

## True Yourself: Balancing Your Wheel of Life

by Bob Schout

### FIRST, THE BACK STORY...

I was arrogant and ignorant...a dangerous combination of characteristics in any human being at any time, but especially when the stakes are high. I was on an AIDS Ride in the late 1990s; riding from Minneapolis to Chicago. I wanted to raise money for a great cause and also to challenge myself to complete a high endurance road trip. I trained for months. I dropped 15 pounds. I did a last-minute tune-up on my bike and headed to Minneapolis to begin the ride.

I remember feeling nervous but masking that nervousness with cockiness. I remember feeling intimidated by better riders and trying to compensate by getting up early, starting at the front of the pack, and stretching my lung and muscle capacity. I remember saying to myself, "yeah, I'm going to do it; I'm not weak." I wanted to be with the best. During the first few days I could feel that I was pushing my body too much; straining my muscles. But my arrogance propelled me. I often left my partner and friends behind as I sped on ahead. I didn't want to stop to check my bike at rest stops or before heading out on the road for the day. I just wanted to GO.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day, during the second 20-mile segment of the 100-mile day, I noticed that my front tire was slightly out of alignment, but I didn't want to stop. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> segment, I noticed that my handlebars were shaking just a little bit, but I didn't want to stop; I had to stay with the pack. Then it happened. At around the 65-mile mark, I crested over the top of a hill and saw that on the other side of the hill there was a long and steep descent with no traffic in sight. I just wanted to go fast. My legs hurt, my bike felt just a little 'out-of-whack' but controllable, and the front tire was now scraping continuously against my brakes...but I'd 'fix that at the next stop', I told myself. My friends and my partner told me not to go so fast and that they were worried about me, but I brushed their comments off; even making fun of them. So, I went for it.

I picked up a lot of speed, held the handlebars steady and felt like I was flying. It was exhilarating..... until I neared the bottom and started to pump the brakes. My front tire's misalignment was causing me to have erratic brake control and my handlebars were shaking making it very tough to maintain balance and control. The front tire hit a small stone and I went flying. When I hit the ground, after the 10-20 foot slide and bounce, I blacked out for a few seconds and awoke to incredible pain. My ankle felt like someone had taken a knife and slit the back of my ankle. My right knee had twisted and there was a shooting pain up my leg. I was very, very lucky to be in one piece (even though some of those pieces were in need of repair). My Achilles tendon had torn, as did some of the cartilage in my knee; and my tendons and ligaments in various parts of my leg were

strained and stretched. The first layer of skin had been scraped off of my forearms and one of my thighs.

## NOW, THE (NECESSARY BUT PAINFUL) LESSON...

All of this happened because of two things: 1) I had not taken time to true my front wheel (to true a tire on a bike means to ensure that the spokes are in alignment and tight and that the tire is circular and stable, not oval, wobbly, or contorted in any way); and 2) I had not taken time to true myself and my wheel of life.

I had not taken time to take care of the very vehicle that was designed, and that I was using, to carry me, transport me, and keep me safe. To be completely honest, I had not taken care of either of the vehicles that I was using: my bike and myself. I had not trued (i.e., stay true too) my inner life (e.g., good character, use of intelligence, stopping unhealthy habits, putting into check my erratic emotions and ego, listening to my body, etc.). I was out of balance.

I was also out of balance in my outer life. On the ride, I left my partner and other friends 'in the dust' instead of enjoying the experience with them. I realized that I had become obsessed with my wants, needs, work and training; and had not connected with family, taken care of daily life maintenance, and my finances were 'out-of-whack'. And, as for my bike, I had neglected its basic upkeep; not doing some very simple things like truing spokes with a little wrench or re-aligning my tire, which would have taken about 4-5 minutes. My spokes were not trued and so my bike was out of balance. I was not trued, so I was out of balance. The combination of the two imbalances led to my demise during the ride.

## SO, QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION...

### **Is your outer Wheel of Life in or out of balance?**

Each spoke represents a different aspect of our outer, daily life. These include:

- **Relationship balance** (e.g., family & friendship health or healing)
- **Financial balance** (e.g., income/debt ratio, savings, credit)
- **Work-life balance** (e.g, workload, workplace peace, work contentment)
- **Physical balance** (e.g., physical health of yourself and others, healthy eating)
- **Crisis balance** (e.g, balance of crisis management with longer periods of less stressful living)
- **Daily life-maintenance balance** (e.g., chore and errand completion)

- **Relaxation balance** (e.g., engagement in rejuvenating activities not numbing activities)
- **Dream balance** (e.g., time spent on pursuits of interests and dreams balanced with time spent on current responsibilities)

### **Is your inner Wheel of Life™ in or out of balance?**

The inner wheel is your Hub of Life. This includes your:

- Emotional health
- Mental health
- Habitual-behavioral health
- Spiritual health
- Character-value system health
- Ego health

If you are out of balance, inside or out, your life will be out of balance and you're bound to suffer from stress, unwanted consequences, or self-destructive choices.

So take some time each day, or on a regular basis to true yourself. If something has broken down or is in the midst of breaking down, pull to the side or take a pit stop for a period of time. Don't be afraid to look at what's out of alignment. Don't blame or shame yourself or others, but begin the work of regaining true alignment in life by connecting to your hub and trueing your spokes. Remember, things break down from time to time and so do we. No vehicle stays in good shape without many tune-ups along the way. If you want to enjoy the ride, take time to true yourself along the way.

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