

The Skinny on Cycling
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I've never been any good at math. In fact, when I was in second grade, I'd get a headache every afternoon about the time math class rolled around. I can remember those sick feelings as I was called to the chalkboard to do multiplication problems in front of the other kids. These days, I've learned that "math anxiety" is a common problem among kids and there are all sorts of methods for helping kids overcome this problem.

Recently, I'm starting to feel like I have a mild case of "cycling anxiety". As the summer heats up, and the days left before the RAIN ride dwindle, I often find myself taking a lot of extra time planning my rides and "kitting up" before my rides. In fact, I spend a lot of time doing almost anything to delay the beginning of my ride for just a few more minutes. For some reason I am a little hesitant to clip in and hit the road.

Now, don't get me wrong. I love cycling. I still feel like it's one of the best exercises and personal sources of mental retreat that I know. But lately, I find myself a little intimidated by the long rides in preparation for such a daunting task as a one-way, one-day, 150-some mile, ride across Indiana.

I've read that long-distance cycling is as much a mental game as a physical challenge. When the wind blows in my face, rather than at my back and when I round a corner to face an enormous hill, I find myself taking deep breaths and steeling myself against just one more challenge to the day's ride.

It's times like these that make me think back to almost two years ago when I had just started my weight loss routine. In fact, I was still very much forming my regimen for weight loss, when I felt very discouraged. It was about this time last year when everyone around me seemed to be enjoying summertime banana splits, hot-dogs and hamburgers on the grill, potato and pasta salads and a variety of fruity, frothy adult beverages that were simply off limits for me and my diet. Now when I look back on those days, I realize that those short moments of suffering were a small price to pay for a healthier, 100 pound lighter version of myself--a version of me who is now faced with mysterious anxiety about an upcoming long-distance bicycle ride.

That math-phobic second grader has grown into an adult who relies on math every single day. In fact, between preparing proposals, budgets and writing computer software at work, math has become the cornerstone of much of my professional success. It's easy to look back at those nervous afternoons in second grade and realize that time and experience heals all wounds. I suppose that around Christmastime, I'll be looking fondly back at this hot July with a chuckle

and realize that it's not so important that you get the math problem right. It's really only important that you step up to the chalkboard and give it a good try.

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Wade Wingler, the author of "The Skinny on Cycling" is the father of one adorable little girl, the husband of a beautiful & talented librarian, a Yogi and an avid cyclist. His web site, www.HowILost100Pounds.com features common sense advice on losing weight without suffering and improving your cycling through healthy living.