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**The Courage Required of Exercise Physiologists**

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None of us is as smart as all of us. -- Ken Blanchard

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| A man without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls.  -- Proverbs 25:28 |

e are living at a time when one view of exercise physiology is very slowly dying out due the lack of leadership and the new view that is still not fully accepted. We cannot doubt this as we look about us to see the failure of academic research, advising, and teaching to promote exercise physiology as a healthcare profession. Behind the failure is the academic advisors' talk about students getting jobs after college, but the fact is there are no career-specific credible jobs. To earn a college degree and, then out of necessity complete an application to graduate school is proof that the undergraduate degree in exercise science and similar physical education/fitness offshoots are meaningless.

A choice confronts exercise physiologists. Shall they continue doing exactly what they have been doing for decades, that is, advertise to the academic community that (aside from their personal interest in publishing research articles) the exercise science department exists to provide students to physical therapy and other graduate programs. Or, shall they surrender to the changes described by the ASEP leadership? To support ASEP is to grasp a new view of exercise physiology. It is a new chance to participate in the forming of the future of exercise physiology. The importance of this opportunity seems so clear to ASEP exercise physiologists.

Doing research is important, but it is not enough. Where is the courage to speak up in support of change? Surely, there are academic exercise physiologists who are willing to take risks to change exercise physiology for the better. The one thing we need is the courage to act. Yet, more often than not, Rollo May is right when he said in *The Courage To Create*, "The most prevalent form of cowardice in our day hides behind the statement 'I did not want to get involved.'"

It takes courage to join ASEP and face our problems. It takes courage to invest one's self in the new view of exercise physiology. Self-actualization is not easy. In fact, it is has become obvious to me that most exercise physiologists avoid talking and/or writing about professionalism and exercise physiology. No one is interested in speaking out for fear of being mistreated by their status quo colleagues. This is a curious paradox for educated individuals. The search for truth is complicated when an idea is not instantly accepted. Surely, it cannot be that they are too overwhelmed with work. Perhaps, it is there is too much over-controlling by generic organizations.

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| The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.  -- Franklin D. Roosevelt |

Whatever the reason is, the most obvious explanation is that no one wants to be seen as being too different. But that is precisely what keeps change from happening in a timely matter. Frankly, though, the only way to grow a profession is to remain in control. If there is need for change, we can engage the process. Thus, the fact that some members of a discipline are willing to challenge the chaos of the mundane allows for creative thinking. This is necessary to bring forward new ideas to regain control. It has nothing to do with a personality or accomplishments of a well-recognized person or a particularly popular organization. It is simply what it is, that is, as we grow older we see life and our work differently. Hopefully, we learn also to acknowledge what we have been doing wrong and the need to change.

Whatever side we may find ourselves on, there is a profound importance in the realization that being open to changing how we think gives structure to our destiny. This is not a minor point in making the right turn to our future. Recall that new ideas begin with pushing forward with a feeling even in face of a rebellion is an expression of a creative act. This act of bringing something new to exercise physiologists should be appreciated at the highest level. The act itself defines who among us is exercising self-control and, therefore, who is helping to fulfill our perceived purpose in life.

The power of the mind to bring forth our desired reality is incredible. It is amazing but true that the act of exercise physiologists bringing into being a new healthcare profession (i.e., the profession of exercise physiology) isn't something that is done just on weekends or with an occasional thought. Rather, it is a 100% mental, emotional, and physical encounter. The intensity of involvement leaves little else in life of interest. To be sure, it is both a passion for something better for the students of exercise physiology profession and the recognition of exercise physiologists as healthcare professionals.

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| Success comes from visualizing yourself the way you want to be.  -- Robert H. Schuller |

The breakthrough of ideas that undergirds ASEP is linked to an instinctive awareness that exercise physiology is equal to other healthcare professions, including but not limited to, physical theory, athletic training, and occupational therapy. But by virtue of the uniting factors that build and hold a profession together, it is evident that an intensification of mental effort and emotional commitment is required of all exercise physiologists. While this point is not a new revelation, it nonetheless needs daily emphasis. As a believer in the power of the mind, I believe we must break with the patterns of the past to reach our new ASEP goals and objectives.

In closing, positive changes can occur, are occurring, and will continue to occur. As a believer, help others to start thinking as healthcare professionals. Help them realize the power invested in the statement: *You are what you think*. Help them go beyond their commonplace thinking, since it serves to buffer them from the work that must be done. Help them fix their thoughts on what is right for the profession of exercise physiology by:

1. Communicating to the academic administration the urgent need for support to fulfill the ASEP goals and objectives, thus giving shape and hope to exercise physiology.
2. Daring to engage in the necessary work, decisions, and struggles to realize the joy of participating in an organization of healthcare professionals who are driven to make sense out of the nonsense of present day academia.
3. Embracing the newness of the ASEP vision by becoming a member.
4. Supporting its originality and expression of freer professional creativity than allowed with present-day conformity.
5. Considering what it means to be a credible healthcare professional guided by a code of ethics, accreditation standards, board certification, and standards of professional practice.
6. Planning time to study the basic structure of ASEP and its symbolic discourse of passion and commitment.
7. Disclosing the reality of student problems with existing undergraduate degree programs and generic certifications?
8. Acknowledging in writing the chaos and complexity of engaging new ideas that drive the change process.
9. Researching the capacity to imagine and to experience the power in a unified professional organization.
10. Finding the time to dream, work, and share with colleagues the fundamental harmony between an academic degree and career opportunities.