

# Yes, you can! Just get out there...

**By Carol Godwin Cycle Mania**

n, But... “I’m not ready”, “I’m too old”, “I’m not in good enough shape”, “It’ll be too scary”, “Everyone will notice me”, “I have too many family obligations, I’ll wait ‘til the kids get older”, “I’ll do it next season”...

Yes, you will be, no you are not, you will get there, stay at your comfort level, nobody else will notice because they are too busy doing their own thing, your family (and dog) can come along too, and no, you won’t do it next season because next season you will be saying the same things!

What is the best motivation to get moving, get in shape, lose the winter weight, and gain the skills you want? Sign yourself up for an organized event or entire series, pay the entry fee(s), and buckle up for an adventure that will have you surprising and impressing even yourself by the end. Why do I say “Just do it”? Because if you commit yourself by actually signing up and paying, you have less wiggle room to slide out of it when the going gets a little tough. Whether you are an endurance runner, triathlete, equestrian, mountain biker, road biker, or gravel bike rider, there is an event for you and most event seasons begin soon. If you wait to sign up until you “are ready”, you may continue to wait season after season and allow yourself to excuse your way out of the adventures and experiences you deserve. Having a firm date in place gives you an anchor for your personal training. I like to set goals and try to reach them before an event. Maybe I plan to do a certain number of miles in a day or week, or plan to lose a certain amount of weight by that date. Knowing that I will be able to reward myself with pretty much unlimited snacks and treats on the race day lets me moderate those things until then. Yum!

“I’m not ready”

I had all the same reservations as anyone, especially the “not ready” part, but after seeing the other participants there I realized that there are people out there that are a lot fatter/thinner, a lot more/less in shape, a lot younger/older, a lot more/less skilled, and a lot of people with a lot more gumption than I had (since they were out there just doing it). Being a cautious, but at least slightly competitive person, I signed up for the easiest race in the series and found that it

wasn't nearly as scary as anticipated. You may not think you are ready now, but by the time the event comes up, you will be ready enough. Having a fixed date on the calendar to watch and prepare for gives you the motivation it takes to get out one extra day, agree to do one extra group activity, push yourself a bit harder on that climb, or conquer that tricky descent you have been avoiding.

Nobody ever feels completely ready anyway because there is always improvement that can be done season to season. Just get out there, do your best, and have fun! You will find that following more experienced participants on the racecourse will give you insights into techniques that you never thought of during training and you will end the race with a much higher skill and confidence level than you entered with.

"I'm too old"

There are categories for every rider. Of course, you won't be competing against a beanpole twenty-something professional if you are a 65-year old racing novice, but so what? You won't be competing against that person anyway, and watching them pass you like you are standing still is impressive. If you are a 65-year-old woman, you enter the female 60+ category, if you are a 52-year-old man, enter the 50+ category (It is interesting to note that the largest category in many race series is that for 50+ men), and if you are if you want to ride as a duo or team, do that and take a nap while your teammates ride a lap. I began entering and competing 2 years ago at 57 and my only regret is that I didn't begin earlier. The longer you wait, the less likely that you will convince yourself to go for it.

"I'm not in good enough shape"

If you can ride a bike, walk, or run (depending on your event) several miles, then you are in good enough shape. Overweight and look like a sausage in spandex? So what? If you love the freedom of riding your bike, get on your bike and ride. Every age, body type, gender, and clothing style is appreciated and accepted at a race. Use the motivation of having an upcoming race to get you in better shape, but embrace yourself and get out there. Feel like one lap is enough? Fine! Do one lap and take a nap under a tree with a bag of M&M's and a good book. Cheer on the racers that pass by and be happy that you can't possibly have any chores to do because you are outside with nothing on the agenda except breathing. Ahh...

“It'll be too scary”

New experiences are always scary, but most of the things I worried about were totally unfounded. I was worried I'd get lost - courses are well marked. I was worried I'd get pushed off the trail or get run over - most people are respectful and really nice. Riders/runners wanting to pass will say “On your left/right” and will wait until you have pulled to the side and/or it is safe to pass. After the first half mile or so, participants will have spread out by speed and ability and you won't be anywhere near athletes significantly faster/bolder than you are. In fact, after a few miles, you will feel like you are pretty much alone on the course with a few friends showing up periodically. If the trail is too technical for your skill level, get off and walk, nobody will care as long as you get off the trail to let people go by. I worry about getting in the way of other riders, so I always start out at the back of the pack, and as we go along, naturally separating ourselves by speed and ability, I find myself passing into about the middle of the group, where I feel most comfortable. I was worried about not knowing anyone- it turns out that everyone at the race is part of the same weird outdoor athlete family. “Hey dude, nice bike!”, “Good job on that climb!”. Accept and give kudos frequently and be supportive of everyone else.

“Everyone will notice me”

No, they won't. There will be people in unicorn costumes, people with spandex, people with Hawaiian shirts and shorts, and people of all races, colors, and genders. There will be thin, heavy, short, and tall people, confident kids, and semi-worried first-time seniors. I have found that everyone is super supportive and just happy to be outside for the weekend, leaving work troubles, social standing, and social media in the dust. If you are in an endurance event, you will be doing laps and nobody knows who is ahead or behind. You may be behind somebody just doing their first lap or somebody on their 10<sup>th</sup>. Everyone is doing their own thing and is not concerned with how you look. If you get injured or have a breakdown, they will notice you and stop or ask if you need help, but other than that, just be you and have fun!

“I have too many family obligations, I'll wait till the kids get older”.

If you wait till the kids get older, you may never get to participate in these kinds of events together. Most of these kinds of events are family-friendly, have activities for the kids, and have ways that parents can participate by taking turns

(duo team). Most bike events will have special events for toddlers to teens and kids quickly gravitate to others in a similar age category, having a blast being part of that pack of new friends. Getting kids involved early gives them a chance to participate in something you all can enjoy as a family for many years to come. Take the whole family with you and camp out with lots of snacks for the kids and a tie-out for the dog. Get those kids hooked on outdoor fun before technology gets ahold of them.

“I’ll do it next season”

If you let each season pass by, the excuses will keep piling up. You won’t be any younger, you won’t really be any more experienced, you won’t be any more ready than you would be this season if you would just do it. Don’t let yourself keep making excuses. Sign up and pay, deal with the nerves later when the race day comes. I knew a really nice older lady who had never really ridden a bike before. She decided that she wanted to learn so she signed up for a fun road race and bought a bike, yes in that order. Her husband was supportive but didn’t want to get out of the car, so he followed her on her training rides to keep her safe. First 1-2 miles, then 5, then 10, and finally a 50-mile race. Now that’s inspiration. The older you get, the more you notice how the potential future seasons diminish, so just get over the what-ifs and it and go for it.

Here is a partial list of some upcoming events in our local area.

April 29-May1, 2022 Whiskey Off-Road. MTB event. Epic Rides race series. <https://epicrides.com/>

May 7, 2022 Flagstaff Frenzy. MTB event. Mountain Bike Association of Arizona <https://mbaa.net>

June 4-5, 2022 Deuces Wild. Triathlon event. Arizona Tri Series <https://www.arizonatriseries.com/>

June 11-12, 2022 Enchanted Forest. MTB event. Zia Rides race series <https://ziarides.com/>

July 17, 2022 Mountain man Triathlon event. Arizona Tri Series <https://www.arizonatriseries.com/>

Sept 16-18, 2022 Albuquerque Dirt Fiesta. MTB, trail running event. Zia Rides race series <https://ziarides.com/>

Sept 24, 2022 Chino Grinder. Gravel bike event. Az Gravel Rides <http://chinogrinder.azgravelrides.com/>

October 1, 2022 Tour of the White Mountains. MTB, gravel bike event Epic Rides Race Series <https://epicrides.com/>

October 15-16, 2022 Wild West Fest. MTB, Enduro event. Zia Rides race series <https://ziarides.com/>

December 10, 2022 Dawn to Dusk. MTB event. Zia Rides race series <https://ziarides.com/>