



Stop, assess your situation, and take a moment to seek wisdom and judgment.

Call on “AAA.” But since they don’t come to the places we like to ride, you must create your own: **Assess, Accept, and Act.**

ASSESS:

Safety must always be first. Whatever your situation, don’t make it worse by rushing. Frustration, frantic efforts to lift a bike, or a mad attempt to force your way out under power can lengthen your stay or, worse, cause injury. During your assessment, consider how far you are from civilization or help. Is it reasonable to try and walk out? Do you have equipment for an overnight stay if necessary? Do you have water? If none of these are available and you don’t have cell service, a personal locator beacon or satellite phone, it’s up to you. Maybe someone will come along and maybe they will help, but don’t count on it. Formulate your own plan, running scenarios through your mind before starting down the wrong path.

If weather conditions are unfriendly, protect yourself first, even as you begin to plan your rescue. Your first attempt may not be successful. Look around. Is there shade or a structure for protection within a reasonable distance? Allowing yourself to get cold and wet, dehydrated, or exhausted eliminates your best resources, your energy reserve and ability to think clearly. A friend and fellow adventure riding instructor, Owen Balduf, suggests always carrying an umbrella. It can shelter you from rain, shield you or a fallen rider from the sun, and even splint an arm or leg in a pinch.

ACCEPT:

Once you are safe and have relaxed a bit, you will think more clearly. Come to grips with the fact that you will be late for dinner or the wedding. Be thankful that you are still healthy and consider that this will make a great story (some day). Honestly, your attitude drives your creativity, and this mindset can lift your spirits. You are on an adventure and this is now part of it.

ACT:

You have accepted your plight, considered your resources, assembled them to your best advantage, and now it’s time to implement your plan. This is when you must be sure your plan is sound. You may pass through the gauntlet to the other side but then have to return, as I did. You may choose to air down, but can you restore pressures and ride on the road after exiting the dirt? These decisions are made during your assessment but be sure you have chosen wisely. Now take a deep breath and send it.

It’s not uncommon for your first attempt to fail. Don’t let this discourage you. You are now one failure closer to success. You are armed with more knowledge and your next attempt just might work. Keep on thinking, keep on plugging, and keep the faith. The specifics of your plan are subjects for many discussions and will vary according

to your emergency but maintaining a good attitude and calling on “AAA”—*Assess, Accept, and Act*, wash, rinse, and repeat—will almost always see you through. And in the event that it doesn’t work, it will at least keep you busy until someone shows up to help.

In my situation, I made my peace and unloaded the bike. Next, I aired the tires down to eight PSI and simply rode out of the worst of the sand. It was exhausting but I carried my gear back to the bike, used my BestRest air pump to restore road pressures, and continued on my way, knowing that someday this would make a great story. 📌

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Sometimes it’s best to remove luggage and lighten the load.