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Every Calling Is a Challenge

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Why not fix your eyes on ASEP, and
take the plunge that will set you free?

Earlier I wrote that Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “Every calling is great when greatly pursued.” That is the key, isn’t it? Interesting words, “greatly pursued”. Obviously, it isn’t easy regardless of how hard a person works to facilitate change. I have wondered at times should I publish one professional article every month in the **PEPonline** journal or should it be two or three articles? Is it even necessary to write yet another article to get someone interested in ASEP? Maybe tradition dictates a time factor that is hard to understand, just like the positive relationship between exercise and health. Hippocrates said in the 5th century BC, “Eating alone will not keep a man well; he must also take exercise.” Yet, what percent of Americans engage in regular exercise to keep well?

As I wrote earlier, I have been living with ASEP for more than 24 years, I have been writing books after books about “professionalism and exercise physiology”. I have been thinking, living, and working on behalf of ASEP. Thank God for Shane Paulson, ASEP CEO, Dr. Frank Wyatt, Professor of exercise physiology at Midwestern State University, and Pat Ayes who have stayed with the uphill battle since college. Their commitment to ASEP means everything to me and the ASEP members. For certain, the growth and sustainability of ASEP depends on people like them.

As I did in the earlier article similar to this one, I will explore my feelings and examine my personal and professional thoughts regarding taking risks, and the

circumstances of today's reasons for not moving faster. I propose that if exercise physiologists are going to share in the hardship of creating their own profession and become authentic healthcare professionals, it will require a commitment like no other to create the work we love and believe in. That is, exercise is medicine, although I have declared numerous times before that I believe the correct saying is "Exercise Medicine" just as you wouldn't say, physical is therapy but rather "Physical Therapy".

Both exercise physiologists and physical therapists have in common laboratory skills and scientific knowledge to achieve their professional goals. The concern for exercise physiologists is that they are uncomfortable with taking on status quo, even though they may know what they genuinely want for their future. Yet, just as it requires a commitment to begin an exercise program, moving ahead of the past way of thinking and actively standing on your own two feet is no different. Change begins in the mind of every person who begins the process of thinking differently.

Physical inactivity is a problem of the mind. It is failed thinking that promotes the development of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and diabetes. Life could be different for people around the world, but first they must start thinking differently. This is true for exercise physiologists, particularly the academic exercise physiologists who place more emphasis on publishing research papers than on developing the profession of exercise physiology. Yes, publishing is important, but securing the future of the profession and the students of exercise physiology are also important.

Is it correct or is it simply my desired to reject thinking that is different from ASEP, which raises another concern: What are the "work" benefits of continuing to being led by non-exercise physiology organizations? Have you thought about this point? Is it not true that the role models of, for example, a sports medicine organization are not the correct models for exercise physiologists? In particular, are they, that is, the sports medicine members interested in promoting exercise science? Are the academic types who are sold on exercise science and sports medicine even interested in thinking about entrepreneurial possibilities for the students of "exercise physiology"?

What I do know is that the discussion about ASEP exercise physiology, professional thinking, accreditation, board certification, and work specifically driven by exercise physiologists is imperative if exercise physiologists are to move away from the 20th century exercise science and sports medicine thinking. Yes, I understand that the biggest barrier to exercise physiologists being completely in control of the future of all exercise physiologists is "...but, we have always done it this way." Stated somewhat differently, and the reason for the growing public burden, medical costs, and increased mortality is the American adults' status quo thinking and/or desire not to be active on a regular basis. Society's desire to be physically inactive and exist with the increase in health

risks is really no different from the academic exercise physiologists who refuse to promote the 21st century view of the American Society of Exercise Physiologists as “the” professional organization of exercise physiologists.

This is a concern because saying “no” to pursuing professionalism in exercise physiology is as inappropriate as avoiding regular exercise and its role in preventing the progression of chronic disease. While such is life today, it must change. Yes, I understand that most academic exercise physiologists are not able to overcome their fear of what might happen if they were to transition to the ASEP 21st century way of thinking about exercise physiology. In short, the bottom line is that letting go of decades of thinking one way to think another way isn't easy. No wonder more than 60% of American adults are not active. Why? Because they are living a sedentary lifestyle supported and/or influenced by failed thinking. They are not interested in exercising 30 minutes per session three times a week, regardless of the health benefits.

Implementing a daily exercise program by a patient is in many ways no different from exercise physiologists' responsibility to the profession of exercise physiology. Both are responsible for an action that isn't being carried out. Low physical activity results in rising health concerns. Adults could agree to carrying out a written exercise prescription, but instead choose not to. Instead of exercising, they continue as usual. This is exactly the behavior of professors who turn a blind eye to ASEP professional conferences to spend their time at generic conferences. Here, the patient and the knowledgeable professor are denying the reality of what they should be doing. Unfortunately, both are focusing on what they have always done, while ignoring changes targeted at making life better for everyone.

What is important to remember is that organizations are working for themselves. Yes, they may have a tradition of supporting exercise physiologists, but that does not mean they are an exercise physiology organization. Exercise physiologists must take the time to identify and cultivate their inner strengths to think as independent healthcare professionals. That is why it is important to emphasize entrepreneurial thinking and career opportunities for exercise physiologists. Entrepreneurs are risk-takers who are inventive and strategic, such as knowing that “exercise is a powerful medicine” and society's healthcare system needs exercise physiologists to implement and oversee exercise medicine as part of their strategy to help patients get better.

In fact, exercise medicine is a high priority for exercise physiologists. For one thing, the exercise physiologist's job security is “exercise medicine”. But, aside from it being a powerful idea that will allow for a fulfilling professional life, it must be done by exercise physiologists who understand the importance of thinking it through from within their own professional organization. If you are an exercise physiologist, do you dare to take the risk of joining ASEP and living up to your

potential as a healthcare professional? Are you presently a member of ASEP? You should be a member for the obvious reasons.

Do not join or support a non-exercise physiology organization just because your friends did. Instead of losing yourself in a non-exercise physiology organization, focus your thinking on ideas and risk-taking that builds your future as an exercise physiologist. Yes, I know that you may feel the more popular organization is the path to take, but think about it. Why take the path to an unfulfilling professional life, especially if your vision is to be an exercise physiologist. Instead, why not join the ASEP professional organization and create your own professional work based on your sense of destiny? ASEP has Board Certification. Why not sit for the exam, pass it, and refer to yourself as an ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologist?

Ask yourself this question: Why do physical therapists join the American Physical Therapy Association? The short answer is because they are physical therapists. This is true for athletic trainers. They join their own professional organization. Then, why are exercise physiologists becoming members of an exercise science and sports medicine organization? Exercise science is not exercise physiology, and neither is sports medicine. For exercise physiologists to build a professional life of their own, they need strength to grow beyond continuing with a counterfeit and meaningless life of an entirely different academic major. After all, how do you become yourself when you allow others to convince you to embrace an old 20th-century agenda? Continuing with what has always been may sound good and safe, but is it the right path to build on the vision of exercise physiology as a healthcare profession?

While it is true that life holds no easy answers, commitment is linked to good judgment, strategic planning, and courage. Those who step out of their comfort zone to think differently find themselves confronting their old ways of thinking. They find that their power comes from the burning desire to help themselves and others similar to them. The desire is so powerful that it is often the reason for getting out of the bed, regardless of the setbacks and/or disappointments. Understandably, it takes audacity and persistence to want a new reality. Exercise physiologists who are thinking about joining ASEP might think they must discontinue membership with other organizations, which isn't true. However, when it comes down to which organization is their professional organization, the answer should be obvious. Then, once an ASEP member, it is important to stay the course and actively work to build the profession of exercise physiology.

Remember the adage, "If you think you can't even though you can, you will likely fail." When you want to do something bad enough to try and try again even though you may not be prepared as you should be, the chances are you will be successful. The success of exercise physiologists is dependent upon their willingness to stay the course and define their future, independence, and self-

sufficiency. Also, it is important to remember that their vision and optimism keeps them moving forward and in control of their destiny.

An authentic vocation opens up the mind to credible and meaningful thoughts, explicit plans, and intuitive future opportunities in healthcare. After all, exercise physiologists are the primary healthcare professionals to prescribe exercise medicine. Whether exercise physiology students plan to create a full-time or part-time exercise medicine business, the future belongs to those who believe in themselves. Yes, there are plenty of unknowns when it comes to starting your own Exercise Medicine healthcare clinic, but there are also books, the internet, and a host of relevant documents to help with probing and understanding the unknown factors.

ASEP exercise physiology entrepreneurs go against the old ways to embrace the new. When they find themselves questioning an idea, they may reach out to a trusted colleague or a friend to help with fulfilling their dream. If not, and more often than not, they find that a concern or an issue has several different ways of being resolved. Whatever the challenges maybe, the answer is to have the courage to stay the course. There are answers to most issues that strengthen financial security and self-reliance. Hence, regardless of the obstacles, learning to stay the course is the right answer.

Imagine an ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologist who has the desire to start an Exercise Medicine business in his 70-year-old father's city. It might be that there is little to no obvious interest in fitness and health issues where he grew up. So, why would anyone do such a thing? Well, what if the exercise physiologist presented several presentations about exercise as medicine to prevent cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and frailty? By updating the older adults in the community regarding the benefits of regular exercise, there will be less doubt about the power of exercise medicine as prescribed by an exercise physiologist to improve health and well-being.

Without question the exercise medicine prescription renders an important service to people of all ages, especially among adults who are physically inactive and living an unhealthy lifestyle that is at high risk for disease. In fact, it is the best insurance against chronic disease, disability, and early death. Strangely enough, most people and many professions fail to see the value in regular exercise and yet, when done correctly, it is not only prudent but a necessary low-risk healthcare practice. Conventional wisdom says, "Really, exercise...you have to be kidding. I'll just continue with my pills. That is what doctors are for. They know how to prescribe medications."

Exercise medicine is for the mind and the body. More people would be healthier if they got out of the chair and went for a 20 to 30 minutes of brisk walking 2 times a day or every other day. For certain, people harm themselves when they live a sedentary lifestyle. regardless of age or ethnicity. But, unfortunately, most

adults and the majority of the adolescents spend their time physically inactive. As a result, their mental functioning and judgment are not as sharp. On the other hand, Regular exercise helps to decrease depression and anxiety, which begs the question: “Why aren’t more people physically active?” The benefits of a healthy weight, living with a lower blood pressure, an improvement in cholesterol and triglyceride levels, decreased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and a lower risk for developing several types of cancers are all linked to a physically active lifestyle.

In closing, just as exercise is coming of age, there is gradual growing of ASEP membership during the past decade. However, there is still room for growth among exercise physiologists as to actual support of professionalism and Board Certification. This is especially the case with the doctorate prepared exercise physiologists. It is likely change is just a matter of time that is true with most things in life, but I would like to pose the question “Is it mandated that exercise physiologists pursue professionalism as a unified body of professionals?” I think it is analogous to asking “Is exercise actually medicine?” The answer only makes sense when both professionalism and exercise are discussed in light of the current consensus and synthesis of knowledge of the literature across the related healthcare professions.