

Mental Recovery After the Bones Mend
By Nana Frye

Courage. It takes a lot of courage to be a motorcyclist, especially after one has fallen off their iron steed. More often than not, it is a physically painful experience. Part of the mind is saying, "Don't do that again!" so thoughts naturally revolve around whether to return to riding or not. One may also be actively pressured to "give it up" by the same loved ones who normally would be supportive of one's endeavors.

It also takes courage if you are a woman practicing therapy in this area of mental recovery from motorcycle accidents and voicing your observations. Brenda Bates, through articles published in "Motorcycle Consumer News" and presentations such as the one she gave at the BMW Owners Club of San Diego, has summoned this courage and we riders have been the beneficiaries. For example, she has observed differences in how male and female riders can be pushed beyond their riding abilities. In a group-riding situation, men's urge to compete can lead them to take unreasonable chances given their abilities. Women, by contrast, tend to passively react. In their desire to "please" their fellow rider, they will continue a ride regardless of how they really feel, even if they are tired. Both situations can result in catastrophe.

Once the accident occurs, the rider will probably experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Typically, this occurs when there is an extreme threat to life. What determines whether the rider will ride the iron steed again? According to Ms. Bates, the two major factors are psychological resilience and motorcycling identity. If riding is an integral part of one's life and lifestyle, this will be a strong motivation for overcoming the psychological aspects and fears.

As Ms. Bates pointed out, there is very little research in this area and none specific to motorcycle riding. Until that time arrives, we riders can benefit from her keen perceptions and observations to help keep us safe and when necessary, help us get back on that horse.