

BIKE THERAPY

by Ellee Thalheimer

Traditional talk therapy is great. Who wouldn't want to talk about themselves for an hour to a rapt audience? However biking is a very useful alternative. Plus, using cycling as a therapeutic tool can really improve one's biking ability.

Every seasoned biker knows how it feels to wake up, peer out the window, and try to figure if the day is more cold than gray or vice versa. Snuggled between toasty sheets, a fateful decision is made. Should you bike or should you sleep in and have a cup of coffee? You feel a slow seeping anger infuse your senses as you remember an annoying job, crappy relationship, negligent friends, failure in general, the sad state of our political climate, or whatever the perceived woe may be. Possibly, your heart feels like a tree continually crashing in your chest. Maybe, sadness anchors you immobile. Life has you by the scruff.

At this point, get on a bike. When reality feels like a train wreck, it's an excellent time. Intense negative feelings are the best fuel out there. I'm not talking about using a bike ride to escape what bothers you. I'm talking about tapping into intense feelings and riding from them. One can reach new heights of masochism that ultimately improves cycling endurance and leaves a rider feeling better about the world.

Focusing on anger and sadness affords me a geyser-like energy. The world falls away and my reality is the road, my cadence, and raw emotion. Anger and sadness can be a propellant, an amazing sort of emotional Cliff Bar. When I'm tapped into this source, lactic acid is less a deterrent than a challenge. It renders exhaustion obsolete, and I crave long, excruciating uphill. By the end of a therapeutic ride, I feel relieved and purified. With my stores spent, the day is brighter.

This idea of bike therapy may sound obvious, but it actually requires intent focus. It's easy to be distracted by internal complaints, thoughts of what's for dinner, the cutie biker smiling from the other side of the road, or whatever the mind chooses to grasp onto. When I lose my concentration, I lose the profound energy source. Sometimes it takes strong intention and even visualization to reconnect to my anger and sadness, especially after endorphins start to induce a lovely euphoria. After all, negative emotions are not the most pleasant thing to dwell on. Yet, when the day is done, it's worth it. I have ridden ferocious ride, and the effort has depleted my anger and sadness.

For those who roll their eyes at the idea of therapy in general, take heed that this tool can be useful to improve cycling stamina. Fury is a beautiful motivator. For bikers looking for a healthy way to deal with negativity and even turn it into something positive, bike therapy could be a great option. Lucky for us in the human condition, there is rarely a shortage of anger and sadness. Unlike petroleum, it is not a finite resource.

Besides, my butt doesn't look the way it does from talk therapy. So get on your bike like a wild banshee and rip through the jungle of your discontent as you shred hills and valleys on two wheels. Between you and your bike, it's strictly confidential.

