



Get Over That Confidence Crisis

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When it comes to thrills and spills eventing is certainly packed with both, but how do you regain your confidence, should you take a tumble?

“Having ridden most of my life, I’ve lost count of the number of times over the years that I have fallen off. Thankfully, I have walked away with just a few cuts and bruises and my pride dented on most occasions, but I have also experienced some rather spectacular departures resulting in broken bones and time out of the saddle.

I think the latter is always the hardest to recover from, because with broken bones you really can’t just get back on board immediately and finish on a positive note, be it riding back to the lorry park or, if at home, over another fence. Left to reflect and recuperate, a negative experience like that can really play on your mind and when you do next get back in the saddle, very often it can be plagued with nerves.

I think the most important thing to do following a fall is to analyse why it happened: was it down to rider or horse error? Could there have been anything that you as a rider could have done to avoid it? Very often the problem can be staring you in the face – does your tack fit? Is your horse comfortable in himself? If your horse’s behaviour has changed, then you need to look into this further and don’t forget what he is being fed can also make a difference. If in doubt, seek professional advice! When it comes to feeding, we get our horses’ diets checked by a Saracen Horse Feeds Nutritionist. This advice is free and has had a positive impact on the horses’ performances and in some cases improved their temperaments!

By reflecting on the fall in a constructive manner, you can look at the moments leading up to it, and how you maybe could have ridden it differently. If the answer isn’t blatantly obvious, then I always suggest talking to your instructor in the first instance, as they will know both you and your horse very well and therefore are probably even more aware of what may have gone wrong than you are! They should be able to make suggestions on what could have happened, which may become a eureka moment for you. If you don’t have a



Photo: Courtesy of Saracen Horse Feeds

regular instructor or someone that you are able to discuss your riding with, then take a look on the British Eventing website, where you will find a list of accredited trainers for your area. Having regular instruction from someone that you respect and trust is key to developing and keeping up your confidence, and also to helping you achieve your goals, no matter what your current level or ability.



Photo: Action Hoof Photography

If, after much thought and discussion, the answer is still not very clear as to why you fell off, then I would suggest that you try and replicate the situation, by taking your horse to a venue (ideally the same course where you had the fall) that has the particular cross country element or show jumps available, for you to school the horse over under the guidance of your instructor. This is useful for two reasons, firstly to iron out any problems, and secondly to help regain your confidence under a watchful and experienced eye. However, if your horse also fell, you should always get him checked over by the vet to ensure that he is absolutely 100% before exercising him, let alone jumping again.

It's important to remember that it might not just be you that has lost confidence; very often it can also have a negative effect on the horse, so make sure that when you are able to ride again, that you can pass on confidence to the horse, otherwise you run the risk of getting worse and worse! If you are nervous about tackling the fence because the horse was apprehensive the last time (when you fell off), why not ask your instructor to take him over the fence a few times to help him overcome any issues that he may have regarding that element. It can really help your confidence to simply see your horse doing the job with your instructor on board first, and this will also help your instructor feel what you are feeling in the saddle, which again can only add to building your self-belief.

The key to regaining your confidence is to take your time and take small steps, rather than push yourself too far only to find yourself becoming a nervous wreck at the very thought of riding! Remember that even top professional riders can have their confidence dented by a fall, so feel the fear and rise to the challenge – you can and will overcome those nerves!

Article courtesy of [Saracen Horse Feeds](#)