

Giving

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This article is about giving, but not in the traditional way. I will attempt to be very brief and focus on one issue and one subject, one thought and perhaps one motivation - giving - the American way.

On September 11, 2001, a tragic chapter in history was written. The incidents that occurred have changed our lives forever. The events will be indelibly engraved in our minds where they will be replayed over and over. The events so vividly captured by the media show grief, suffering, and death as we have never seen it. We witnessed the crushing end of more than 6,000 lives and the valiant efforts of so many unsung heroes. No matter how history replays it, we personally experienced this catastrophe, and its fallout will never leave us.

My reason for this article on giving, however, is to discuss another very important consequence of the September 11th disaster. Prior to the event, whether unknowingly or by design, Americans were becoming more cynical; suspicious; distrustful; egocentric; and more selfishly concerned about themselves and less thoughtful of others. Evidence suggests we were less inclined to participate in volunteer organizations and less interested in charitable giving. So the impression we had of ourselves, and the impression held by many outside our borders, was less than positive. The image of the ugly, demanding, self-centered American was a perception held by many. Worse, it was a reality for those caught up in the material way of life - those who put the dollar far above any moral value.

In one fateful day - September 11 - a transformation took place. It wasn't just an image change; it was an attitude change. Many Americans literally had an epiphany on that day that transformed them in ways not yet fully understood. This has been reflected in an emergence of values that we thought were lost with the "innocence" of the 1940s. Pushing aside the shock and response of Pearl Harbor as the number-one unifier in American history, these acts of terror, designed to undermine America's confidence, did the opposite. They spurred hundreds of heroic deeds, and a new sense of patriotism. They also reawakened some of the values we hold so dear as Americans: friendship, generosity, kindness and integrity.

Since September 11, we have seen these traits being used every day in some fashion or another. Even little things like the person-to-person relationship of strangers in the big city are impressive. Remember how impersonal people seemed to be in New York City? Hustle and bustle took precedent over courtesy. Today, as people pass each other in the big city, many pause to say "Hello" or "Good morning." In the past, soldiers in uniform were ignored. Today, strangers at airports observing soldiers often stop to make positive comments about their dedication to their country. People are appreciated regardless of color, creed or gender.

Citizens in every community across America are seeking ways to "help" those affected by the terrorists, while still trying to make sense of it in their own ways. Even the hands of friendship held out to our Moslem community to protect them from prejudice and misunderstanding says something about the reawakening of American ideals.

There are reports of doctors of chiropractic volunteering their time to treat firefighters, police, and volunteer workers near ground zero in an effort to help ease their physical strain of the day. Hollywood contributed its talents to raise \$150 million in a telethon; Congressional leaders putting aside partisan politics to focus on solutions rather than rhetoric; and anchors on news shows letting their hair down and showing their emotions in an unusual moment of personalized reporting.

Millions of individuals across this great land have quietly and without much fanfare written checks to the Red Cross; donated blood; sent clothing to the Salvation Army; participated in volunteer programs in their community; and taken the time to help their children address an envelope to the White House with a dollar enclosed. The list of deeds is endless and many in their own way, have "given" something as a result of this disaster.

"What have we as a nation given up?" the president was asked.

"A piece of our souls," was the president's succinct response.

So true, for that's what we have lost in these tragedies. The essence of this tragedy could not have been better stated.

Perhaps hidden too deep, and permitted to lay dormant for too long in the deep recesses of our collective subconscious, were the traits that made America: the unselfish spirit of caring. The signs of our disinclination to give, to help, to nurture, to remember, and yes - even to care - were evident. These American qualities were put on "hold" as a result of the hustle and bustle of keeping up with modern life. We were on the treadmill of materialism and self-indulgence. Perhaps the greedy side of us had developed in such an insidious and subtle way that we hardly noticed our attitude had changed; our tolerance diminished; our tempers shortened; our volunteerism reduced; and our charitable giving had diminished.

Enjoying the simple pleasures had become a chore: a morning sunrise; an evening sunset; quality time with a child; a note or call to a longtime friend; or an "I love you" for no reason.

That all changed on September 11th. With one ghastly event, most Americans were liberated from the shackles of indifference, apathy and cynicism. As tragic as it was, the terrorist attack brought us to our senses; as deadly as it was, it gave the lives of Americans a new meaning. Certainly the terrorists did not expect that!

A reassessment of priorities has taken place for millions of people. The value of a friendly smile; a trusting neighbor; a small child's laughter; or the simple ability to walk free anywhere in our country all became so much more important. Our great nation met the challenge of dealing with this evil deed in a way that should make everyone proud: with an outpouring of patriotism, heroism, volunteerism and leadership. Truly the American way!

What can our profession learn from this? Doctors of chiropractic have responded, like most Americans, by their volunteer actions. They have made contributions to charitable causes and have used creative approaches to provide help, each in their own way during this time of need. Chiropractic's willingness to accept it's social responsibility is evident.

America is under siege from terrorists who wish to annihilate our country and its values. Whatever their warped or misguided reasons, they are out to destroy us. While we may be flinching, we are not

surrendering. Because we are responding wisely and aggressively, we will win.

If you will forgive me for drawing this somewhat grim analogy merely to make a point, chiropractic has also been under attack since 1895, also by a misguided foe; not the kind of deadly attacks witnessed at the WTC or the Pentagon, but nonetheless as destructive to the profession as a missile aimed directly at the heart of chiropractic. The culprit: politically motivated medicine, which wants to control the "world" of health care.

The attacks have affected the very core of chiropractic practice, our right to exist as a health care profession independent of the control or dominance of the American Medical Association. Sadly, the attack on chiropractic continues to this very day, and the AMA, as a host nation, is still harboring those "cells" of terrorism dedicated to destroying chiropractic throughout its network of influence.

From "terrorizing" any insurance company considering chiropractic care in their core benefit plans, to attacking any position supporting "subluxation" in the Medicare HCVA lawsuit, to the ongoing and ever-present propaganda machine spewing venomous lies about chiropractic, to the attempt to regulate chiropractic to an afterthought in various legislative initiatives, the AMA "terrorist cells" are working hard to infiltrate, take over and maintain control of the American health care system.

Obviously, our chiropractic issues are not of a kind to rally a nation to our cause. We have a limited ability to enlist many allies to our defense. And unfortunately, we do not have enough friends with either the influence or economic clout to help us.

Then how do we finally overcome these "cells of terror" and defeat the enemy once and for all? Much like the U.S. is doing in its new war, we must attack health care terrorism at its core.

We have to finally recognize that the only group interested in our problems is ours! No one else cares about our situation to offer a groundswell of support, despite the knowledge that there are unjust issues to be resolved. And so perhaps it is time for the profession to wake up from its 100-year nap and put aside those things that are superficial, but have kept us battling amongst ourselves. Perhaps it is time we acknowledge that the American Chiropractic Association, whether we are its members or not, is capable of leading the charge against HCFA in the Medicare lawsuit and the attack against the Insurance Industry in the Blue Shield Trigon lawsuit. If we do that, then the next step is to do our part to underwrite the effort so it doesn't fall apart because of a lack of resources. Send in a pledge: a \$1000 contribution for 2001, and \$1000 for 2002, a commitment that will support the global needs to defeat anti-chiropractic terrorism. A commitment from 50,000 doctors of chiropractic will once and for all eliminate the "AMA terrorist cells" and enable the profession to practice without further harassment. It cannot be done without dollars, dedication, drive and desire.

Leadership talent is not an issue at this point. We are fortunate to have an attorney whose track record speaks for itself. George McAndrews' successful 17-year battle with the AMA not only proved his expertise, but also his commitment as a true leader. He personifies the professionalism, wisdom and confidence modern chiropractic exudes. George McAndrews and his firm will be at the helm, steering this profession to victory in the Medicare and Blue Shield Trigon suits. The ACA had the vision to take the lead, and put the right people in place to do the job. Now what is needed is the fuel to fire the missiles and food to feed the troops.

What it will take to win is giving! There is not one single chiropractor in America that cannot give \$1000 to this effort, irrespective of philosophical beliefs, technique, college of graduation, state of

licensure, date of graduation, gender, political persuasion, religion or age. This war transcends all the boundaries of what may have divided our profession in the past.

Our profession can become "one" for a cause. Following our victory perhaps there can be slippage back to old arguments, philosophical division and spirited debate over other mundane issues. But for today, can we not cooperate? Is there any reason why this profession cannot bridge its divisions to make the necessary commitment to move our profession forward? Is it not time - when thoughts are serious, patriotism is high, pride is abundant, fairness is in style, and an unselfish heart appears to be evident in every American?

As horrible as was the attack on the U.S, we learned something evil can be carried too far. Our profession needs to consider the sustaining "attacks" on chiropractic as evil acts that demand a response. If we permit those that wish to eliminate our profession to continue their "terrorism" because of our apathy or lack of ability to unite, we will eventually be destroyed. If we act decisively, wisely and aggressively, we will create a health care environment where we can truly provide our services with freedom and equality. We have no option but to fight back!

We can change the course of history for our profession. Fortunately, until now, there has not been a catastrophic event to provoke us to focus so vividly on everything we hold dear; our country, our family, our friends, our profession and yes, our lives. But following the tragedy, it is easy to relate to many personal issues and the bearing they have on our profession and on human values.

Let's use this heart-rendering period to put aside our petty differences and rally our forces. Send your contribution to the American Chiropractic Association Giving Campaign, 1701 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia 22209. Do It now. Give the American Way!

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