like not having them and everything else as well (computers for example).

Humankind is advancing in so many ways that it is not only possible, it is logical and expected that exercise physiologists will recreate themselves. This is the phenomenal promise of the ASEP organization. That is, the ASEP leaders believe that exercise physiologists must come together to push forwards in changing the exercise physiologist's historical way of thinking to create a totally new kind of future for all students of exercise physiology. Yes, without question, this is the most formidable task. It takes guts and a new frame of mind to reinvent exercise physiology of the 21st century.

This thinking is one of doing different things, especially that of believing in the professionalism of exercise physiologists, connecting with similar and like-minded colleagues, and sharing the ASEP common purpose of how to learn and how to create new solutions to their problems. It is all about helping exercise physiologists achieve their professional and economic goals. After all, exercise physiologists as healthcare professionals are just beginning to recognize that they share significant responsibilities and benefits. To think otherwise is an impractical illusion.

The future of all professionals demands a vision of interdependent and purposeful building of their professions. Only then will the lack of understanding of cultural development be corrected. Returning to the way it used to be is not an option. The fragmented and diminishing returns of 40 plus undergraduate degree-programs is everything other than a dynamic creative process of straight thinking. In fact, the overflow of college graduates from exercise science programs into the public sector is old and bad business for colleges. The administrators must make room for new thinking to enter – that's right, accredited exercise physiology

programs with a career-driven healthcare perspective and financially sound job opportunities.

By tapping into the deeper forces of professionalism and professional development, exercise physiologists move in the direction of exemplifying competence. Their thinking is recognized as transcending the accepted truths of the limited and illogical truths of exercise science and personal training. In time, their unshakable commitment to the ASEP vision will be recognized as the beginning point to bring together what never existed before and what couldn't have been predicted from past thinking. However, by opening themselves to connect with new ideas, new people and new possibilities, is it possible that they and their friends and colleagues will pull together to see a new and better future?

“Parting with the past” is the function of a creative socialization process that automatically assigns new value judgments to the change process. The logical, reasonable path of connecting with the ASEP wave of possibilities is how exercise physiologists, young and old, will learn to get rid of the sports medicine and exercise science ambiguity, chaos, and disorder. The only problem is ego. It is in fact the greatest barrier to change if not “the” reason colleagues become a prisoner of their opinions. Colliding opinions of reference produce unexpected twist. When exercise physiologists are so tightly wedded to sports medicine and exercise science that they are unwilling to even listen to their ASEP friends and colleagues, thus co-creation proves impossible.

The secret of the change process is the determination to co-create regardless of the inherent issues and problems. Autopoiesis, meaning self-organizing or self-creating, is exactly what the ASEP leadership and the membership have done. They know their vision, committed to achieving it, and they understand the importance of being different to create a different future. The ASEP leaders understand what they want, and they are willing to do it. Thus, ASEP is the assertion of hope and faith in every exercise physiologist's potential for personal growth and professional development. It is all about creating a new viewpoint of “what is exercise physiology” and “what happens to the students of exercise

physiology.” ASEP is in short about providing a new orientation to exercise, health, and rehabilitation.

So, after everything is said and done, why not commit to fully participate in the ASEP organization with friends and colleagues and circumstances exactly as they are and exactly as they should be on behalf of the profession of exercise physiology? Why not connect with those who want to see things happen in exercise physiology? Why not live as if your life makes a difference? Why not do what you can within the context of ASEP to open up the future of exercise physiology to unlimited possibilities?

Together, we within ASEP can and will create a different world of exercise physiology. We will create a world whereby the students of exercise physiology are driven to empower the client and/or patient as well as the athlete by way of a scientific application of exercise. It will be a world whereby the right learning is better than a lot of misguided thinking that has proven to be less than helpful. Yes, if you haven't gotten my point, it is this: The seduction of research has proven to distract from the realities of the bottom line. Exercise physiologists must step back and help build their own scholarly, scientific, and professional Society from which legitimate change can be defined from within.

As Jesus said, “If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.” Without question, the unique and true self of “what is” exercise physiology resides in each of one of us. It may be suppressed for many of the reasons mentioned, but it is there. One thing is clear: The 21st century exercise physiology is increasingly blessed with the imagination and power to break free from the illusions of non-exercise physiologists. It is this capacity for deep focus that allows exercise physiologists to become one with their profession.

The key to fostering change is the regularity in visualizing something altogether new and different while continually expelling fear and decades of sports medicine and exercise science rituals. If you are skeptical of this point, why not proceed with a few minutes of progressive relaxation with the intent first to simply relax your mind and body. Then, allow your mind to entertain the

feelings of newness and freedom to become more like other healthcare professionals and less like servants to well-recognized sports medicine protocols. The good news is a healing will occur along with a sadness of time lost with the questions and challenges that speak to the change process.

Odd as it may sound, as you practice more regularly the relaxation steps that allows for the mental journey, consider allowing for if not encouraging free-form thoughts and uncensored feelings to surface. You may want to write your thoughts and feelings down, as an expression of your true inner life and the fact that you are real and you have the right to your own professional society of exercise physiologists. After all, as David Hare said, “The act of writing is the act of discovering what you believe.” Perhaps, you too will understand more clearly your bond with exercise physiology the more you write. In time, your story of exercise physiology will write itself so that others may know the path to success and credibility.

In time, exercise physiologists will see clearly the profession of exercise physiology with a path that is parallel to other healthcare professionals. This path is part of the journey of becoming our optimal self; one that will be noticed by others who have traveled the same scene. They know that failing to part from one’s past leaves everyone a shadowy figure of its true self. They know that broken-spirited individuals without a future create more confusion, self-doubt, and failure. They know that the freedom to explore their environment and develop is vital to overcoming the numbness of indifference.

Much like the Japanese proverb, “A circle needs no beginning.” Exercise physiology is riding its own circle. The ASEP organization was founded in 1997, but its reality is much the same as the proverb. Becoming what we already are has nothing to do with beginning and yet, the “New Age” sounds like a beginning when in reality it is actually taking another step to finally complete ourselves. It is feeling and living the empathetic life and bridge to our circle of realities as healthcare professionals. Thinking and feeling are important to the unity of our work and professionalism.

Instead of a light from sports medicine directed at exercise physiologists, ASEP is the light that shines from within. It is the parting from the past that, most surprising to non-exercise physiologists who fail to recognize it as a paradigm shift. Where did it come from? How can exercise physiologists have an image of themselves that is linked to ASEP, and yet it is so different from our reality of them? Perhaps, the irony of getting older is that we are more willing to measure ourselves by different methods. Aging makes a person a bit more introspective. Aging is helpful in finding ourselves; it is a form of self-discovery.

Exercise physiologists are on the edge of self-discovery and change. It is the journey of ASEP members with a vision of connectedness and interdependence. It's not surprising that freeing themselves from the world of false feelings and nurturing by non-exercise physiologists has allowed for exploring new ideas and possibilities. Although many exercise physiologists feel like outsiders at what they have helped to create, especially the understanding that "exercise is medicine," they are optimists. They look for ways to enrich the profession and to keep learning what it means to be a healthcare professional.

Part of the process of enrichment is the acknowledgment that exercise physiologists have their own professional organization, and thinking about exercise physiology as a profession. They can talk about their own code of ethics, accreditation, board certification, and standards of professional practice. This kind of thinking is directly linked to decisions based on the belief that parting from the past will have a direct affect on students, the way they think about themselves and what they will do when they graduate and, ultimately, the full evolutionary force of exercise physiologists with the autonomy to practice the scientific thoughts and ideas that acknowledge exercise as medicine. As John C. Maxwell said, "You don't have to be a scientist or mathematician to embrace big-picture thinking or to benefit from it." It is time to bring wholeness and maturity to exercise physiology by promoting the ASEP organization.

Doing so will help the students of exercise physiology experience new possibilities, new ideas, new books, new people, new thinking, and it will connect them with opportunities to learn about credible career possibilities with financial

stability to pay back their huge tuition loans and still pay their bills every month. Most often the missing ingredient in the change process is the belief that change is possible. No doubt about it, the price is high. It takes courage, candor, and more courage to “break it off” with past thinking. The unwillingness to surrender the phoniness of exercise science for exercise physiology is the desire to not settle for mediocrity. Breaking off from the past is all about having courage and conviction to think not only with your head, but also with your heart.

Exercise physiologists become what they believe they are. They make things happen in spite of the challenges otherwise. The ASEP exercise physiologists believe that until you learn to acknowledge what you are it is impossible to become that person. That’s why Dr. Neibuhr’s famous quotation is important to the ASEP exercise physiologists, which in slightly different form is also the alcoholic’s anonymous prayer: “Give me the courage to change what can be changed, the serenity to accept that which we can’t, and the wisdom to know the difference.” In short, exercise physiologists are in a very real sense a product of their courage to change, serenity to accept, and knowing the difference.

If exercise physiologists think they are a different form of physical education, and if they think they are not healthcare professionals, then, they aren’t likely to think of themselves as something different. If a person thinks he or she is something other than what he or she is, that is exactly what that person is going to be. Change and success are dependent upon our attitudes and our willingness to change. In other words, to “Know thyself” is to build on our strengths, to free ourselves from past thinking, to resolve the paradoxes of exercise science versus exercise physiology, to transcend the conflicts between ASEP and other organizations, and to become the leaders in “exercise as medicine” rather than the slaves of personal training.

Parting from the past means thinking strategically and investing in the future of exercise physiology. It means learning to take risks as entrepreneurs, and doing everything to learn about starting one’s own healthcare business. Parting from the past is the product of vision and flexibility. Both provide the ability to change and set a new direction to succeed. But be aware that both vision and

flexibility in thinking wake up the opposition that proves ASEP exercise physiologists are doing something significant with their lives. In other words, it is important that ASEP exercise physiologists do not sacrifice their dreams because of conflict or disagreement.

Think about it. There is no resistance from colleagues if you are not doing something different. Friends and colleagues who aren't willing to change have nothing to think about. Think about it: There is no resistance if the ASEP exercise physiologists are not moving towards the professionalization of exercise physiology. Colleagues who aren't doing anything on behalf of the professional development of exercise physiology have little to concern themselves. That is why they go to sports medicine meetings and workshops. That is why they are not interested in doing anything different because they are not interested in doing what it takes to think differently from the past.

On the other hand, if you are an exercise physiologists asking questions and supporting ASEP, please appreciate that you are part of the 21st century ASEP perspective of what exercise physiology should be. Recently, an ASEP exercise physiologist said, "If you don't like what I stand for, then do your own thing. If you don't think you can join ASEP, then, that ought to tell you something. If you think you can, then, do so. If you still don't like ASEP and those who support it, find an organization you do like. If you like the idea of a sound academic accreditation and standards of professional practice, I commend your good taste and recommend joining ASEP."

Parting from the past to build the profession of exercise physiology is a long journey of constant work. The journey isn't easy. There is always a feeling "Am I going to blow it?" After all, not everyone is automatically a leader. Much of what people do is by trial and error. Fortunately, the core of the ASEP leadership believes the impossible is possible. And yet, they have heard the same statements time after time. "That's impossible." "How dare you suggest what we are doing is wrong." "That's too radical a change. We don't do it that way." The truth is this: The ASEP organization is a radical step to help students, but it is worth being a nonconformist to make a difference. The leadership doesn't care just



about their ideas, but also about the goals and objectives of the ASEP organization. They believe ASEP can make a difference, even if the purpose of the organization isn't well supported by academic exercise physiologists.

Most organizations that are doing things well ahead of their counterparts are future oriented. They are pioneering change, given the leaders' willingness to venture into unexplored territory. The ASEP organization is promoting change because "change is inevitable." To not acknowledge and do the work of defining exercise physiology as a healthcare profession is a sure sign of imminent extinction. Why do you think personal training is so popular, although lacking credibility? Exercise physiologists who don't change with the changing dynamics of other healthcare professions, like dinosaurs, will find themselves a few feet from extinction. That's why they must stop resisting change and, most certainly, the work of the ASEP leaders to promote professionalism in exercise physiology. The leadership's desire is to work with the academic exercise physiologists who continue to choose a direction of extinction.

Parting from the past isn't easy. No one is saying that it is. Everyone in almost every way, from products to ideas, resists change. Thus, despite the naysayers and opposition, ASEP exercise physiologists continue to believe their work is making a difference. They believe the ASEP vision articulates a realistic, credible and attractive future for exercise physiologists. Are they dreamers? You bet they are. All leaders are dreamers. Are they proactive? Yes, why? Because they believe it is imperative that exercise physiologists recognize that they are in the midst of a paradigm revolution in healthcare. Dramatic changes are taking place and exercise physiologists need to get out in front of the change process. Otherwise, if they continue to fire the guns in the wrong direction, they will become obsolete.

Futurist Alvin Toffler said, "The illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." Toffler's comment is an excellent definition of "the way to part from the past." Exercise physiologists must learn more about professional organizations, unlearn their past experiences with sports medicine, exercise

science, and physical education, and relearn the importance of being learners all over again. Otherwise, it is just a matter of time that students will be majoring in “personal training” in college and exercise physiologists will one day wake up and realize they were asleep at the wheel of traditional thinking. As a result, students will miss the paradigm shift and the opportunity to become credible healthcare professionals. The world is changing, but exercise physiologists are not. They must learn to change, however.

Unfortunately, it is true that many exercise physiologists have a kind of blind spot at the core of their thinking. And yet, inevitably they will have to come to grips with it if they are part from the past. Coming to grips means that exercise physiologists must learn to part with their sacred cow, “sports medicine.” There is no reason why it should be held above questioning or criticism. In fact, it is unreasonable to hold sports medicine in an awe-inspiring position. Our loyalties must always be on behalf of exercise physiology and our capacity to control and nurture it. Why not set aside some time to think about the future of the profession of exercise physiology? Why not read the ASEP vision statement and share it with your friends and colleagues? Why not join the ASEP organization and help promote its goals and objectives. Why not take time to read books about exercise physiology today and tomorrow. Here are several I have written that might help you to get started:

1. Boone, T. (2010). **Integrating Spirituality and Exercise Physiology: Toward A New Understanding of Health.** The Edwin Mellen Press, 166 pages.
2. Boone, T. (2009). **Basic Issues In Sports Ethics: The Many Ways of Cheating.** The Edwin Mellen Press, 273 pages.
3. Boone, T. (2009). **The Professionalization of Exercise Physiology: Certification, Accreditation, and Standards of Practice of the American Society of Exercise Physiologists (ASEP).** The Edwin Mellen Press, 645 pages.
4. Boone, T. (2008). **Sex Before Athletic Performance: Myth or Fact.** The Edwin Mellen Press, 163 pages
5. Boone, T. (2007). **Ethical Standards and Professional Credentials in the Practice of Exercise Physiology.** The Edwin Mellen Press, 416 pages.

6. Boone, T. (2006). ***Is Sports Nutrition for Sale?*** Nova Science Publishing, Inc., 151 pages.
7. Boone, T. (2006). ***Exercise Physiology as a Career: A Guide and Sourcebook*** The Edwin Mellen Press, 220 pages.
8. Boone, T. (2005). ***Exercise Physiology: Professional Issues, Organizational Concerns, and Ethical Trends.*** The Edwin Mellen Press, 353 pages.
9. Boone, T. (2002). ***The Power Within: The Integration of Faith and Purposeful Self-Care in the 21st Century.*** AuthorHouse, 232 pages.
10. Boone, T. (2001). ***Professional Development of Exercise Physiology.*** The Edwin Mellen Press, 215 pages.