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**Hope and Exercise Physiology**

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The future belongs to those who believe in their dreams.

-- Eleanor Roosevelt

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| **It is one thing to be a member of a generic organization. It’s another thing to embrace the ASEP organization.** |

his is an article on hope and how it helps us with change in exercise physiology. Hope is as important as is physiology to an exercise physiologist (1). After all, without legs, we cannot go for a walk and without oxygen in the air we cannot live. Just as legs and air are important to getting from one place to another, I believe hope is the key to staying the ASEP course. Hope is our faith in the ASEP leaders to always do the right thing for all exercise physiologists (2). Do you have an understanding of the work that has been done by the ASEP exercise physiologists? If not, I would encourage you to read the articles published in **PEP**online, JPEP, and the ASEPNewsletter.

It should not come as a surprise to anyone that it is so common for people to give up hope that life will get better. When there is no hope there is no reason to go on. With hope, which is another word for faith in an idea, a dream, or our daily work, we may stop in our tracks from time to time but we never give up. Thus, we must always hope and expect to be better tomorrow and the day after. We must believe in our dreams of professionalism in exercise physiology, and to know that our students will have the same chance at career success after college as the graduates of other healthcare professions do.

Mind you, the journey of growing a profession is a never-ending tug-of-war (3). If that sounds stupid, then just think about it. It takes sacrifice. It takes paying attention to detail. It takes seeking understanding. Every established health profession or any profession for that matter is always thinking and implementing new guidelines, standards, ethical procedures, to name only a few. Moving from one way of thinking to a different way is sparked by hope linked to a dream of something better.

As a college teacher for more than 4 decades, I know what it means to a college graduate when life hurts. The sting of heartache that comes from failing to find a job after graduation is too often a reality of the students of exercise physiology. Not having a reason to go on is hard to live with, especially when the academic system seems uninterested in changing its philosophic infrastructure to improve the situation. The secret to dealing with this kind of a disinterested majority is to concentrate on the common ground of being an exercise physiologist.

I understand that you may know I have written about this topic for 2 decades now. You may want to say, “Tommy, give it up. Move on to something else. You are making a fool of yourself.” Well, the bottom line is that you are wrong and I can’t do that anyway. Yes, I understand I could be wrong, but I don’t think I am. I believe God has given each of us a purpose for our existence. He has given us a reason to go on, regardless of how difficult it is. My purpose surfaced with the founding of the American Society of Exercise Physiologists (ASEP) in 1997 while I was a professor and chair of the Department of Exercise Physiology at The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN. For 16 years it was a fantastic job that allowed me the opportunity to promote exercise physiology as a healthcare profession (4,5).

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| **Our world is full of organizations that will help individuals carry out their agenda. The problem is that you may be a member of “this or that” organization, but you will only find your way as an exercise physiologist with ASEP.** |

To those who are still comfortable with status quo and what I believe is our ultimate failure as exercise physiologists, the existence of ASEP is more than mental fantasy (i.e., like wishing upon a star). It is my hope and dream that ASEP will help to transition exercise physiology from a world filled with sports medicine, exercise science, kinesiology, and human performance, in addition to a dozen similar degree programs. My hope in ASEP is driven by what I perceive is my God given purpose in life that stabilizes all the emotions that come with the storms of change and thinking differently. Yes, I believe that the ultimate destination for exercise physiology is healthcare. How do I know this? I accept this thinking and trust that it is true. I cannot explain it any more than what I have said. I accept it as my reality and as the reality of a significant following of the ASEP members and/or ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologists (6).

While it is a challenge and time consuming to write about exercise physiology, I am happy to write about ASEP as well. I am happy to share my feelings of hope and change and professional development even though doing so has had a huge emotional price. It has left me with exercise physiology friends and colleagues that I cared for and served who are no longer in my circle of friends. Thus, the flip side is that I rejoice in the work of ASEP in spite of fact it has positioned me on the outside of the majority looking in. But, the point is this: the ASEP organization and everything the members and I have experienced proves our genuine feelings about faith, compassion, and our willingness to stay the course because we are the light at the end of the tunnel (7).

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if God would change all of us within a matter of seconds to think the right thoughts and to insulate the ASEP members from harm or evil from their colleagues and the politics and greed of other organizations. If only we would pull together to care for and get along with each other, regardless of our differences. Unity is the key to our survival as professionals. Few things are more important for exercise physiologists than avoiding being conformed to the world of non-exercise physiology offshoot academic programs.

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| **There is no reason to run from the negative comments your friends say about your ASEP membership. Don’t attempt to escape and don’t panic. Stay the course and let not your heart be troubled.** |

Knowing and thinking that we are what we were meant to be as exercise physiologists means that we must live what as we think. This means fixing our hope on the belief that is revealed in God’s witness of us in prayer to do what we sense is our purpose in life. For me, it means coming together, supporting each other, and believing in one another. After all, we are the ASEP exercise physiologists with the opportunity to focus and work on our future as healthcare professionals. Also, coming together means supporting professionalism and other organizational needs and necessities that are consistent with similar steps in recognition and growth of other professions. After all, we want to be able to say our education is the stuff that is critical to transcending our past.

A truly humble moment that we are growing up as a profession is when we stop fighting with each other. And we do this by participating in the ASEP professional effort that favors the maturity and purpose of exercise physiologists. Honestly, I believe the Lord is watching us and listening to us. Why? Because He cares about our challenges, setbacks, and points of contention with other organizations. I am especially grateful to the academic exercise physiologists who take the time to join ASEP and experience the journey of professional development. I understand that ultimately the desire to do what is right will surface as the winner. Therefore, when we are mistreated because of our beliefs, it is important to remember that God is just, kind, and fair.

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| **Belief is the most important part of achieving big. If you believe it can happen, it can happen.**  **-** Marc Winn |

While we are on the right track to success, we must face the inevitable fact that life will not be easy as members of ASEP. This is true for all new organizations that are perceived as a threat to common place thinking. That’s why we must focus on what our colleagues can’t or refuse to see. For example, if they cannot commit to change, then the good news is to extend your hand to those with the desire to be part of ASEP.

Also, remember that refusing to change is essentially the same as a person saying I can’t change (8). Make no mistake about it. An encounter of this kind is common. Until time closes yesterday’s thinking, be warned that the majority will always act in a manner to lead you away from how you think. This means also that being different is your reality. Let your integrity speak for itself. Meantime, don’t be surprised when false accusations are made about you. Your actions, convictions, and persistence to support ASEP will prove they are wrong.

Man is deathly afraid to leave the artificial securities he has created for himself … This is why he is so slow to advance. New ideas aren’t welcome. People are afraid of them. They’re afraid to think for themselves and be original.

-- Percy Wells Cerutty

Please appreciate this article is not about putting people down. In one sense, members of ASEP are soldiers away from the common thinking of today’s exercise physiologist. They live in a culture of exercise physiology that’s lost its way and is in a desperate need of new thinking. The secret of success then is to stay calm and balanced and keep on keeping on because we cannot simply dream our way into a better future. Nothing is more compelling witness of the great image of ASEP than the decision to become an ASEP member. Why wait? Why not join now to help with the professional development of all exercise physiologists? Why not embrace ASEP and bear up under the load of changing thoughts, ideas, and emotions?

In conclusion, all ASEP exercise physiologists hope to see ASEP grow and become the professional organization of all exercise physiologists. So, let us bear up under the load we presently find ourselves. Let us pave the way to a better future for all who believe in the importance of promoting professionalism in exercise physiology.

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