

FINE-C Your Day

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"One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words." *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

When you get up in the morning, what do you do to start your day? You prepare yourself physically and mentally for a safe, productive day. You get ready to ride!

Motorcycle riders are taught, in Motorcycle Safety class, that to get ready to ride, we should go through a process called "FINE-C":



- Fuel
- Ignition
- Neutral
- Engine, and sometimes,
- Choke.

These are switches and controls that a rider should check or put into position before starting the engine and lifting the kick stand for a safe start (so that the bike does not lurch out of control and topple over with the rider on it).

I am going to propose to you how you can get ready for your day -- get ready to ride -- more effectively, using the same process.

Fuel feeds the engine. It makes the engine run. The fuel knob -- or fuel petcock -- on a motorcycle shuts the flow of gas on and off. It allows gas to flow from the gas tank, through the carburetor or fuel pump, to the engine. The motorcyclist checks that this fuel knob is turned "on".

When you start your day, you need to feed yourself something that provides you the physical energy to move through the day. Your fuel should be a balanced breakfast of some kind. Some of us add vitamins. Whatever it is that gives you the physical nourishment to get going and maintain your energy throughout the day, make sure your body gets it.

The **ignition** switch allows electricity to flow from the battery through the rest of the motorcycle's electrical system. When the ignition switch is "off", the electric circuit is open from the battery and no current passes to the bike's electrical system. The fuel may be there to provide the physical energy, but the rest of the bike is "dead".

This is akin to the mental, emotional, and spiritual energy that gets us and keeps us going throughout the day -- like exercise, affirmations, incentives, the news, or a spiritual thought. Without having the mental, emotional, and spiritual motivation, we would just sit there -- fed, but unmoved. Put an exercise routine into your day, if just for a few minute's walk. Tell yourself how valuable you are. Give thanks to -- or for -- whatever or in whomever you believe, for your life. Get in tune to what is happening in the world to determine how to best deal with it.

Neutral is the transmission state that is a non-gear. The rear wheel of the bike is not engaged in a gear (to either move forward or backward). When the motor is started with the bike in neutral, the bike cannot buck forward and tip the rider off balance.

When your day starts, there are things that you do that you do no matter what the day holds for you. They are the things that neither inspire nor discourage you. They are "just there" -- like taking a shower, brushing your teeth, fixing your hair, shaving, dressing, or making your bed. These are things that are our "neutral gear" at the start of the day. Yes, the way we dress or fix our hair, or the decision to shave -- may differ based on our expectations for the day, but we -- usually -- have to do these things nonetheless. They are our routine. They

provide a certain "groundedness" for our day. I don't know about you, but when I skip something that is a part of my routine, I feel off-balance for the rest of the day. So, make sure you do the things you need to do to keep your grounded feeling.

The **engine** switch -- or "kill switch" -- on a motorcycle opens and closes the ignition circuit. This allows the spark plug to ignite the engine when the "start" button is pressed. I see the engine switch and start button as working in tandem. When the engine switch is not "on", the ignition circuit is open and electricity cannot be sent to provide a spark to make the engine turn over.

What provides the spark for you that, when all else about you is ready, gives you that final push out the door or spark into action for the day? Is it the clock reaching that "must-go" hour whereby you can no longer linger? If you don't have a spark, set one. Even if it is just committing to a time after which you ignite into action. We need something that provides that "spark point" to move us to action.

When the motorcycle engine is cold, after sitting for a period of time, it needs an extra "something" to get it started and remain running until it warms up. That "something" is provided by the **choke**. The engine runs on a specific mixture – ratio – of air and gasoline. When cold, it needs a different mixture to get going than it when it is warm. The choke regulates the flow of air, or inlet airflow, to the motor, thus providing the needed mixture to the engine.

When we are "cold" and cannot quite see the point in doing what we are doing, or cannot find the motivation to continue through the rest of the day, we need that "something" to point us in the right direction so that we do not stop soon after we start. We need goals in our lives to find enrichment and purpose. We need objectives and daily plans to help us achieve our goals. Without something to work towards or to look forward to, we can get started and get moving but go nowhere. We can get stalled, or lose our path, and end up not getting anywhere -- on a day-to-day basis. For help with goal-setting, meeting personal objectives, and working on daily plans, there are books, tapes, seminars, and other resources available through bookstores, libraries, online, and through work/life balance programs.

In summary, how do you "FINE-C" your day?

- **Fuel** -- Give your body the physical nourishment it needs, like a healthy breakfast.
- **Ignition** -- Provide the mental, emotional, and spiritual energy to motivate you to action.
- **Neutral** -- Do the things you have to do every day, for "groundness"; your routine.
- **Engine** -- Hit that "spark-point" to get moving, get out the door, or spring into action.
- **Choke** -- Set goals and objectives and work a daily plan towards reaching those goals, to enrich your life and find purpose.

FINE-C your day, and you're ready to ride through life!

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