Making a Habit of Family Biking

FIGURING OUT HOW TO MAKE BIKING part of your daily routine is really about wanting a new habit. As with any habit, you have to figure out how to make it easier to do. Here are a few tips:

Invest in bike parking. Park your (bikke) somewhere convenient—both simple to get on the road and simple to get off the road. Pay for a parking space if you have to. If parking your bike isn’t convenient and easy, then you are way less likely to succeed at making bicycling a habit. Remember, you will still save money over driving (or paying for transit), but in this:

Research your routes. While you are getting the hang of your new bicycling way of life, spend a little extra time to carefully plan your routes. In cities like Vancouver and Montreal, there are extensive networks of bike paths, including separated bike lanes. Figure out which roads and lanes you can comfortably riding on and then map your route to the grocery store, playground, school, daycares, and work. Many cities have websites to help you find new routes.

The Pedal-Powered Alternative to the Mini-Van: Cargo Bikes

Cargo bikes are designed to carry extra cargo. They come in a few different shapes, sizes, and styles. The “tandem” can be carried either in front of the “driver” or behind; the bike might have a basket or a box or all of these that hold anything from 5.5 lbs to 1,800 lbs, which is built upon a heavy-duty bicycle frame, or it is a three-wheeled bicycle-style tricycle. Cargo bikes are designed to carry heavy loads and thus often have stronger frames, spoked, or a double kidseat, which is extremely useful to carry kids in a bike with kids front and back.

If you want your cargo bike to have the capacity to function much more like a pedal-powered wagon, then you can load up with kids and groceries. I strongly encourage you to consider investing in electric assist. Without it, you will be very strong to get up and down any hills. As a relatively small woman, I consider it essential in hilly Vancouver, but I did ride a fully-loaded cargo bike in other cities without it. You can add electric assist as a retro-fit to most bikes and turn your bike into an “e-bike.” That way you have a little electric boost available to you every time you pedal. The “Brick” is what we use. We chose it because it is competitively priced, gets great reviews, and was capable of working with our big cargo bike (and has a 3-year warranty).

The Madsen is a cargo bike—a bike designed to carry extra cargo—that has the carrier in the back. The Madsen is what I ride with my kids.

Age range of passenger: From infants to adults.

Price range: From $200 to $2,000. www.madsencycles.com

The long-tail bicycle

Long-tail bicycles look a lot like any other around-the-town bike, but just a bit longer. The longer part in back can be set up to hold two bike riders or front and back. The long tail bicycle is also available as a kit and thus can be supplemental with electric assist.

Age range of passenger: From infants to adults.

Price range: Without electric assist, under $300; with electric assist, $330.

Ways to Turn your “Regular” Bicycle into a Family Bike

Your regular bicycle can become a family bike too just by adding a few “kicks” and “whistles.” You can add up to two bicycle seats, a wagon to pull behind the bike, bags and baskets to hold your stuff, and even electric assist to help haul it all to the bike you have now.

The Final Freckled Faux Pas

The first time I saw a kid riding on the front of his bicycle, I was in Ireland. The kid had been born and he was nearly weighing 30lbs. We were juggling around the ground, yet, I still knew I wanted one for my child when she came. There are any number of kid bike seats that you can get now. They actually mount onto the centre of the bike, so the kid looks to be sitting on a seat near your handlebars. This child really fits in the front until about 5 years of age, but from about 9 months until that age, this is the most fun bike accessory. I also use it to look down and see my child while I am riding. It is also easier to balance than a bike seat with a built-in seat post. The downside is that when they fall asleep their head bounces around unattended and there is less room for the rider as if you have very long legs or you are 7 months pregnant you will have to always keep an eye on the bike with your child.

The Mr. Fox ECO by MammaCangura - Finally a truly great rear-mounted kid seat option!

The Kick-Start Kits

Turn your road or mountain bike into a long-tail style cargo bike with this nifty kit now called the Free-Radical Family Kit. Learn more at: www.xtracycle.com/cargo-bicycles/xtracycle-cargo-bicycles/ cargobike-homedelivered-family.html

Age range of passenger: The same as the long tail 9 months to adult.

Price range: Get a taste of the convenience of cargo biking for $569. www.xtracycle.com/cargo-bicycles/xtracycle-cargo-bicycles/}

Aficionado by Eco Aficionado and syndicated columnist Manda Aflopes Gillespie

THE green mama bikes ........ with her family

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