



n your bike



FOR SIMON GIPSON, AN EARLY
MORNING BIKE RIDE ISN'T SIMPLY
A WAY OF GETTING HIS MIND
INTO GEAR, IT'S THE KEY TO
UNLOCKING CREATIVITY.

Every morning I like to ride between 30 and 45 kilometres on my bike. This means getting up at around 5.15am in order to fit a ride in before going to work. Sometimes it can be hard to struggle out of bed, particularly during the middle of winter, and especially over the last few weeks when the north-westerly winds have been so strong and unremitting. By the time I return home after an hour and a half of exercise, though, I feel awake and ready for the day.

This routine has been part of my life for so long now, that if I don't exercise first thing in the morning, I find it takes me a while to get into gear – my mind is not as clear as it should be and the decisions don't flow as easily. I'm sure that in part it's just that the exercise triggers a sense of physical wellbeing, and an endorphin rush that is particularly addictive, but I think there's more to the morning ride than this.

Even in summer at 5.15 in the morning it's dark and, invariably, quiet. My ride normally takes me down Beach Road along the south-eastern side of Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay, either north or south, and there's rarely any traffic – a few early morning commuters, some equally obsessive individuals on foot or on bike, an occasional fox.

I'm still waking up for the first 15 minutes, but then the rhythm of riding kicks in, my heart rate goes up, and I start to enjoy the ride and the uninterrupted mental space, with no noise or disturbance to intervene. All I need do is concentrate on the road ahead – a lesson I learned the hard way. A broken collarbone in 2002 taught me the dangers of losing concentration.

Nonetheless, the ride still provides me with plenty of time to think and to reflect.

Unfortunately, contemporary life provide us with few opportunities for quiet reflection and thought, and too often these moments are intruded upon by other noise, from the ringtone of our mobile phones to elevator muzak. Indeed, if we experience silence and quiet, most of us seek to replace it with noise and distraction. It's as if, as a society, we're increasingly uncomfortable unless we're surrounded by sound – the ubiquitous iPod is an iconic symbol of this societal need.

It's in the quiet time on my bike each morning, though, that I rehearse my day, reflect on decisions I may need to make or have made, compose a newsletter article, write a speech or simply de-clutter my mind. We all need quiet time and we should all find quiet time. It's important that we find space in which we just think, preferably at a time or in an environment where there are few distractions, and where we can find the opportunity to quieten our minds a little.

Earlier this year, I heard an Indian academic, Professor Debashis Chatterjee, speak on what he termed timeless leadership. Fusing Western traditions of thought with Indian, Chatterjee believes that effective leadership requires reflective silence, a discipline which contemporary society has lost. He suggests that creativity occurs when there's an opportunity to find the calm eye in the centre of the storm of activity that is the brain. Finding this calm eye comes through quiet and reflection.

For me, the calm eye comes during exercise, and it's during this time that I also feel at my most creative. I'd recommend the early morning to anyone seeking quiet time and creative inspiration!

Maybe I'll see you on Beach Road. **T**

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