



Roger Wiles #32797 MotoSafe Editor

# Safety Pyramid Thoughts

*Moshe, Scott and Dr. Nick have some provocative insights about the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Safety Pyramid (June 2010 MotoSafe). Your copies of Motorcycling Excellence, 2nd Edition are on the way; well done!*



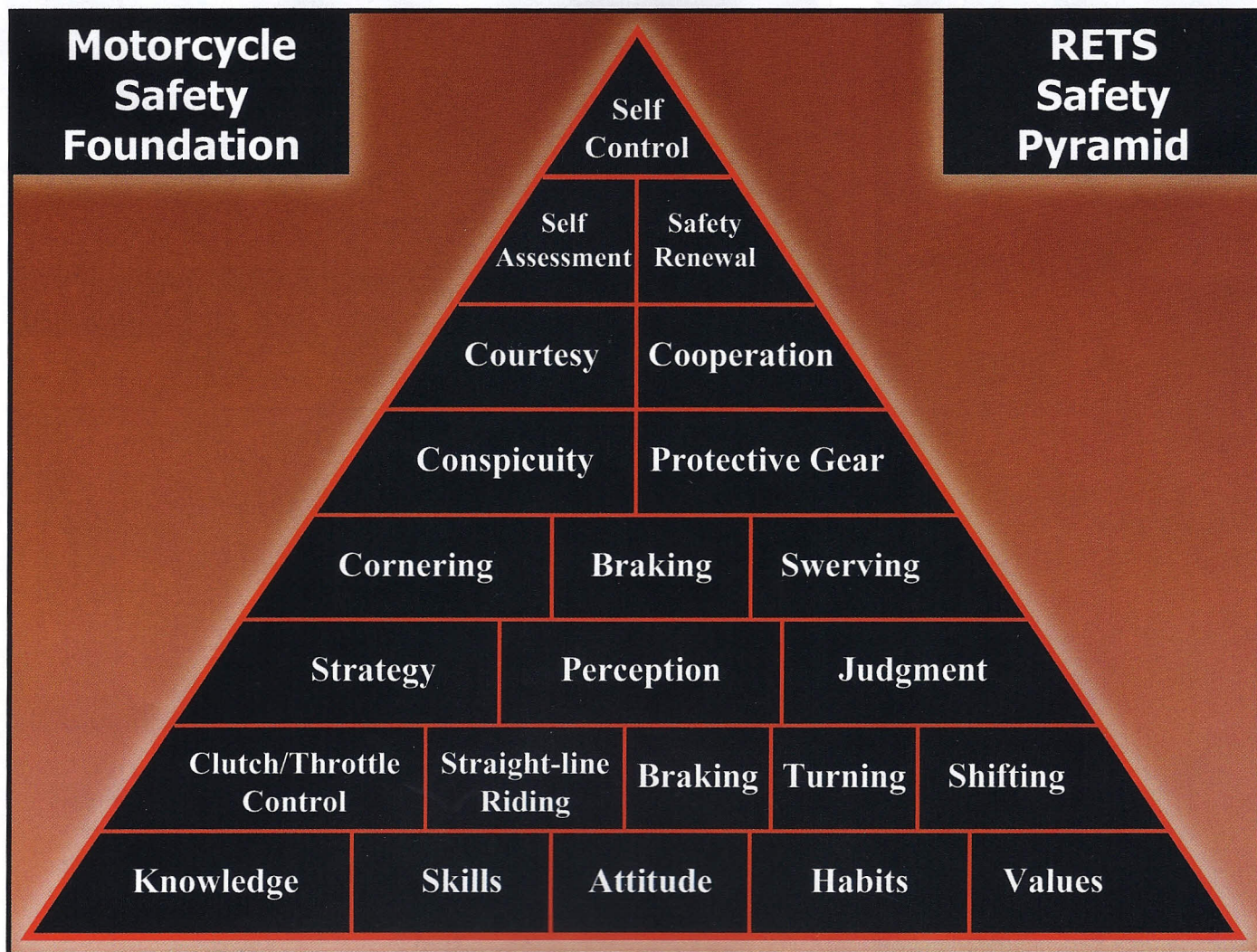
Moshe K. Levy

## MSF SAFETY PYRAMID – Moshe K. Levy 108259

**IN ATTEMPTING TO JUDGE THE MSF'S** new Safety Pyramid, one must first accept that since any meaningful rider training is optional in the USA, the type of riders who would seek out such instruction on their own are already the choir to whom the safety-training industry is preaching. Let's face it: The standards one needs to meet in

order to obtain a motorcycle license in America are abysmally low. If you can complete a few wide u-turns at the DMV lot aboard an automatic 49cc scooter, the state will grant you a license to ride the liter-class superbike of your choice. (MS: Moshe comments at length on the stringent motorcycle-licensing requirements in Germany.) Given this level of testing, it's not exactly rocket-science to guess which country has lower motorcycle-crash and -fatality rates.

That said, in studying the Pyramid, it is quite pleasing to welcome mental and emotional components in addition to the usual

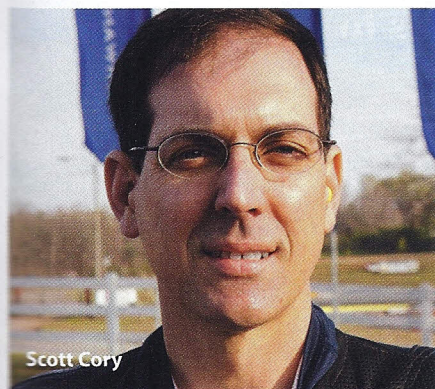




the physical skills required to ride. Indeed, a motorcyclist's first line of defense is awareness. In many cases, before the emergency maneuver ever has to be executed, well-honed awareness can save the day. Like any skill, it must be practiced diligently to be useful, and through effort, over time, awareness translates not just to one's exterior surroundings, but also to internal ones such as attitudes, habits, and values. The top of the Pyramid is correctly identified as self-control, both mentally and physically, as in "How can a rider be expected to control a 650-pound motorcycle at speed unless his mind is purely in the moment, and he rides within his skill set?"

This new holistic focus may help riders tune in to what noted psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has termed flow, an often-elusive mental state in which a person is fully immersed in the moment with complete focus, free from all discursive thoughts. In this meditative state, a person relies more on what they feel intuitively than on what they think rationally. Because the mind is clear and calm, the physical becomes reflexive and reactions instantaneous.

With long-term practice, skills improve, which only makes riding more fun, which, in turn, only results in more practice, and so on as a rider ascends towards mastery. Thus, if the MSF Pyramid convinces just a few motorcyclists to look inside themselves as part of their ongoing rider education, it is a step in the right direction.



**ATTITUDE – Scott Cory 61843**  
I REVIEWED THE MSF SAFETY PYRAMID with a great deal of interest. The pyramid includes many of the physical and mental skills necessary to be a safe motorcyclist, but 25 of experience with industrial safety, and 22 years of riding on the street have convinced me that the key to safety in any environment is the attitude you bring to it.

A couple of years ago I attended a

well-known riding school at Road Atlanta Raceway. Sitting next to me was a gentleman I'll call Jeff.

He was a car-racer with more than 25 years of SCCA production and formula car experience. Jeff had literally thousands of racing miles at Road Atlanta. He had recently decided to try vintage motorcycle racing and was restoring a bike for the upcoming season. Jeff had also bought an old Honda CB750 to practice his riding on the roads near his home in North Carolina.

When it came time to split the class between the faster A group and the slower B group, Jeff placed himself in the A group. His reasoning was he knew the circuit well, and as a racer he was comfortable going fast. Jeff was two minutes and ten corners into his first track session when he crashed. This particular riding school supplies the motor-

## I REVIEWED THE MSF SAFETY PYRAMID WITH A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST. THE PYRAMID INCLUDES MANY OF THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SKILLS NECESSARY TO BE A SAFE MOTORCYCLIST

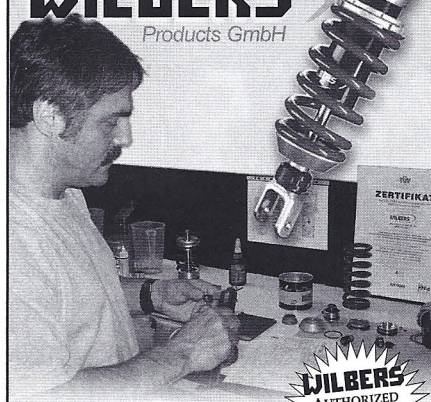
cycles for the school, and has a firm policy that if you fall off a bike, your school is over. Jeff spent the next two days watching the rest of the class improve their riding skills.

What went wrong? It all came back to attitude. Jeff's attitude didn't allow him to do an honest self-assessment of his experience and riding skills. He lacked experience on the modern sportbike supplied by the school, as well as the basic riding skills to keep up with the fast group. He was in well over his head. This was not a particularly unusual situation. Over the years we have all seen new riders come to grief trying to keep up with faster riders.

As a MSF RiderCoach, I come in contact with literally dozens of new riders every year and I see how attitude affects almost every decision a rider makes regarding motorcycling. Attitude affects the motorcycle he chooses, the protective gear he wears, and his willingness to learn and practice potentially lifesaving skills. So, while the Safety Pyramid includes many of the key concepts to riding safely, it all starts with the attitude we bring to the task.

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