

BIKE HEALTH: back in the saddle

RICHARD CHAYKIN

After our Tuesday ride I was sitting on my bumper taking off my shoes when Ruth Husky came up to talk to me. She wanted to know how long it took me to get back on my bike after my accident. She had been going through some soul-searching of her own and just wanted to talk. I told her it was about 5 years layoff. She wanted to know if it was mental or physical that kept me off the bike. The honest answer was •both•. Physically it took me that long to be able to get back on the bike. My riding has not returned to its prior level but I am just glad to be able to ride. It is the psychological aspect that was also there. When I returned to riding it was only done on back roads. I was afraid of traffic and that the physical pain would get worse. That was something that was not part of my thinking before being hit.

Looking back, the mental part of returning is just as large if not larger than the physical. Yes, I am limited in what I can now do as compared to before the accident but there is a psychological aspect that has not truly been conquered. My riding style is certainly not as aggressive as before and there are times when a hesitation emerges. A few years ago the group was on a ride where the rider in front of me violently crashed. It was not a pretty site and this also left its mark on me. I am not as confident riding in a line with my tire inches from the rider ahead. Now there is a larger space and one that I choose not to close. Yes it costs me energy but it is the mental aspect that keeps me there. On top of that, the rider has not gotten back on his bike. I have e-mailed him numerous times to attempt to get him out on the road again offering to ride at whatever speed and area he felt comfortable. Yet he has not been able to do so to my knowledge. He told me he was afraid to return to the roads.

So why am I writing about this? This morning I also received an e-mail from Bud Gance. The mail was from an Ed Collins. The letter he wrote was in response to his father being killed on the roads of Tampa. It was a very powerful letter expressing many emotions. In the letter it talked about the driver just touching his father with the SUV. The driver could not understand how such a light touch could kill someone. My light touch sent me to the ground with significant impact. I was lucky in that I was alive and not paralyzed. How does one recover after an injury or accident. I am not a counselor so what I state is from some literature I have read and my own feelings. Please take it for that as everyone recovers differently. Even slight injuries can follow this pattern so always treat them correctly.

There are different stages one goes through when they are injured. When the injury is small one may not go through all of these but as the trauma increases so does the intensity of these symptoms. These include denial, grief, mourning, anger, depression, resentment, and acceptance. The denial part is one that is hard to get past but eventually it will sink in that you have been injured. Then there is the grief. The why did this happen to me? The bigger problem is the anger and resentment. These are energy sappers for what has happened. There is no way to undone the injury no matter how much you want it that way. This is especially true when what happened was not one's own fault. This often leads to depression. What is under my control is how I deal with these emotions. If they are left unchecked they will rot the person that is having these thoughts. For me this was and at times still is a tough one

to get over. This is where the use of professional counseling will help. I had to do this for my depression as it was a hole that I just never want to reenter. Psychological counselors are the experts at helping someone get over this stage as well as the grief. There are so many ways of dealing with these problems but to keep all of the emotions bottled up is not healthy. It ruins relationships with loved ones as well as friends and coworkers. The mourning process is real and necessary. Things have been lost or changed and for some this is difficult to get past. When you are working with a counselor they will get you past this and finally into acceptance. It is at this point where you are able to change what has happened. One can now take a look and objectively see what has changed.

Most difficult in this is acceptance. Everyone is responsible for what they think. *No one can make you think anything!* You are what you think and if you are in a negative state your body takes on this negative attitude and energy. Become positive in your outlook. Use mental imagery. Picture your body repairing itself. See an improved you. Do this in great detail. The more detail your image the more your body will work to get itself to this state. What the mind thinks so will the body follow. Get help with this process either from a counselor or from readings but use it as it is a powerful

tool! To some this is one of those metaphysical things that are just hocus-pocus. Interestingly, sports teams use this technique all of the time. They hire sports psychologists to help their athletes perform better and to recover from injuries. All that you need is a quiet room, some conducive music, willingness, and guidance. The difference between people of equal ability is what they think of themselves underneath all of the external presentations. Don't

let an injury put you in that place where it becomes extremely difficult to escape. Get whatever help you need! Take responsibility for what goes on within you!

Again this is my thinking and if you have any questions please contact me at richardchaykin@yahoo.com



i IN CASE OF EMERGENCY!

Program a new number into your cell phone with the name "ICE"

This stands for **In Case of Emergency** and should connect to your emergency contact person. First responders are trained to look for this number in cell phones so that if — heaven forbid — you slip on a banana peel while you're out your loved ones can be notified.

DIAL I•C•E