

## Rider's Intuition

**W**E'VE ALL EXPERIENCED it. The phone rings and the very person you've just been thinking about is calling you. Was it coincidence, merely the random probability of the event? Or did it feel like some kind of extrasensory perception? As if you two made a mental connection that inspired the urge to get in touch?

Motorcyclists need to know, because riding safely is about predicting road conditions, traffic situations and so much more. Do we rely entirely on a rigorously calculated left-brain approach, imagining and pre-planning for what could go wrong so that we are prepared for the unexpected? Or do we dare trust our "rider's intuition" as an additional source of knowledge?

Riding the new BMW K1200S back from its Northern California press introduction was a good example. Not only did I need to identify the bike's unique qualities, strengths and weaknesses and find ways to explain them for the article to follow, which is typical of road testing, but because the bike is so innovative, that was an even greater challenge than usual. And although the first few days, roughly 500 miles of riding, were about learning the machine's behavior, the final 500-mile leg was a marathon 12-hour ride, when intuitive familiarity with the bike had finally replaced logical analysis.

Long rides always serve to create a strengthened sense of intuition in me, and by the last two-hour stretch, splitting lanes in rush hour traffic through Los Angeles—when I really needed it—I really felt it strongly. Thus, the question of intuition recommended itself for this month's column.

I'll never forget one of our readers emailing me on this subject years ago, explaining that he could ride a race pace on the road because he somehow "knew" the road was clear around the next blind right-hander, for instance. He said he had a gift of some Zen-like extrasensory perception. I only hope he's still with us.

Of course, most of us have plenty of near-miss stories to warn us against trusting that conditions will be optimum all the time: The stalled car around a bend on a narrow canyon road, unexpected water runoff or fallen rock in mid-turn, over-the-centerline drivers, commercial trucks leaving diesel spills, separated retreads, broken exhaust systems or twirling driveshafts careening down the road are a few of my brain's favorite flashbacks. But depending on where we ride, our top-ten list could include unfenced livestock, wild animals, black ice, road construction like unfinished gravel



roads when the pavement suddenly ends, treacherous edge traps or melted tar snakes. Such near-misses seem to imprint themselves vividly in our memory banks forever, which has got to be our brains' way of making sure we don't make the same mistakes twice. And, as much as I enjoy stories of Samurai archers and swordsmen, I'd never trust my rider's intuition to go faster than good old-fashioned prudence dictates when my life is at stake.

This is not to say that I don't believe in intuition. In fact, I'm probably more inclined to tap into my intuition than many riders I know. An avid reader of unexplained phenomena, I'm a believer that the things that don't fit into all the agreed-upon hypotheses that pass for "reality" are the ones that can open new doors of understanding. The key point is that I use my rider's intuition defensively, as a way to avoid trouble, rather than as a license to get crazy. According to my wife, I do too much of that already.

Here's how I think intuition works: Many seemingly improbable questions could be answered if we could only ask properly. Precisely how or why or if it should be identified with a religious belief I defer to others, but quantum physics does a good job of explaining that all things are connected on a sub-atomic level. Therefore, I believe, if you could ask a question and be completely willing to hear the answer, you might be able to hear it. However, there are some special conditions. First, you must ask the question from a non-judgmental place with no prejudice either for or against any answer. When you're emotionally quiet and still, this tends to come naturally, which is a good

reason to have some way to release everyday stress, like meditation. Also, because it can be so hard to be non-judgmental when the questions are emotionally charged issues like relationships, etc., it can actually be easier with mundane questions like: Is the road ahead clear? Are there cops waiting up ahead to catch speeders? Like that.

Second, you can't just ask once and expect answers to keep coming. You have to make an effort to keep asking such questions on a continual basis while you're on the road. And I find you have to make the questions conscious to have any hope of hearing the answers. When my intuition is working, oftentimes, I find my question answered when I find myself rolling off the throttle without a logical reason, only to find road hazards around the next bend, or a patrol officer coming the other way moments later.

Through repetition, it's become a mental habit, and I resist the impulse to tell you about how many times it's worked, for fear of jinxing myself.

Riding takes extraordinary concentration to do safely. And to be fair to the left-brain, an incredible number of subtle signs exist to assist the metal and reflective paint versions put up by highway road crews. Oncoming traffic running slower than expected on well-known roads might be the result of hazards, or a police presence, for instance. And whether you notice this consciously, you might still react to it by slowing down unconsciously yourself. The tricks of watching the road's vanishing point, or the tops of telephone poles, as a way to determine a turn's radius, directional changes or elevations is another clue that might be mistakenly attributed to intuition.

What it comes down to is that we need all the help we can get to ride safely. If you've never considered rider's intuition to be real, the next time the phone rings, and the friend you were thinking about is calling, think again. And then give yourself permission to chill out in a comfortable chair for twenty minutes or so, and watch your thoughts come and go without judgment until you have achieved a measure of inner peace. Then ask a question and see if you don't feel an answer return. Next, see if you can tap into this state while riding, and if your throttle hand doesn't answer you back.

Cheers,

*DAVE SEARLE*

—Dave Searle  
Editor