

TIME

I recently had the opportunity to speak to my brother Joe, about his take on my monthly President's Page and *Round-up* magazine. When this younger brother asks the 'alpha' a question, there is much trepidation, but I was confident that he would shower me with accolades about my editorial pieces. Well, sort of! He told me that I spent too much time exhorting and suggested a less intense softer approach. Well, being the 4th of 5 brothers, I always feel obligated to do whatever my older brothers suggest.

The unexpected passing of Mr. Tim Russert reminds us all of our mortality. His background was similar to many of us who grew up in big cities far away from Phoenix, with parents who worked very hard, every day to make sure that their kids had clothes to wear and food to eat. The clothes might have been passed down from older to younger brothers, but we did not care. I always looked forward to getting my hands on that big brown coat or special hat that my brothers had worn. In our home in Philadelphia, there were 7 of us at the kitchen table for dinner every night, and we had to move fast to make sure we had food on our plate. That one-half gallon of Breyer's ice-cream was divided into 8 pieces after Sunday dinner, one for each of us, and the eighth piece was cut into 5 pieces for the 5 brothers. Talk about scrutiny. We made sure that each one got the same sized piece. Our parents recognized the value of education that they did not have the chance to pursue, as well as the doors of opportunity that could be opened by that college diploma. My childhood in Philly holds very special memories for me – kinder, gentler times that seem so long ago.

Let's face it: physicians are a driven species. Sixteen years of education to earn the right to apply for medical school. Then a minimum of 7 additional years to finish med school and a residency program, up to thirteen years if you choose to be a neurosurgeon. Then years of hard work, like our parents, to establish ourselves in our chosen vocation. Hard work has been the common denominator for all of us.

Time has always been a precious commodity, especially after mechanical time measuring devices were invented in the 14th century. Yes, there had been water clocks, candle clocks and incense clocks dating back more than 2,000 years. The invention of the marine chronometer clock in 1752 heralded the ability to calculate east-west distance from the Greenwich meridian (longitude), a significant improvement over Amerigo Vespucci's calculation of longitude by observing the conjunction of planets and the moon. Today time pieces and clocks are everywhere, on our cell phones, computers, DVD players, cars, billboards, cable boxes and even our wrist!

But, how well do we spend our time? Out of bed before dawn, perhaps an early morning workout, if time permits, then a quick shower feeding/dressing ourselves and our kids, a few words of adult conversation then off to a 6:30 or 7:00 am meeting before office/operating room. Then back to the office to finish paper work before a medical society/medical staff meeting and if we're really lucky, an occasional weeknight dinner at home with our family. Off to school for parent-teacher conferences, school concerts, little league/high school sporting events, then back home trying to relearn algebra so we

can make it understandable to our kids. We cannot forget walking the dog and cleaning the kitty litter box. You get the idea. Most of the time we feel that we have no time for anything but the things we have to do, as opposed to the things we might want to do.

There has to be a better way, and as in other venues, no one can make the changes except us.

I think about things I have been meaning to do or would like to do. I make a list and give them the same priority as the other 'important' things that direct my hectic life. Then I make time and do it. I might miss an occasional credentials meeting, home owners association meeting or medical staff meeting, but that's the way it is. The next day the sun will still rise, my job will be waiting and I will get to do everything all over again – with one important difference – the pleasant memory of doing something fun that was important to me or my family.

Which brings us back to Mr. Russert – feel free to substitute the name of a colleague or friend who you believe passed away too soon. None of us knows the day, the time or the place that our lives will end. I do not believe that anyone ever approached death and said, "I wish I had worked harder." Do something meaningful every day, don't wait until tomorrow to tell someone you love them, take time to smell the roses, make a difference, and leave a legacy. The world will be a better place because you were here.

Warm regards,

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President**