ASEP: A Reason to Get Up in the Morning
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Purpose.
You aim.
Your reason for getting up in the morning.
Every one of us needs a reason to get up in the morning.

-- Richard J. Leider [1]

AS A COLLEGE TEACHER for 40 years, I have always been grateful for
the opportunity to teach. My students have heard me say more than once
in a semester, “Teaching is what gets me up in
the morning.” So, when I ran across the book,
The Power of Purpose [1], I knew that I needed
to take the time to read it. Each of us needs that
“special something” in life that keeps us going.

Have you thought about what your purpose
is in life? Frankly, I am of the opinion that too
many people go about living each day without
the slightest hint of why it is important to know one’s purpose in life. Purpose
gives meaning to life. It is at the core of living. Purpose defines us. What we
think, what we write about, and how we say something are all linked to our
calling in life. It is so important that not knowing the power of a purposeful life
sets the stage for all kinds of disappointments.

In fact, according to Tom Wolf [2], “…73% of employed Americans are
not psychologically connected to their work. They show up but are not

We all want to find our purpose—that thing that makes us feel like our
life matters.

--Richard J. Leider [1]
passionate. This lack of passion is not limited to those in the workforce. Data shows that there is an **ongoing struggle inside each of us** that wants a connection to something bigger than ourselves. We want lives filled with **meaning, purpose** and **enjoyment**.” By “disappointment,” it seems reasonable to conclude that Wolf is referring particularly to adults in the workplace who are unhappy if not miserable, even depressed doing what they have come to believe is mandated to survive financially.

I suspect that millions of people in the United States and worldwide are working in jobs that they either dislike or hate. They aren’t happy because the work is either meaningless or time taken from finding meaning and direction in life. Think about it: If you could live your life over again, what would you do differently? Would you be doing exactly what you are doing now? In my case, I would love to live my life over with another 40 to 50 years of opportunity to teach. Do you feel the same? Are you growing and finding meaning in your work? If the answer is NO, what would you share with college students to help them find a career after college that is a calling versus a job?

Perhaps, it is first important to point out that thousands of college graduates find themselves working in different jobs without the slightest of interest in getting up every morning. They work because if they didn’t no one would pay their bills and they would be displaced from their apartments or homes living on the streets. To personalize this point, if you have already graduated from college and working, would you be more serious about majoring in an academic program that is more in line with your interests? Would you be more reflective about which programs and/or career opportunities that might be considered a calling? What is your purpose in life? Is it doing what you are doing now or is it all about something else altogether?

**What should I do with my life?** This is a powerful question most of us ask ourselves at some point in life. What *is it that I should do with my life? What is my purpose in life, my passion?*
A calling or purpose in life is highly specific if not a mystery of sorts. That is, until we start asking questions and taking the time to make the right decisions about a college major we will continue to make mistakes. This is a big problem, not just in time wasted, but in real money as well. Today, for a student to attend The College of St. Scholastica, tuition is about $30,000 a year. In short, if the student ends up in an academic major without thinking it, he or she will have a tuition load well over $100,000 to pay back while failing to find his or her purpose in life. Talk about the inevitable problems of anxiety, sadness, and sense of doom when a person wakes up several years after college to realize that life sucks. And yet, it doesn’t have to end that way at all.

Why not find out what wakes you up in the morning and gets you out of the bed? Is it the profession of exercise physiology? If so, what is it about exercise physiology that is waiting to be discovered? Is it the clinical application of exercise physiology? Are you motivated and excited about working with post-myocardial infarction patients? If not, what about sports and athletics? Is the idea of teaching athletes to run faster, jump higher, and develop bigger muscles of interest to you? Lastly, in general, are you interested in “exercise as medicine?” Perhaps, you are an entrepreneur looking to start your own healthcare business?

It is not about throwing yourself into the relentless pursuits of money and power. Rather, it is about finding work that is meaningful. As the survivor of the Holocaust, Frankl [3] said, “those who survived the concentration camp had meaning in their lives.” Of course, this raises the question: What is meaning? The answer is this: It is a personal reason for existence. It is the reason a person gets out of bed in the morning. Or, stated somewhat differently, it is choosing what to dedicate your life to. And, in terms of being a student, if you believe that being an exercise physiologist is one way to live a meaningful life, then, you must major in exercise physiology. To major in exercise science or kinesiology would

Do you wonder about your life’s purpose? How do you become happy? How do you find inner peace?
not the right path to being an exercise physiologist and, therefore, the path, time, and tuition dollars invested would not result in a meaningful life. Here again, it is about making the right choice early on rather than later.

The point is simply this: If there is an exercise physiology major and student wants to be an exercise physiologist, then, majoring in exercise science or sports sciences or human performance cannot fulfill the needs of the college graduate. This thinking is no different from a student who is majoring in nursing, but wants to be a physical therapist. And yet, unfortunately, students are victims of bad advising by the college teachers who are not interested in recognizing the differences between exercise science and related degree programs and exercise physiology. Time and time again they tell students who are majoring in exercise science that they can call themselves “exercise physiologists.” Students graduate thinking they are something they are not and thus, end up being victims of a failed education.

Perhaps, this is also one reason for this article. Not being a victim starts with you, the student! It is a choice students must make to find meaning in life. Yes, it can be quite difficult, but it isn’t impossible. That’s why if you are a student you need to have an academic vision of your future and how you plan to make it as a scientifically educated healthcare professional. After all, isn’t it reasonable that finding your life purpose and your deepest life intentions can help you to move with greater focus and clarity every day of your life? Why not stop for a moment and ask yourself two questions: "What is most important to you? What do you value?" Don’t panic if you don’t have answers to these questions. You are not alone. There are a lot of students in the same boat.

If you aren’t happy with your academic major, do something about it! If you are not jumping out the bed on most days of the week with excitement about your academic major, why not do something about it? Make a commitment to talk to your college teachers. Ask for clarification regarding what is exercise science and

How do you discover your real purpose in life? Do you know the real reason why you are here at all (i.e., the very reason you exist).
what is exercise physiology? It doesn't have to be a long conversation, but get the ball rolling. Just do it! By the way, it is not an easy or simple task to corner your teacher, but it is extremely important that you do so. Imagine an academic experience where you leap out of bed every morning ready to tackle a new class - enthusiastic about what the teacher says that will influence if not shape your future. Imagine after college, as an entrepreneur healthcare professional, your clients and patients flock to you for your scientific knowledge and pay you generously for the great value you are adding to their lives.

Your life is filled with purpose and meaning, and is a joy to live, instead of the drudgery you used to suffer in a $12 per hour job as a trainer without health insurance benefits.

This vision doesn't have to be wishful thinking. It can very much be your reality, but only if you are ready to request your college teachers to live up to their responsibility to empower you as a college educated professional. Henry David Thoreau once said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them." It is time to start singing and doing so at the top of your lungs. Let your teachers know what is right and what is wrong in how they advertise the department and the academic majors. You can have everything in life, but it will mean nothing at all if you haven’t fulfilled your purpose for this life. Your purpose is connected to your passion for credibility, financial stability, and recognition as a healthcare professional. So with that in mind, let's work with the premise that we are all here for a reason.
References