

## **If I had only One Minute with The President**

Good morning, Your Excellency. My name is Kojo Essel. I am a wellness entrepreneur.

I wish that Ghanaians and all people of the republic of the world will realize that ‘their dreams and goals of a healthy life are possible’. I will continue to create awareness (and form habits) that eating right and increasing our physical activity is the safest and most foolproof way of growing a healthy world and automatically increasing our wealth.

A few things have been bugging me, and if you do not mind, Mr. President, I will run through them in fifty seconds.

### 1. Keeping Healthy to Grow Wealth

In each country, healthy citizens are the trump card to wealth creation. The monetary losses from paying hospital bills for diseases that could have been avoided; and the losses from days off work due to common colds, back pain, fatigue, and lack of drive while we are at work, are really alarming.

Starting with the public sector, could we institute workplace wellness programmes (and as part of this, I recommend mandatory thirty-minute daily breaks at work for exercising)? I know people will rant and rave, but trust me, Sir, it will do us a world of good.

### 2. Starting Right

- I really can't believe that these days, children as young as six years spend hours on end sitting in class studying. How practical is this? I pray that physical education will be strengthened as early as in the nursery schools.
- All drinks that we call ‘minerals’ should be banned from schools. PERIOD. This should not even be debatable. The harm many of these drinks cause is unimaginable. I hope that when these children are at home, their parents will supervise what they drink and the quantities consumed.
- Children should be taught what, how, and when to eat, as early as in nursery school. The benefits that will accrue to us as a nation will exceed our wildest imagination.

### 3. Road Safety

- No hands to ears while we drive! This rule should have been enforced years ago. To grow wealth, we need all shoulders to the plough. We can't afford to have people die in senseless road accidents or have people maimed because of the same culprit – a driver handling a cell phone with one hand, and driving with the other. These days, we are getting extremely ambitious – we even send text messages while driving. Sir, I promise that I will no longer indulge in this atrocious crime.

Hmmm! We also have the pedestrian who crosses a road totally oblivious of his surroundings, just because he/she is chatting on a phone as if there is no tomorrow.

- Your Excellency, I know we are working on this, but can we speed it up? There is so much traffic - especially in Accra - that people arrive at work tired, stressed out or probably angered beyond measure by the driver of a commercial vehicle. How can anyone in such a state of mind work optimally? We are stabbing ourselves by not finding instant and permanent solutions to this serious issue. I know the use of separate routes for commercial and private vehicles has been discussed. It's great, but can we add the penalizing of private car drivers who enter the commercial district during peak hours, with less than four people in a car? Imagine how this is going to encourage car pooling, which will reduce the number of cars on the road, and reduce traffic and fuel. The bonus here is that we get to know our neighbours better as we ride together daily.

...Then I saw an arm stretch across my chest. I took the cue: my time was up. I turned to walk away, and hit my head against the wall. I woke up with a jolt and a swollen forehead. IT WAS JUST A DREAM.

It is my prayer that those who have the clout to let these things happen will not overlook them. We can make our country healthy, and then we will create wealth.

As we begin the 2011 journey I have a simple message for you – Ghana can grow healthier and wealthier if we show commitment and discipline. This starts with YOU!

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