

We Will Find A Way! A Personal Perspective

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Let us not give ourselves time to regret what should have been done and wasn't!

SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE the 1997 founding of ASEP, it occurred to me that I should develop a questionnaire to determine the thinking of exercise physiologists regarding a professional organization. The results were encouraging. Since then hundreds of ASEP exercise physiologists have engaged in an ongoing challenge to think about exercise physiology as a healthcare profession.

As to ASEP, exercise physiologists have come and gone. As you might expect, some stayed longer than others. Until exercise physiologists are on the same page, the challenge will be great and extended. And yet, that is okay too. Those of us who continue the work are neither ashamed of our beliefs or dedication to exercise physiology nor we disappointed in others.

Change is a huge process that takes place across decades. I think that I understand this point better than most. Hence, what has happened in recent years will not destroy me or my dreams. I expect challenges and hard work from life. I know that exercise physiologists deserve a credible career in healthcare. After all, exercise is medicine!

No organization should get the idea that it is important because it is big. For an organization to be great, it need not be big. The life of an organization, as the life of its members, is a treasury of both opportunity and dreams.

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.

-- Goethe

Exercise Physiology Professionalism

I know that the pursuit of professionalism in exercise physiology is the right thing to do. The worst thing to do is nothing. The next worst thing is to support the competition, mostly out of ignorance or reward. If you were to read the ASEP vision you would conclude that it is designed to make life less difficult for exercise physiologists and their clients. From the point of view of the ASEP leaders, the vision is “giving something of ourselves” to the students of exercise physiology. They do not deserve the problems created by the failed rhetoric of generic organizations and the lack of straight thinking by academic exercise physiologists.

That is why the ASEP organization is designed to educate the readership to “what is exercise physiology” and “who is an exercise physiologist.” It teaches exercise physiologists at all levels to assume a different state of mind and, if necessary, to go out

It is right that exercise physiologists should wonder about their position and responsibility in healthcare. Imagine living a life which did not provide the rich possibilities of self-fulfillment, expectation, and achievement. It would not be a good life.

of their way to help others. This thinking is different from the teaching that doctorate prepared exercise physiologists received. Believe me when I tell you that I learned years earlier that I was suppose to think of exercise physiology as a research discipline. That’s it.

So, difficult as it might be to imagine, I went about holding my breath from my desire to talk about exercise physiology as a healthcare profession. At one point, however, within two years of my second 20 years of college teaching, it became apparent to me that it was time to stop and look at “what could be” in regards to exercise physiology rather than “what it is.” I am convinced that if exercise physiologists change their view of exercise physiology, they can learn to think of exercise physiology as a healthcare profession!

To educate exercise physiologists to think with their hearts and minds is to include students in their purposeful work activities in addition to the emphasis on research and publishing. This is part of the work of the ASEP leaders who believe that exercise physiologists should assume a different state of mind. Sadly, learning how to think differently requires effort. Academic exercise physiologists need to learn the

importance of investing in “what they are.” As healthcare professionals, their students will never run out of a credible and meaningful career. Think about it.

Each year students spend thousands of dollars on tuition and more money on living expenses. The fact that many academic degrees do not yield credible career opportunities is a problem. Parents, students, administrators, and faculty should seek out qualified advice about academic majors. If they don't, then, the failure to do so may mean that they are placing too much trust in an educational system that has become a business. Second, they need to understand that the administrators and faculty are more impressed with publishing, grants, and the financial bottom line than with the success of the graduates.

None of this personal perspective is about being envious of others. I have friends in several different disciplines and professions. None of the hundreds of articles published in PEPonline, JPEP, and the ASEPNewsletter was written out of rebellion. The electronic journals and the newsletter exist to share thoughts, ideas, hopes, dreams, and possibilities in order to support the change process. The articles are about *how* to think about exercise physiology. Although the readers may disagree, new thinking has to begin at some point in time to bring wholeness and maturity to exercise physiology.

It was only a short time after accepting the Chair position at St. Scholastica that I knew the degree program had to change from Exercise Science to Exercise Physiology. Fortunately, the administration agreed with me. As I began to rebuild the curriculum, the idea of creating a master's degree in exercise physiology hit me. That became reality, too. Over the many snow-covered months of 20 years in Duluth, it is all good (as my daughter says).

To understand why physical therapists are successful, you must stop thinking about yourself and find out what they think is important.

The ASEP exercise physiologists are not satisfied with exercise physiology as a discipline. They understand that research is important, but visiting new ideas, reading new articles about exercise physiology as a profession, and learning new ways to think about and applying exercise medicine are also important. Big-picture thinkers more

about what they don't know and less about what is common thinking. They realize there is more to exercise physiology besides their own research. That's why they make an effort to see exercise physiologists with and without the doctorate degree. Their thinking defines the vision that most academic exercise physiologists do not have.

The goal of achieving a college education shouldn't be merely to have a degree, but to help the graduates find a credible career and accomplish their dreams of being successful. This thinking is at the heart of the ASEP leadership. They believe it is important that the degree is career-driven and, therefore, they have seized upon every opportunity to see that it is true for the students of exercise physiology. Needless to say I believe in time more exercise physiologists will see the need to share their thoughts, concerns, and convictions regarding exercise physiology and career opportunities. It is simply a matter of time great men and women will stand before others in classrooms and meetings throughout the United States and talk about the exercise physiologist's code of ethics and why exercise physiologists have their own standards of professional practice.

Big-Picture Thinking: *Why not put yourself in the shoes of the typical exercise science college graduate and discover the pitfalls in his or her life? Why not (just for 10 minutes) try to set aside your own research agenda to see what is wrong with failing to change?*

It is extraordinary how the mind changes across time. What is wrong with thinking differently today will be the right way to think tomorrow. Let's face it: the ASEP exercise physiologists haven't lost sight of yesterday, but they are thoroughly interested in changing. That is why they believe all exercise physiologists will eventually learn of the importance of professionalism in exercise physiology through their persistent observations of the professionalization process. As a matter of fact, contrary to the decades of exercise science, fitness instructors, and personal trainers, they believe the acknowledgment and cultivation of respect for exercise physiologists as healthcare practitioners will in time become commonplace. Third, they believe It will be exceedingly difficult for anyone to disagree with the exercise physiologist's credibility in the prescription of exercise medicine.

In time, the true professionalism of exercise physiology will be understood and supported among friends, colleagues, and others. Exercise physiologists will rely upon their own resources to diminish distracting and troubled thoughts. They will come to understand that nothing confines those who are determined to succeed. It is matter of positive thinking, as Norman Vincent Peale illustrates in *The Power of Positive Thinking* whereby each person (i.e., exercise physiologist) learns of the power of perseverance, faith, and enthusiasm.

If you think you are beaten you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you want to win but think you can't
It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you'll lose you're lost;
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will;
It's all in the state of mind.
Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger and faster man,
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the man who thinks he can.

Staying the Course

It is of the utmost importance that this thinking is received with open eyes, ears, and hearts to help inspire others to the reality of the change process. In this way, future students will also be able to see the big-picture. They will look to Departments of Exercise Physiology with the expectation of seeking and making great strides in healthcare. They will expect to find support from their own professional organization to promote and ensure a better future for all exercise physiology students. But, it is important to “stay the course.” Starting and stopping doesn't mean success. It means failure.

As a man thinketh, so is he.
-- Biblical passage

Winning begins with and ends with changing how exercise physiologists think. This programming of the heart and mind isn't easy. It takes consistency across decades of non-stop work and attention to stating and reinforcing our beliefs. The more exercise

physiologists believe in ASEP and its right to promote and sustain professionalism in exercise physiology, the more exercise physiologists will accept ASEP.

1. In other words, have you talked about ASEP today to a colleague?
2. Are you a member of ASEP? If you were a member several years ago, why not stay the course with ASEP?
3. Are you a member now? If not, why not embrace and deal with the complex and diverse ideas that undergird change?
4. If you desire to be accredited, have you examined the ASEP accreditation guidelines?
5. Have you read articles published in the ASEP journals and newsletter to deepen your professionalism experience?
6. Do you understand the danger of staying with the sports medicine status quo?
7. While organizations are important, it is important that exercise physiologists learn of which ones among dozens not to bother with?
8. Do you realize that exercise physiologists are not going to achieve greatness by being generalist?
9. Do you have the right feelings about ASEP to filter non-ASEP remarks from interfering with your determination to help others develop the right attitude about exercise physiology as a healthcare profession?
10. Are you staying focus on the goals and objectives of the ASEP organization on behalf of every person who dreams to be an exercise physiologist?

Change Requires Dedication and Work

Change does not happen by accident. To change something requires focused thinking, dedication, and work. But, if your attitude is right, your beliefs will drive the change process. Change is a matter of persevering and staying focused. It is about tolerating individuals who cannot see the big-picture, and change is about self-control, self-discipline, and habitual work towards achieving the ASEP vision. Remember, it all starts with the belief that you are doing the right thing for the right reason. Of course, to do the right thing requires the right attitude and hard work. Time and time again I have said that ASEP is a success because the leadership and the members have stayed with

the ASEP plan and they are sticking to it. Why not start now and become an ASEP member and help carry it on into tomorrow, next week and years into the future? To begin this process of change, read the following slowly:

1. I am an exercise physiologist.
2. I am well educated in several major fields of study.
3. I have knowledge of and personal experience with highly specific hands-on laboratory experiences
4. I have all the right in the work to control my destiny.
5. I believe in myself.
6. I am a healthcare professional.
7. I help society by transcending the dogma of the failed rhetoric.
8. I am in charge of my life. I am a success.
9. I am going to contribute ideas to ASEP to help ensure its success
10. I am going to turn a deaf ear to everyone who says, "It's not going to happen." or "It can't be done."

As earl Nightingale said, "We become what we think about." If the physical therapists can do it, exercise physiologists can learn to do it. The chance to live the life only a few have dreamed of is ours for the taking. All we need to do is to define our reality. Then, the dream becomes our work, which is driven by inner attitudes that are guided by what lies within us – passion!