

Learning to Ride a Motorcycle

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ED 593
Dr. Martin
November 2, 1998

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Introduction

I have recently learned to ride a motorcycle as a result of using my explorer, artist, judge, and warrior to be more creative and express myself in a new and exciting way. Many personal myths had initially prohibited me from learning to ride a motorcycle, but I was able to turn the negative myths into positive truths. I found that riding a motorcycle could meet the five basic needs that Glasser describes (1986). Because I am continually learning from my experiences on the bike, I see that learning to ride a motorcycle is a process like Harri-Augstein describes, rather than an outcome of a specific number of instructions (1991). In learning this new skill I did not just develop the ability to ride a motorcycle, but I learned how to overcome my fears and how to put an idea into action.

Learning Myths

Up until recently, I possessed many negative myths about motorcycles. I thought they were very dangerous machines and that only “tough guys” rode them. I was also quite intimidated by them and the hazards associated to them. I thought that because I was petite I would not be able to hold one up and balance myself enough to successfully ride. These are the very myths that kept me from trying to learn how to ride a motorcycle. Harri-Augstein refers to them as “disabling myths” and because of them, my expectations were low (1991). A friend of mine had a motorcycle and began taking me for rides on the back of it. I immediately liked the thrill of riding fast with the wind

pushing against me; it was like riding down a steep hill on my bicycle, but much better. One day, after riding on the back of the motorcycle, I decided to overcome the negative myths I had about learning to ride. I asked my friend if I could try to ride it myself. He agreed, although I don't think he thought I would be able to hold it up. I got on the motorcycle and turned on the ignition. After putting it in first gear, I let off the clutch and gave it some gas. Unfortunately I released the clutch too fast and the bike died. Discouraged minimally, I decided to try again. This time I had the motorcycle up and going while my friend ran along behind me with his hands stretched out in case I tipped over. I was so excited as I rode around in circles in the parking lot. I couldn't believe I was actually riding a motorcycle; something I originally thought was dangerous and only restricted to "tough guys." My friend told me I was doing great for my first time driving a motorcycle. He encouraged me to let go of the myth that I couldn't learn to ride one because I was small or that they were too dangerous. With this encouragement, I decided to study and take the learner's permit test. Had I not been able to overcome these myths, I feel I would have missed out on a wonderful experience.

The Four Learning Roles

The Explorer

As Roger von Oech (1986) states, the first step in the learning process is to "bring out the first member of your creative team, your explorer" (p. 25). The explorer in me needed to produce the desire to learn how to ride a motorcycle. When searching for a new way to have fun, my explorer saw riding a motorcycle as an excellent opportunity. After overcoming the initial disabling myths, my explorer decided to "slay a dragon" as

von Oech (1986) describes the process of conquering our fears (p. 39). I decided to think of motorcycles in a new way. Instead of viewing them as threatening, I decided to see them as fun and exciting. My explorer helped me look for a new idea in a place that I had previously been afraid to examine.

The Artist

By learning to ride a motorcycle, the artist in me was able to look at myself and see what I could do to change. My explorer did her job and now I had to do something to the materials she collected to give them value (von Oech, 1986). I looked at myself and decided I needed to be more adventurous. It was somewhat difficult for me to utilize my artist fully because I knew I was risking the chance of failure. I did not want to fall and hurt myself or the bike. Ultimately, the artist taught me to see motorcycles as fun rather than dangerous.

The Judge

The judge played a very important role in my motorcycle experience. While my artist did a good job of convincing me that motorcycles were fun, I had neglected to properly evaluate my ideas to realize the dangers that were involved (von Oech, 1986). One day as I was pulling out of the parking lot at Hy-Vee, I encountered one of my greatest learning experiences. I had decided to go very slowly through a stop sign to see if I could stop without putting my feet down. While trying to balance the bike at such a slow speed, I ended up tipping the bike over and it fell to the ground. I was so shocked and I didn't know what to do, so a man standing near-by came over to help me pick it

back up. I was very upset with myself after not being cautious and I decided to re-evaluate my stance on motorcycles. My judge had the good intuition to realize that motorcycles are not toys and cannot be regarded lightly. As I realized earlier, they are not big, scary machines, but I now had the insight that they are also not available strictly for my enjoyment. Motorcycles can be dangerous if I don't act responsibly. My judge and artist worked together to analyze the situation differently and realize that a substantial amount of caution is necessary when learning to ride a motorcycle. My judge taught me that the explorer and artist had come up with a good idea, but it did have some problems that needed work. With the help of the judge, I know that in order to be successful in learning to ride a motorcycle, I must exhibit caution.

The Warrior

My warrior gave me the strength and courage to learn to ride a motorcycle; she helped me carry my idea into action (von Oech, 1986). My warrior gave me the strength and courage to learn to ride a motorcycle. With the help of my warrior, I was able to fight my disabling myths and accomplish my goal. My warrior has acted multiple times in my quest to learn to ride a motorcycle. Obviously, it came out in the parking lot that very first day I rode the bike. Then, a couple months later, when I tipped the bike over in the Hy-Vee parking lot, I was scared to even get on the motorcycle again. I stayed off of it completely for about a month or two because I felt like I was not responsible enough to ride it. I was very scared that I would make the same mistake again. After my judge helped me re-evaluate this decision and I decided I just needed to exhibit more caution, my warrior helped me get back on the motorcycle and ride again. Von Oech (1986) says,

“the two greatest enemies of action are fear and lack of confidence” (p.134). After tipping over the bike I experienced both of these feelings. The warrior was my weapon against these enemies. I needed to overcome the mental lock that von Oech (1990) labels “To Err is Wrong” (p. 151). I now realized that errors are learning experiences and I need to be strong to find the lesson in my mistake. The warrior is ultimately responsible for helping me put my idea into action.

The Five Basic Needs

Dr. William Glasser (1986) introduces the five basic needs he believes “are built into our genetic structure as instructions for how we must attempt to live our lives” (p. 23). Each of the needs are fulfilled in one way or another with my learning to ride a motorcycle.

To Survive

I believe that learning to ride a motorcycle has helped me fulfill the basic need to survive because it is the method of transportation that I most frequently use. I need the motorcycle to go to the store and buy food. Without the food from the store, I could not survive.

To Belong and Love

Learning to ride a motorcycle fulfilled my basic need to belong because I now have a strong connection with my friend that owns the motorcycle. I feel like I belong to some sort of unspoken motorcycle riders club. Whenever I am riding and I see another

motorcyclist, we will wave to each other. If I hadn't learned to ride, this connection would not exist.

Power

Learning to ride a motorcycle has fulfilled my basic need for power because when I am riding I feel an incredible rush of power come over me. I feel strong and powerful because I am able to control a machine I had previously viewed as dangerous.

Freedom

Riding the motorcycle with the wind rushing past my body and the open highway ahead of me, I feel an incredible surge of freedom. I feel like I have the freedom to go anywhere and do anything. With this my need for freedom is satisfied.

Fun

The last but not least of Glasser's basic needs is the need for fun. This need is fulfilled through my total enjoyment of riding a motorcycle. As my artist helped me realize, riding a motorcycle is a fun experience. If learning to ride a motorcycle had not been a fun experience, then I would not have stuck with it. Glasser (1986) states that "anytime we can introduce power, freedom, or belonging into any situation, ... we also find ourselves having fun and cannot help learning along the way" (p. 30).

Conclusion

Learning to ride a motorcycle has been a valuable experience for me. I have learned to overcome fears and disabling myths. I also learned how to utilize the roles of the explorer, artist, judge, and warrior. Furthermore, I learned how this experience fulfilled all of my basic needs. While I initially thought I was only learning how to ride a motorcycle, I now see that I taught myself a lot more. Learning is a valuable process that is never finished. I am still learning new things everytime I ride a motorcycle. I encounter new situations and learn how to act in each of them. After analyzing my own learning experience, I am better able to understand how others learn. With this new knowledge, I will be able to improve the learning of my students.

References

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Self-evaluation

I learned a lot while doing this project. I discovered that the process of learning involves many more steps than one realizes. The four roles that von Oech touches on are a very essential part of the learning procedure. This project also helped me identify the negative, disabling myths about myself. Now when I think I am unable to do something, I will think about whether I truly am unable to do it, or if I am just too scared to try. Another valuable skill I learned in the process of doing this project was the use of APA style. This new skill will help me in future papers and assignments.

This project was different than anything else I have done because I broke it up into sections and subsections. All the papers I have written thus far for my classes have been straight essays, without any headings. I find the headings make it easier to read and understand. I think my project is different from the other ones I viewed on the Internet because I put a visual in mine. At the end of the paper, I scanned a picture of my friend and I on motorcycles. I think this visual will help readers remember my project.

With this project I was able to more clearly understand the multiple steps in the learning process. By understanding how I learned to learn to ride a motorcycle, I can apply that new knowledge to how all humans learn to learn. When teaching, I can plan my lessons according to this learning process. It's sometimes hard to realize that learning is a process and does not occur all at once. I now realize that what may seem easy to me will seem very difficult to my students when they are first introduced to it, just as riding a motorcycle is fairly easy for me now, but I did have some difficulties in the beginning.

Also, I see that just because a student does not understand or grasp a concept right away, does not mean they are unable to ever grasp it. I will just need to be patient and help them along. When I was learning to ride the motorcycle, I fell and tipped the bike over once. Some may view this as a failure, as I previously did, but now I realize it was a valuable learning experience. From that fall, I learned to be more cautious and that motorcycles aren't toys. Likewise, all humans should learn from their mistakes. Mistakes let us know that we need to re-evaluate our decisions and try something new. Undoubtedly my students will encounter many mathematical mistakes, but it is my job to help them see the mistakes as a chance to learn. By analyzing their mistakes, they can realize what they did wrong so that they don't make the same error again.