



Success is Like Learning how to Ride a Bike

As I was teaching my 6-year-old daughter Gabriela how to ride a bike, I realized that Gabriela was going through all the challenges and emotions I went through when learning how to luge.

She was going through all the emotions anyone goes through when they are learning something new - hope, fear, trepidation, self-doubt, and finally exhilaration and pride that comes from pushing yourself and accomplishing something you never did before.

On the first day Gabriela was excited and filled with anticipation as we drove to our training ground - the church parking lot. Her excitement quickly turned to fear and doubt after falling two or three times from her bike. Gabriela's a pretty tough cookie, but after a few falls she started stalling. She didn't want to get back on that "mean" bike.

When she was ready to call it quits, I realized how important it is to have a coach. As her coach, I was able to encourage her and push her through the fear stage. I constantly corrected and encouraged Gabriela as I taught her how to balance herself on the bike. This took a while and felt like tough love because she was afraid throughout the whole process.

Whenever you are doing something challenging and new, it's critical to have a coach or a mentor to get you through the tough phase. You especially need help in the beginning to keep you from quitting. I never would have made it to the Olympics without my coach. He kept me in the game long enough for me to learn the skills and gain self confidence.

Gabriela didn't make much progress on day two. Her position was a bit better, she was a little bit looser, but she was still falling after only 10 feet. The main reason she was falling was that as soon as she started to lose balance, her fear would cause her to freeze and she would stop pedaling. At that point, I thought it would take another week before Gabriela would get it.

On the third day, I focused on getting Gabriela to continue pedaling no matter what. About 5 minutes into the lesson. I let Gabriela's bike go and she just kept on pedaling. Gabriela rode out about 30 feet, made a big loop back, and started coming back towards me. She must have not realized that she was riding on her own, because when she saw me, her eyes got as big as saucers, she quit pedaling, and down she went. But you should have seen her after that! From that moment on she was on cloud nine and all she could say was, "I can't believe I did it! I did it! I can't believe it! Thank you Daddy!"

Now Gabriela had had a taste of success. She could see light at the end of the tunnel. With a little help from her coach, she had worked through the fear stage and now all we had to do was a little fine tuning. Gabriela is brand new at this. She is not confident on the bike yet. Her confidence will come from practicing her bike riding skills. Confidence is not a result of faking it until you make it. Confidence comes from proper practice and mastery of your skills.

Doing something new is always hard in the beginning. Growing and developing yourself so you can succeed is tough. That's why it's critical to have someone to encourage you and to help you in the beginning. Once you get through the fear stage, the fun begins and you will experience pride and joy at having accomplished something you'd never done before. If you practice your new skill, and you master your new skill, you will become confident.

This stuff applies to anything - riding a bike, lugging, skiing, learning how to speak another language, using new sales and prospecting techniques, playing the piano, etc.

Put it into action:

Is fear of failure holding you back from being your best? If it is, attack your fear by getting someone else to help you work through the fear. Don't try to do it all on your own. Once you learn the new skill. Practice it, master it, and enjoy the fruits of being confident in your new skill.

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