

KHOG Safety Article, April 2017: WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO YOU HAVE?

Spring is in the air! Birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and all the city stoplights recently celebrated St. Patrick's day by turning green for one-third of their day. It's a time for new beginnings, anticipation of great days ahead, and saving the best for last...motorcycle riding!!

When was the last time you took your motorcycle out on a date? I don't mean to Sonic to throw a cheeseburger down its throat, or out to the Twin-Star Drive-in to watch "True Grit", but on a date to learn more about each other, to build that relationship? Dare I ask that you run off together to somewhere remote and quiet to spend time doing quality bonding? How about to an out-of-the-way parking lot to practice rudimentary fundamentals like slow, tight-radius turns, swerving, emergency braking. Have you ever gently laid your bike on its side and practiced picking it up? When was the last time you attempted to ride as SLOW as you can without putting your feet on the ground? It's a great way to learn balance. (Gosh, maybe this IS starting to sound like the last time I went to the Twin-Star Drive-in!)

It's said that when you are attempting to perform a task under stress that one will always revert to their lowest level of training. Even though we may have been trained to higher levels of performance added stressors can cause us to completely forget it all and fall flat on our faces. That is why we must practice our training, and it must be practiced well! A statement I recently heard from a Motorcycle Safety Foundation instructor says it best: "Practice doesn't make perfect. Only PERFECT PRACTICE makes perfect." While certainly alliterative, it is also true! Talk about upping your game!

What if I told you there were a way to learn the tactics and strategies you need to perfectly practice and to create a tight bond between you and your ride? What if that lowest level of training you resorted to under stress caused you to be highly proficient and potentially save your life?

I have good news! The Motorcycle Safety Foundation has classes available for you to take that can do exactly that! While many local organizations provide a basic rider skills course, you will be amazed at the increase in your comfort and skill level from taking advanced classes. A local provider of these high-quality classes is St. Louis Community College. The instructors there have decades of experience teaching high levels of riding skills. The best way to take these classes is to start at the Basic Rider Course level and work your way up, over time. This will allow you to perfectly practice your skills before loading on more, advanced skills. The Basic Course II actually encourages you to bring a passenger with you so you can experience fine-tuning your skills with a loaded bike, as well as provide knowledge and skills for your passenger as well! I rarely ride with a passenger, but the class provides great information as to how to communicate with a passenger on what to expect during a ride as well, to keep you both safe!

Is this the year you wish to build a better relationship with your bike? With riding season just now getting under way, learning how to perfectly practice your skills after a long winter is the perfect time to sign up for these classes, but they are also available well into the fall. This is not a paid endorsement. It is solely a passionate plea from one experienced enthusiast, to you, asking you to learn how to perfectly practice, and do so, a lot! The time will come when you are riding under stress, in bad weather, in a crowd, or with a passenger, that you will resort to that lowest level of training you have perfectly practiced. Make sure you have a high-level of perfectly-practiced training and your bike will certainly reward you for all that time you spent bonding! It's a great way to make sure you are able to get home, and live to ride another day!

...and "Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"

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