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**Making a Difference by Doing Something**

Tommy Boone, PhD, MPH, MAM, MBA, FASEP

Board Certified Exercise Physiologist

*I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.*

-- [Edward Everett Hale](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8183.Edward_Everett_Hale)

What are the reasons for ASEP’s existence? Are the reasons valid? Are they valued by exercise physiologists? These are interesting questions that started me thinking about “what is exercise physiology” and “why should I care”? I am only one person, but I can do something to help move exercise physiology into the 21st century healthcare perspective.

Why is doing something important? Here is one reason. After ~20 years of college teaching, I decided to devote myself to the ongoing journey of self-realization. In so doing, I developed a great appreciation for the depth of what it means to be an exercise physiologist. No doubt you have heard the advice from someone close to you: “This above all: to thine own self be true.”

While I was the Chair of the Department of Exercise Physiology at The College of St. Scholastic in Duluth, MN, the mental dialogue that was going on in my head never stopped. It just kept going on and on. Finally, after 4 years at CSS, I decided to do something about it. As they say, the rest is history.

The bottom line is I knew I would not be 100% free from all the common thoughts, ideas, and organizations of exercise science that most exercise physiologists embraced. But, to attain the inner freedom I needed, I knew I needed to belong to an organization just for exercise physiologists. Since no such organization existed 21 years ago, I created ASEP, the American Society of Exercise Physiologists. It was pretty easy to do at least on paper, but much more work to maintain and grow the organization. Thank goodness for the support of key individuals across the years. They have helped to ensure that ASEP would not only get a good start, but would be around for a long time.

ASEP is at the heart of what I do every day. After retiring from college teaching, I am still very happy. I believe living a happy life begins by being true to your thoughts, expectations, and dreams. I want to concentrate on one thing in this article and that is making a difference. It is imperative that exercise physiologists start thinking differently. In fact, it is prerequisite and to building credible career opportunities for the students of exercise physiology. Yet, as scary as it sounds, this isn’t the case with most academic exercise physiologists. I know because I have worked elbow to elbow with many professors for decades with one thing on their mind and that was doing research. The students’ future is lost in their professors’ interest in publishing research papers.

Please don’t sell my thoughts short. A person has to decide if he or she wants to continue walking in the wrong direction. Clinging to the past is no way to experience life and process new possibilities. It is that simple. It is impossible to be free without being willing to live in the moment. This means we must learn how to move ourselves from the past way of thinking. Ask yourself this question: Are you willing to pay the price for your freedom? Only you can give yourself the freedom to be you. Are you willing to release the old thinking of thinking about exercise physiology to liberate yourself?

There is nothing wrong with feeling the energy of what attracts you to new thoughts and possibilities, such as the professionalization of exercise physiology. After all, it is always better to let go to grow and to achieve a higher self. And, while doing so, do as little comparison with other groups of individuals as possible. Understandably, there will always be for a significant period of time a major difference between them and you. So, don’t sabotage yourself by trying to be what you can’t be tomorrow due to your past. But, it is appropriate to remember that every new beginning must start from where it is today. Small steps become big and important steps tomorrow.

It is not a failure to understand that growth takes time and commitment to change. Figure out what needs improvement in your life and begin to work on it. There is no reason to be concerned that we have this hope and expectation for ASEP and yet others don’t. Over time they too will get with the program. Those who choose to grow and not be part of the status quo have the mindset that every new idea always has a beginning.

If you surround yourself with exercise physiologists who view ASEP as you do, you will see and experience opportunities. There is no reason to be afraid to face your colleagues. If they can’t get why ASEP exist, it is their problem. If you are a student and your professor speaks negatively about ASEP, then that is his or her problem. It isn’t your problem. There is no reason to think we can control their thinking or help them think better, particularly if they are not interested. Life creates all kinds of people who are trying to figure out who they are and what they do.

With a mindset of growing ASEP, setbacks are temporary. Time is always on the side of new thinking. Eventually, the thinking that will help support and grow the organization will take shape and will last the test of time. Hence, there is no reason to be fearful of your desire to work on behalf of ASEP. It may be hard to understand all the issues involved, but you have the right to your feelings. Be willing to open yourself up to others and let go of anything that is keeping you from living your dream. Use your thoughts to strengthen your resolve and enjoy the journey of making a difference.

Do not doubt your ability to look deep within yourself to get free from yesterday’s thinking about exercise physiology. You can transcend the pain, anguish, or sorrow of continuing to go in the wrong direction. To put this into perspective, imagine if your parents and friends understood that you are a credible healthcare professional with the academic training to prescribe exercise medicine. Would they look at you differently as their minds try to make sense of your academic degree? At some point, it will no doubt happen and the loneliness and sense of insufficient thoughts within will be changed forever.

You can live a professional life free from the status quo by helping to fix the problems that are controlling how exercise physiologists think. You can make a difference when your mind starts telling you what to do and why it is okay to fix what’s wrong around you. Join ASEP and become a warrior for promoting professionalism in exercise physiology by exercise physiologists, not by non-exercise physiologists with make believe efforts. Begin with the little things that make changes and move to the bigger things. Just keep doing what will help ASEP grow and bring recognition to all ASEP exercise physiologists.

The price of freedom from yesterday’s bondage is worth the thoughts and feelings to place exercise physiology on the healthcare map. Once you face this fact, you will realize that being uncomfortable with making a difference is at the core of the steps required to grow professionally with new thinking and beliefs. In short, if you will simply allow yourself to buy into what I am saying, it will become a part of you. You will end up writing articles for JPEP to share your ideas to help make ASEP a powerful organization for exercise physiologists. This thinking is at the core of the work that binds new ideas. In truth, professional growth is at the heart of taking down the walls and going pass the limits and boundaries of your comfort zone.

Otherwise, if you believe in the limits shared with you by a person who isn’t looking out for you best interest, then, it must be apparent that you are willing to stay in yesterday’s cage of failed behavior. To fully appreciate this point, simply look around you and it is frightening to realize that so few exercise physiologists have a backbone. Instead of trying to change and making a difference, they are locked in the world of sports medicine and exercise science.

Each of us must be willing to do what we can to bring about change in our own fields of study. Otherwise, we will remain within the mental cages of other disciplines. This means giving up because we are not willing to go beyond the edges of our comfort zone. Why not ask yourself, “What exactly are you trying to hold onto?” Honestly, is it worth it, that is, giving up who you are as well as your thoughts, emotions, and stability that come from a deeper understanding of yourself? I don’t think it is worth it. That is why making a difference is a true sense of awareness that as an exercise physiologist you need your own society of exercise physiologists, not a generic organization of this and that point of contact with individuals who majored in exercise science, kinesiology, human performance, sports medicine, health and physical education, and 20+ other academic degree programs.

It is this awareness that set the stage for the founding of ASEP, which is the root of my own thoughts, emotions, and conscious decision to go deeper into my own professional needs and building blocks for the profession of exercise physiology. Once these thoughts are tied together, and exercise physiologists relate to them and promote them, then the entire structure of professionalism will become a reality of major importance. That moment will be recognized as the birth of the exercise physiology profession that we all can rest upon.

This process is not about building something to find ourselves. I know who I am, and I feel certain that other ASEP members know who they are. The building is being done because it is a dynamic requirement of all groups of individuals who belong to their profession-specific group. They are not lost or confused. They understand that unification is important to defining and controlling the ethical and professional integrity of the members, whether they are exercise physiologists, athletic trainers, physical therapists, or nurses. Without the shield of agreed upon beliefs and practice concepts, there is no way to ensure the safety of the clients and/or patients.

Hence, if you take the ASEP journey, you will begin to experience the feelings and impressions that you are part of a professional structure fashioned by a new exercise physiology model. So, why not decide today that you are going to commit yourself to being an ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologist and take the ASEP certification exam? No matter what happens, if you keep at the ASEP journey, you will reach your goal. Just tell yourself that no matter what happens, you are already happy for being part of ASEP and making a difference in your life and that of your clients and/or patients.

In closing, I want to say a little about the forces in opposition to ASEP. Yes, they exist and they have the power to affect things. But, please keep in mind that ASEP is not about asserting a more powerful will to resist the influence. Instead, there is no reason to get all stressed out or always taking the time to think about what things could be if they didn’t exist. The smart way out is to simply not give the thinkers of yesterday a passing thought. After all, it is just a waste our energy regardless of what continues to happen. This doesn’t mean ASEP should not deal with events that are ethically and/or legally wrong. The key is to keep working on completing the tremendously important work of ASEP while doing so with the contentment and peace of mind. Remember daily that ASEP is a gift, and that gift is the challenging and exciting work that helps to promote the professionalization of exercise physiology.

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