

## Foreword



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To dream too much of the person you would like to be is to waste the person you are.

—Anonymous

Here comes the hardest part: clearly recognizing our positives and negatives, our individual strengths and weaknesses. Looking internally without those annoying “rose-colored glasses” is never easy, and it’s awfully convenient to just forget about it and hope that we won’t ever have to look at ourselves from a critical point of view. But there comes a time—whether it is thrust upon us as a component of the aging process or as an opportunity to make a significant career move or adjustment—when we understand the need to perform a self-evaluation.

Notice, I said “self-evaluation”—not how we perceive ourselves to be by our peers’ standards, but by our own standards. This is not an easy thing to do, especially if we consider ourselves to be what we do for a living and not who we are. Some may argue that they are one in the same; I do not agree. Who we are makes up what we have become. A career is part of our makeup, not the entirety of it. How many times have we seen those individuals who have made their career their whole existence? What is our usual response? “That person needs to get a life.” How ironic.

This is a great challenge for each of us from a professional and personal point of view. Marcus Aurelius, emperor of the Roman Empire, said, “We are troubled not by the things of the world but, rather, by our perception of

those things.” I am reminded of how we think of ourselves professionally, how we present ourselves to our patients, our peers, and other health professionals. Is the quality of care rendered the most important aspect of our professional lives or whether or not we have umpteen certifications, some of which make no sense? Does being a good test-taker constitute a certifiable knowledge of one’s craft? For that matter, is the opposite true? Are we foot and ankle surgeons, podiatrists, foot specialists, biomechanical foot and ankle specialists, and so forth, or does it really matter? And if it does, to whom does it matter most: us (the individual), our colleagues, or our patients? Is it shameful to be a podiatrist, or is it noble to be the best podiatrist possible?

We need to give due diligence to examining our lives from all aspects. Socrates stated that “the unexamined life is not worth living,” and William James suggested that the most important discovery in psychology is that by “changing the interior states of our minds, we can change the exterior dimensions of our lives.” Our profession is made up of many individuals who bring much enrichment to the practice of podiatry. Yet so many voices and opinions are never heard because of lack of confidence and perceived weakness that is nothing more than peer-labeling and the unfortunate belief that this labeling is accurate. It is essential to remember that beliefs lead to emotions that eventually translate into behaviors, whether or not the beliefs are substantiated. Perception is indeed often interpreted as reality.

I would challenge each and every one of us to look internally and decide what positive contributions can be offered to make things better. Pick a cause that you believe will improve the stagnant systems that some group decided must be in place and that you must abide by, both in your professional and personal life. You are likely to become stronger, more confident, and more self-reliant. Interestingly, not everyone will welcome those traits in you. . . what a great realization! It takes courage to change yourself and the things around you—but as Ambrose Redmoon said: “Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.” What is more important to you?

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