

Breakthroughs

SOMETIMES, THE HARDEST thing to do is to look at a situation and honestly admit what you're seeing. We tend to simply accept difficult situations in our lives without questioning them. We'd rather tell ourselves that we are optimistic, hoping for the best, dealing with our problems.

But in fact we never actually plan for any improvement because we are inwardly resigned that things will never change. Instead, as the slow pressure of this external friction increases, you quietly spend more energy trying harder and harder to shut it out of your mind, becoming more rigid in thought and body as you do. Month after month, failing to confront the issues or personalities that are bringing you down, your psychic energy slowly drains away. You may compensate in various ways, perhaps working it out of your body through vigorous exercise, but oftentimes self-destructively, hoping to numb the feelings.

We need to remember that we are not alone. A great many people depend on each of us. Whether it is your obligation to those you work for, as I feel toward all of you who subscribe to this magazine, or to family and friends, who love you, and who need you to be functional and effective—in effect to inspire similar effectiveness from themselves. You shouldn't feel selfish or guilty for wanting a change. It may be absolutely necessary and in the best interests of all concerned. Those who choose to be lazy and manipulative rather than helpful don't deserve your concern. An impossible situation must be changed or dropped altogether. The possibilities of the future are too great, and you'll never know how great unless you make the effort to move forward.

As motorcyclists, we have a great advantage over the general population. Our bikes are a tremendous outlet, providing both the benefits of physical exercise together with the often-underestimated psychic exercise that we gain from the continuous flow of non-verbal decision-making skills. This focused attention to the road and the bike is all the reason I need to continue riding, because it cleans up my mental desktop, organizing and prioritizing my tasks and putting them in a manageable perspective, and giving me the sense that I can deal with them, as I do the traffic on the road.

However, I sometimes find that I must work to eliminate any nagging internal dialogue that might distract me from my riding. Sometimes, just the awareness of distraction allows me to shut it off, but other times, it can be hard, and I know that if you don't have 100% attention on riding, you



shouldn't be doing it. The corollary to that is that we shouldn't be using the bike irresponsibly, riding/acting out of frustration or anger or depression as a way to push away what's really bothering us. I think it's fair to say that all the antisocial behavior by motorcyclists—which seriously threatens our sport in the minds of the public—has its roots in just such a place. Wisdom comes slowly with age for most of us, and I'm guilty of poor past behavior too, but we at least need to speak it when we know it's true. Acting out on a motorcycle is not only unhelpful to our common cause, but it's dangerous and often exactly what causes accidents. I learned years ago that every single time I lost my temper on a bike, a life-threatening situation was only moments away. I was lucky I learned that lesson before it bit me.

How about an exercise? This being the January issue, you should have it in your hands before the first of the year. When was the last time you made a New Year's Resolution? Let's try one together: Here's the technique: As part of a corporate board, I once had the opportunity to work with a professional facilitator, whose job was to get our squabbling group of nine people past their individual differences and into agreement to move the corporation forward. We all had a financial stake in that outcome.

Think what would make you happy this year...besides winning the lottery?

Interpersonal issues might be as high on your list as they are on mine. Your job situation? Perhaps a long-delayed project? Be honest and list everything you have. If the list becomes too long, take the top five for the exercise.

Next, you must list what's holding you back in each of these areas. This is equally important. Be honest, but not angry. Be objective, but not depressed. Write it down and look at it all, and include your evasive behavior, the things you do to avoid looking at the problems, and how that ultimately affects you, too.

Now, imagine five years into the future, when everything you want has come to pass. Everything is amazingly improved. Let that thought sink in. Visualize exactly how perfect it all is. Be thrilled with the improvement in your life, relationships and work. The harder you try this exercise, the better it will work. It's proven.

Now imagine that your success has made you so admired that a newspaper reporter has come to interview you, to ask you how you did it, so that you might inspire others to do the same.

This is where you will fill in the story, working from the future back to the present, each step of the way until you reach the place where this process started. By doing this, you will clearly see what had to happen to reach the place where you wish to be. Perhaps for the first time, you will realize that your situation is not carved in stone. It can be changed, and even better, it can be so much better than you would have ever let yourself believe. Why settle for less than you can imagine?

Take an hour to do this exercise right now if you're really with me.

Return to this page with your head clear, your path in front of you, your goals in sight.

How do you suppose the most successful people think if not exactly this same way?

We all need to know we can move forward. Burdens that can be identified can be dealt with. Don't let life grind you down. Look at the big picture, take the long view. Live in the future and the present will take you there.

And because we all share this same love of motorcycling, add one resolution at the end of your list, if you haven't already:

Find more time to ride in 2005, quality riding time, without the distraction of unsolved problems. Enjoy the exquisite freedom of control; balancing in three dimensions as you travel to new places, seeing things you've never seen before.

Make this the best year ever.

Happy New Year!

DAVE SEARLE

—Dave Searle
Editor