



A WORKOUT TO DEVELOP STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

“I’ve got to get to the gym and get my workout in or I’ll get flabby” might be the hewn cry of many in our society. We tend to spend a good deal of time and money working at keeping physically fit. There are thousands of devices that pretend to “put muscle here” or “take fat off there” and the “feeling good industry” is thriving as a result.

The only gym that I remember growing up was the one in school or the neighborhood playground where you went to have fun and hang out with your friends while engaging in an activity. You rode your bike at top speed anticipating the events that awaited you and you were seldom disappointed. We didn’t think of training exercises or measuring biceps or being concerned with weight loss.

The training that I DO REMEMBER, though, was the training that I received at home from my parents. I guess that now, I could refer to it as “character training” although back then I called it “discipline”. The training was 24/7...it never stopped being reinforced. There were reminders everywhere. There were no cell phones to check up on you because the picture in your mind of what would happen if you transgressed was a very vivid one that would pop up instantly when you were tempted to go off course. It was called guilt and fear. The “popup” would be instantaneously brief, perhaps somewhat vague and you could choose to ignore it. But if you did, you were secretly aware that there would probably be consequences to pay.

I will never understand it but my mother had an uncanny sense of being able to read my mind despite a limited formal education. It was like she had eyes in the back of her head. She was phenomenal. She didn’t have to say anything. All she had to do was stare at me and the blood would rush to my head belying my attempts at covering up my “ill deeds”. The phrase that I most abhorred was “Tell me who you were with and I’ll tell you who you are”. Somehow, if she was remiss in her reading my actions, there would be neighbors who would keep her informed. The neighborhood newscast communication was more efficient than CNN or FOX. Those were simple but very good days affording many enjoyable memories and even more importantly, some very valuable lessons.

What happened?! Where did the lessons of the past go? Are we forever lost or did we just take a wrong turn? Now we talk about “moral decay” and “police states”. There are the naysayers who proclaim that the role of the family is dead and that the need for structure isn’t necessary in order to fulfill our dreams. “You can have it all” is a common motto that is bandied about to indicate that there are no boundaries, no structures that can interfere with our attaining our goals. There is no need for discipline...only a need to make more money. Don’t be thankful for what you have...never be satisfied. Instead, look for the next opportunity...and the next...and so on. It’s all about “the good life”...the next deal...being number one.

I guess the question is whether it is really necessary or important to develop and maintain a sense of character in today’s society. More importantly, CAN we develop a sense of character in our lives? I believe the answer is YES to both...we can and we should. A sense of character is associated with doing the right thing and knowing clearly what the right thing is. As with my mother, a sense of character evolves from our ability to discipline ourselves. There really isn’t a need for someone to be looking over our shoulder. Our view of what is right and wrong should clearly point the way to developing strength of character.

I liken the discipline that is necessary to the “reps” that we conduct as we lift the weights that get our bodies into shape or the inordinate amount of time we might spend on the treadmill or stationary bike. Discipline builds “emotional muscle” that allows us to deal with the ups and downs of life. It gives us the strength to keep on going when we feel like giving up. It provides the incentive to forge ahead and conquer new frontiers in our lives. You don’t have to get to a gym. You can practice whenever and wherever you might be without anyone really knowing the better.

Interestingly, just like going to the gym and not really feeling motivated initially, the ultimate feeling after the character building workout provides is a sense of well-being and accomplishment. It’s a very personal thing and despite the fact that it might not show as with our physical workouts, there is an internal sense of awareness and satisfaction that makes us feel confident and self-assured. Strength of character truly separates the men from the boys and the women from the girls. One of the main gauges of its necessity is the fact that we are all looking for leaders who portray those qualities that comprise strength of character.

We’re not forever lost. We just took a wrong turn. I believe that we will get back onto the road that will bring back memories similar to those that I still relish from my childhood as well as the fruits of that training. I guess that my Mom really knew what she was doing...eyes in the back of her head and all! After all these years, her voice has gone with me. Let her voice become your voice as well.

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a "mind game", he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is "seeking alternative methods to happiness" and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: "enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.