

When Life Happens!

This year started out like all the others. I made a list of races I wanted to do and set cycling goals. My training got off to a good start in January and February, and then life happened. Things got busy with work and with the family. My focus on training was sidetracked as was my motivation. If you have been training for any number of years, you can probably relate as you have likely had this happen to you as well. Training takes a lot of mental, physical and emotional energy as well as a lot of motivation. When other more pressing issues come up, it can be difficult to continue to train with determination.

I often use the analogy that my training is my barometer of life. When my life is going along well, and my work, family and finances are in order, then I have the time and energy to focus on training and it goes well. But when one or more of these more important factors needs to be dealt with, my training is the first thing to go. Let's review briefly the key factors required for consistent training.

Physical energy: Obviously training requires a lot of physical energy. If you are involved in other physical activities in your work life or family life, this will take a toll on your training and will interfere with recovery from your training. You may not even realize it but simply standing or walking a lot can take a lot out of you physically. And don't overlook sleep. If you aren't getting 7-8 hours of sleep each night when training hard, you will likely not be fully recovered each morning and over time this will compromise your training.

Mental energy: Training requires a lot of mental energy. To push yourself and to make yourself suffer during intense training, you need a lot of mental fortitude. Most likely you all have experienced days where you've had a mentally exhausting day at work and when it comes time to train after work, you just can't push yourself. The last thing you want to do is impose more stress or fatigue on yourself.

Emotional energy: This is similar to mental energy in that you may struggle to have the energy to force yourself to work hard or to make yourself suffer. However its cause is somewhat different. Emotional stress can be the result of any number of things such as a family illness, loss of a job, financial stress, or even something positive like moving to a new home or birth of a child. The last thing on your mind is being able to pedal a bicycle faster.

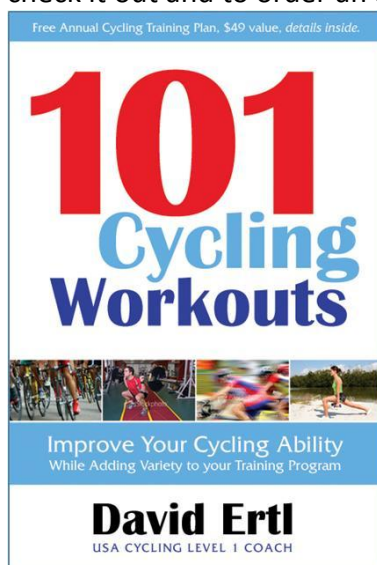
Here are a couple of ideas to employ when 'life happens' to you. First of all, prioritize all the important things in your life. Step back and put your training and racing in perspective with what else is important in your life in the long term. If your work, family, or friends require extra time and effort, be sure to give these the time they require. Unless you make a living pedaling a bike, remember that cycling is a hobby and will need to take a backseat from time to time when more important issues in life come up. You need to get your life in order so that you can resume your hobby. Remember though that your cycling will always be there for you when life settles back down. It's something you can do the rest of your life. When life hiccups, deal with it and get your life back in order. Your training and fitness may be sidelined temporarily, but its time will come again.

Secondly, even when your life gets hectic and your structured training program may be blown to bits, still get out and do some training even if the frequency, intensity and/or distance is cut back. The last

thing you want to do is hang up your bike completely. Physical exercise is important for your overall health and will help relieve stress as well as help you sleep better. Try to maintain a baseline of conditioning even during stressful times. This will allow you to regain your high level of fitness more quickly when you resume your training.

Undoubtedly you will have times when your training and racing wanes both during the season and from year to year. Keep your hobby in perspective and don't let it interfere with more important issues in your life. When life happens, deal with it. Strive for balance in your life and your training and racing will again become a rewarding part of your life.

My new book – 101 Cycling Workouts – is now available! Go to www.101CyclingWorkouts.com to check it out and to order an autographed copy.



Ride on -- David Ertl

David Ertl is a USA Cycling Level 1 (Elite) Coach and NSCA Certified Personal Trainer. He coaches individuals interested in improving on their current cycling ability, whatever level that may be. He also provides cycling training plans and ebooks at his website: www.CyclesportCoaching.com He can be contacted at Coach@CyclesportCoaching.com