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**What Is Your Vision?**

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Board Certified Exercise Physiologist

There is something within you that is being called by eternity.

-- Dr. Myles Munroe

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ast week, during a brief email exchange, a personal trainer asked me about the ASEP Board Certification. Although his college degree was psychology, he had successfully completed certification with one of the several personal trainer organizations. Please understand that I do not have an issue with personal trainers. Many are successful at what they do, but there is a professional concern that must be addressed when it comes to the desire to change one’s path in life.

In short, the personal trainer wanted to sit for the ASEP “Exercise Physiologist Certified” exam (also, recognized as the ASEP Board Certification exam). So far, this is not a problem. But, after I learned of his academic degree, I emailed him the only logical response possible (i.e., he did not meet the academic requirements to sit for the EPC). He was not happy and asked for an explanation since he had been a personal trainer for years since college.

This point illustrates that what we are doing is not necessarily the reality of what is. My point is that many people are working as personal trainers when, in reality, they may want recognition that they are more! Because they help various people meet their fitness and exercise goals, they struggle with the idea that they cannot refer to themselves as an exercise physiologist. I have met many people with an academic degree in human performance, exercise science, and kinesiology who do not understand the academic coursework to be an exercise physiologist. I see them struggling when they are asked, “What is your title or what is your work?”

The dozens of academic degree programs, many without a purpose except to transition into graduate school, represent the unfulfilled potential of thousands of young adults across the United States. Yet, there is the desire of many college graduates to be successful. The title “exercise physiologist” may be the dream they had considered, but without the credentials it cannot be their reality. This means their lives are not yet fulfilled, which brings me to why I felt 20+ years ago that exercise physiologists needed their own professional ethics, standards of practice, certification, and academic accreditation. Yes, as you might imagine, I am excited that the American Society of Exercise Physiologists (ASEP) is helping people live as healthcare professionals and fulfilling their life’s vision.

Regarding the email exchange, I asked him to read the following definition of an exercise physiologist on the ASEP website: “… a healthcare professional who either has an academic degree in exercise physiology or who is certified by ASEP to practice exercise physiology [via the Exercise Physiologist Certified exam (EPC)] and, therefore, is recognized as an ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologist, or who has a doctorate degree in exercise physiology from an accredited college or university” (1). I also asked him to read the educational requirements to sit for the EPC exam.

**Educational Requirements**

To be eligible to sit for the EPC examination, candidates must submit their transcripts for evaluation by ASEP.  The following are the criteria that are used to approve or decline eligibility (2).

1. An **academic degree with a major in exercise physiology**, or
2. An **academic degree with a major in exercise science, kinesiology, sport science, human performance, or a related degree**, and
3. A **passing grade of "C" or better in "seven" of the following nine academic courses** (listed on an official college transcript):

* **Exercise physiology** (including but not limited to titles: physiology of exercise and sport; advanced exercise physiology; cardiovascular physiology; and physiology of exercise);
* **Fitness assessment and prescription** (including but not limited to titles: health and fitness testing; cardiopulmonary rehabilitation; exercise prescription; exercise testing; exercise electrocardiography);
* **Exercise metabolism** (including but not limited to titles: exercise biochemistry and exercise regulation and metabolism);
* **Kinesiology** (including but not limited to titles: anatomical kinesiology; applied anatomy; neuromuscular kinesiology; and advanced kinesiology);
* **Research design** (including but not limited to titles: research; research design; test and measurements; and statistics);
* **Biomechanics** (including but not limited to titles: biomechanics; and mechanical kinesiology);
* **Environmental physiology** (including but not limited to titles: environmental exercise physiology; applied exercise physiology; and altitude training); and
* **Nutrition** (including but not limited to titles: sports nutrition and ergogenic aids; and exercise nutrition); and
* **Exercise and special populations** (including but not limited to titles: aging and exercise; pediatric exercise; and disabled and exercise).

1. **Current ASEP membership**.

In a later email, he said that the material was interesting but the point is, “I know how to train people. I know how to motivate and help my clients. I don’t need to take those courses.” I said that I can tell you with reasonably good certainty if a person has had a heart attack by reading his ECGs. But, the reality is that I am not a medical doctor or a cardiologist. If your vision is to be an exercise physiologist, you must follow the rules laid out by ASEP just as I would have to do if my life’s vision was to be a physician with a specialty in cardiology. This thinking isn’t complicated except when college teachers fail to explain the basic rules that determine a student’s destiny.

Fortunately, since a person’s vision gives shape to one’s future reality, that person can do what is necessary to be an exercise physiologist. Doing the impossible begins with believing in yourself. Persistence is also powerful in holding on to the vision. Perhaps, then, what seems apparent to me is this. If a person wants to sit for the ASEP Board Certification (3) to fulfill his or her purpose in life, the key to success is not acting like you are that person but doing what is necessary (such as completing an exercise physiology degree and sitting for the EPC exam). Focus on fulfilling your purpose by doing that which is required to be the person you want to be.

You may say, “But I have already been to college. I have a degree.” My answer is, I understand, but it is the wrong degree to live your dream. Now that you understand this, it is time to act. It is time to put your whole life into fulfilling your vision and purpose for your life.

**References**

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