

# New Year — New Resolutions

SO WE SURVIVED THE HOLIDAYS, AND, THOUGH winter may still seem to have us in its grasp, it is slowly wearing away. Some of us may have gotten some new add-ons for our rides, whether as a gift or self-gifted, and are getting ready to show

them off. Along with the traditions of the holiday season, many of us may have made a resolution or two to try and keep for the new year. This year, how about deciding on one that would be easy to keep and would improve your riding experiences such as becoming a better rider through education.

I know the most common response is “I know how to ride” or the infamous “I have X years of experience, and they couldn’t teach me anything I haven’t seen or done.” Well, as I have said before, experience is not the same as actual skills. Experience is basically just mental processing of a situation that may have had a physical outcome, but skills are a combination of mental and physical motor skills that will possibly help you avoid a sticky or even painful situation. Look at it this way: the more you think you know how to ride, the more your risk level can increase. No one wants more risk added to his ride; just swinging a leg over that seat for a roll down the road is risky enough, so why add to it?

Don’t think that just because I’m a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) RiderCoach I try to push people to take courses. I actually work on practicing what I preach. This past summer I put myself in the position of a student a couple times to keep myself in check (trying not to let my ego tell me that I knew how to ride) and to see if I had developed any possible bad habits that needed attention and/or correction.

The first experience was an MSF BasicRiderCourse 2 (BRC2, formerly known as ERC, the Experienced RiderCourse) that I attended with a local HOG Chapter. After instructing/coaching the course for 10 years, I opted to put myself on the other side of the handlebars for a different experience. Although I did the course with no issues, I found that being a student concentrating on the exercises

while on the range with other riders could be a bit distracting and even confusing. This may not have benefited my riding experience, but it certainly was some key information, which I can now use when I go back to the coaching side of things. Knowing what a student may or may not experience can surely help anyone teaching the course to cover or explain possible situations one may encounter.

The second event I went to was an experienced skills

practice day with exercises similar to the MSF Bike Bonding RiderCourse and police motor officer skills. This one I didn’t breeze through like the previous course; I had to put all my effort into doing things correctly, which I didn’t achieve every time. Though I practice tight, slow speed maneuvers as often as I can, doing it on an actual range was definitely different. Some exercises were certainly more difficult than others, but the ones I struggled with were helped by instructors/coaches telling me what I was doing wrong and how to correct it. Much like my students say to me, my response to them was “Easy for you to say.” Yet I worked on what they said to do.

After several tries and practice rounds, and once I let go of some bad habits and trusted the bike, things started to come together and work — I was doing it. Learning new skills and making them work has a very satisfying effect: it makes you want to learn more. That, without a doubt, is one big benefit for anyone who rides. So, I’m here to tell you that if a RiderCoach of 10-plus years and over 40 years of riding experience can be in a position to

learn and improve on new skills, there are surely many more out there who could do the same.

Having been on both sides of the road, one being the “I know how” mindset and the other riding with education and practiced skills, I can tell you that riding with training on my side is far more enjoyable and less stressful than just knowing how to ride. So if you want to step up your riding experience for not only this year, but for years to come, consider making a riding course part of your New Year’s resolution. It’s one you can easily keep, and the rewards not only increase your rider gratification, but it could possibly save your life. Now that’s a resolution worth keeping. **AIM**



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