



REGAIN Confidence After a Crash

Many techniques can be used to psychologically prepare for a return to riding after going down.

> By **Alisa Clickenger**

Being in a motorcycle crash is a traumatic experience, no matter how mild the outcome. It's perfectly natural to have lingering fears and anxieties about riding, even after the body and bike have been healed.

We do not have to give in to those fears; it is possible to regain self-assurance after a crash. Here are some ways to move beyond the crash and back into being a confident rider.

REPAIR OR REPLACE

Even if the crash wasn't at speed, the motorcycle might have suffered damage that isn't immediately visible. Twisted forks, bent handlebars and frame damage are a few possibilities.

Have the bike checked and serviced by a qualified mechanic. This will help alleviate fear and anxiety when getting back in the saddle.

The same goes for safety apparel. If you hit your head, no matter how



slightly, invest in a new helmet. Helmets are made for one impact, then they are done. If your riding apparel can be repaired, do so before riding again. If not, invest in new gear to feel 100% protected. Much like taking care of the bike, looking after the gear will increase the feeling of safety the next time you ride.

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Once physically and mentally able, it's time to get back in the saddle. The sooner the return to riding after a crash, the less time fear has to build. Fear will only grow if left unchecked, whereas riding straight away can stop fear in its tracks.

An immediate return may not be possible, depending on the injuries suffered. If it takes a long time to

recover, getting back on a bike may be scarier than the first time you rode.

Start slow. Instead of hitting the open road, try regularly sitting on the bike first. Take small steps toward the goal of regaining confidence every day, or as often as possible, until the urge to ride again returns.

START SMALL

Consider starting on a smaller motorcycle. If getting back on a big bike feels intimidating, borrow, rent or buy something smaller, possibly even a scooter. There's no shame in taking small, effective actions to boost confidence back to former levels.

In addition to the emotional trauma, the body may not be physically ready, and that's OK!

GET TRAINING

Professional training can be beneficial for redeveloping skill and regaining confidence, even for seasoned riders. Consider classes like the MSF Basic RiderCourse or MotoVentures Dirt First. The smaller displacement, lighter bikes used in beginner courses can rekindle the passion for motorcycling in a nonthreatening way.

It is common to feel vulnerable after a crash. Choose the right trainer or coach. Do some online research or ask for recommendations from other riders in your area. Identify an instructor who is kind, encouraging, patient and empathetic, to assist in conquering the fear. Many training centers also offer private, one-on-one coaching.

Approach training with a beginner's mind; a slow and direct approach to boosting confidence.

OBSESSION

After a motorcycle crash, many riders replay the incident in their head, searching for answers. What could I have done differently? What if it happens again? Can I ever love riding again? And other common questions of doubt. You're not alone in wondering. Reality dictates that it could happen again; we simply do not know.

Crashing is a risk motorcyclists take



every day. Instead of focusing on the crash, refocus on any positive outcomes. Was the aftermath of the crash handled well? Was recovery quick? Did the protective gear do its job?

Consider any skills, knowledge and experience that prevented the crash from being worse, and focus on those, instead of any negative results. This will help reestablish confidence.

STAY GROUNDED

Once you start riding again, avoid contemplating "what if" scenarios. Instead, stay in the moment, paying close attention the sound of the engine, the road ahead and the surrounding environment.

Above all, practice gratitude. Be thankful for the many great experiences created on a motorcycle and the opportunity to recommit to the passion of riding. Staying grounded and being present does wonders for morale.

ADVENTURE SLOWLY

The sooner the return to riding after a crash, the better. That doesn't mean immediately tackling long distances or tough terrain. Start with a short, half-hour ride on a well-known route, then turn around. The next day, go a little farther, even if only a few miles.

Do not push to extremes, but be sure to add something new every day: a little more distance, a busier street or intersection. You will feel safer riding and be rebuilding confidence, one building block at a time.

ENLIST FRIENDS

For those who feel more comfortable riding in a group or with a friend, enlist their help. Ask friends to join

on rides as you get back into motorcycling. The support of a good friend can be a great confidence booster.

On the other hand, if riding with others may create unnecessary pressure, fly solo for a while. Always ride at your own pace, and don't worry about keeping up with anyone.

TALK ABOUT IT

Lots of riders go down. Join some riders' forums or social media groups; a great way to discuss the crash with others who have experienced something similar.

Connecting over a shared experience and talking about the fears, anxieties and sharing recovery tips can greatly assist a faster return to riding.

GET HELP

If the crash was serious and fears or anxieties are becoming hard to control, or create post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), talk to a professional therapist.

Getting professional help is not admitting defeat. On the contrary, it means enlisting the best help available to actively and effectively regain confidence, as quickly as possible.

A motorcycle crash is physically and emotionally challenging. Take time to heal, do not rush, and remember there are no "shoulds." Thinking you should already be riding, or should feel a certain way, ignores the reality that everyone copes with trauma differently.

Take it easy and slow, ask for help and support from riding friends, and get coaching and therapy to help get back on track. Regaining confidence after a crash is an individual journey, easily accomplished when you put your mind to it. **MCN**