



# Take Care of Yourself...Literally

*As we travel down the road of life, we often encounter speed bumps along the way. It is how we handle these challenges that affect our life and future.*

When I was asked by my good friend, Bob Kohlstedt, to write an article for *On Course*, I told him I would, and then I thought about the many topics I could discuss. After deliberating for over a month, I realized that Bob has been on the board for over two years, and yet I have never read any of his musings.

I thought about the topics that I could write about and whether I should proceed and write an article. I have to be honest. I was somewhat embarrassed about my level of participation within the association. I am the only salesman for a small privately owned company and call on about 100 turf customers, and I also do the purchasing and distribution. It doesn't leave a whole lot of extra time to attend monthly meetings or be involved on a committee. Only after thinking about the many friends, customers, and the competitors for whom I have respect and regard did I make up my mind and proceed with my thoughts.

What should I write about? The topics of fertilizer pricing, the different controlled release products that are available, and the life and times of a salesman crossed my mind, but I decided to write about something we all could relate to – our health.

I turned 50 a few years ago. As the surprised guest at a birthday party, I was the recipient of many gifts and many barbs about being "over the hill." I distinctly remember thinking to myself: what in the heck are they talking about? I was in good health; I could toss bags of fertilizer with no problem; and I still enjoyed tossing back a few Miller Lites with my friends. The next day, as I was going toward town for some groceries, I saw someone pointing and laughing behind me. When we got to a four-way stop, I got out of my vehicle and asked the driver behind me what was so funny. When I realized that my sisters had put a metallic bumper sticker on my car that read, "honk, driver just turned fifty," I returned to it sheepishly.

The next year the Golf Industry show was in Orlando. When I returned home, the next night was the Super Bowl.

After going to a party, my heart was pounding. I was afraid that I was having a heart attack. I drove myself to the hospital to learn I had an upper respiratory infection and a bad case of acid reflux.

It gets better. The next year the show was in New Orleans. The Friday night before we were to leave I walked out to my vehicle and slipped on some "black ice." While I was sliding, my right foot hit a protruding chunk of ice and my right leg broke in four different places. My foot was turned 90 degrees to the right after the fall. I endured surgery, the insertion of two screws to keep the damaged ligaments in place, and over four months of therapy before I was finally able to walk normally.

But nothing could prepare me for this past January. I was scheduled to have surgery to remove the two screws from my ankle. Once again my heart had been pounding over the Holiday Season. I didn't like my current doctor. Based on recommendations from several of my friends, I decided to make a change. It turns out that it might have been the best thing that I have ever done and possibly saved my life.

The new doctor scheduled several tests and asked me to postpone the surgery on my ankle. He called me the night of my CT scan and asked me if I was sitting down. He then informed me that they had discovered an aneurysm right outside my heart. He asked me to come into the hospital and admit myself so that they could check some more things out and have the cardiologists and surgeons review my results.

After that call you could have knocked me off my chair with a feather. I sat there for about an hour with a myriad of thoughts and emotions running through my mind. I finally got enough strength and resolve to call my mother and family to tell them what was going on. It was a tough thing for me to digest.

The purpose of writing this is not only about me. It's about all of us. We all need to think about our health and make sure we are doing the right things to confront life's speed bumps.

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We are in a "now" business. When the season is here we are in go time. It seems as if the winter season for retooling and getting away is shrinking by the year. The time for thinking about our health and welfare becomes secondary. I beseech each and every member of our association to think about this and reflect on how it affects you.

Have you had the necessary tests to insure everything is fine? Are you content with your doctor's care? Is your perception of the way you feel an accurate reflection of your health? Have you put off going to a physician because of the pressures of work or because you don't want to? I cannot stress enough that answering these questions can make all the difference in the world.

There is an abundance of information on the Internet. WebMD.com is an excellent source on conditions, medications, and general health concerns. Many of the larger Clinics and Hospitals, such as Mayo's, Cleveland, and Loyola, have web sites that explain different surgeries and procedures.

Talk to family and friends about any concerns and questions you may have. Although this might be difficult for you, I have found it to be a source of information and comfort. It's how I found my orthopedic surgeon, my family practitioner, and the cardio surgeon who will repair my aneurysm. Just last Friday, the doctor who did the surgery on my leg told me that he had been diagnosed with the same thoracic aneurysm that

I face. He went to school with the surgeon who did his surgery and who will do mine. He talked about what he endured and what I will face. I can't explain in words what that meant and how it put me at ease with what I face.

We have all known friends and fellow members who have faced difficult times and decisions with their health. Rather than putting it off due to fear, uncertainty, or work constraints, please make it a focal part of your life and make the necessary choices.

If there is anything you take away from this article, I hope it will be these three things:

Take time for your health. Having a yearly physical and seeing the proper physician when you are under the weather is the least you can do for yourself.

Take time for yourself. We are in a stressful industry and some days we try to pour 10 hours into an 8-hour day. Take fifteen or twenty minutes, no matter how hard that might be, when you feel overburdened and catch your breath. I started that routine this year, and I can tell you it works wonders.

Take time for your family and friends. Let them know how much they mean to you. Remember tomorrow is not given, nor is it promised.

Ok, Bob, now it's your turn.... **-OC**



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