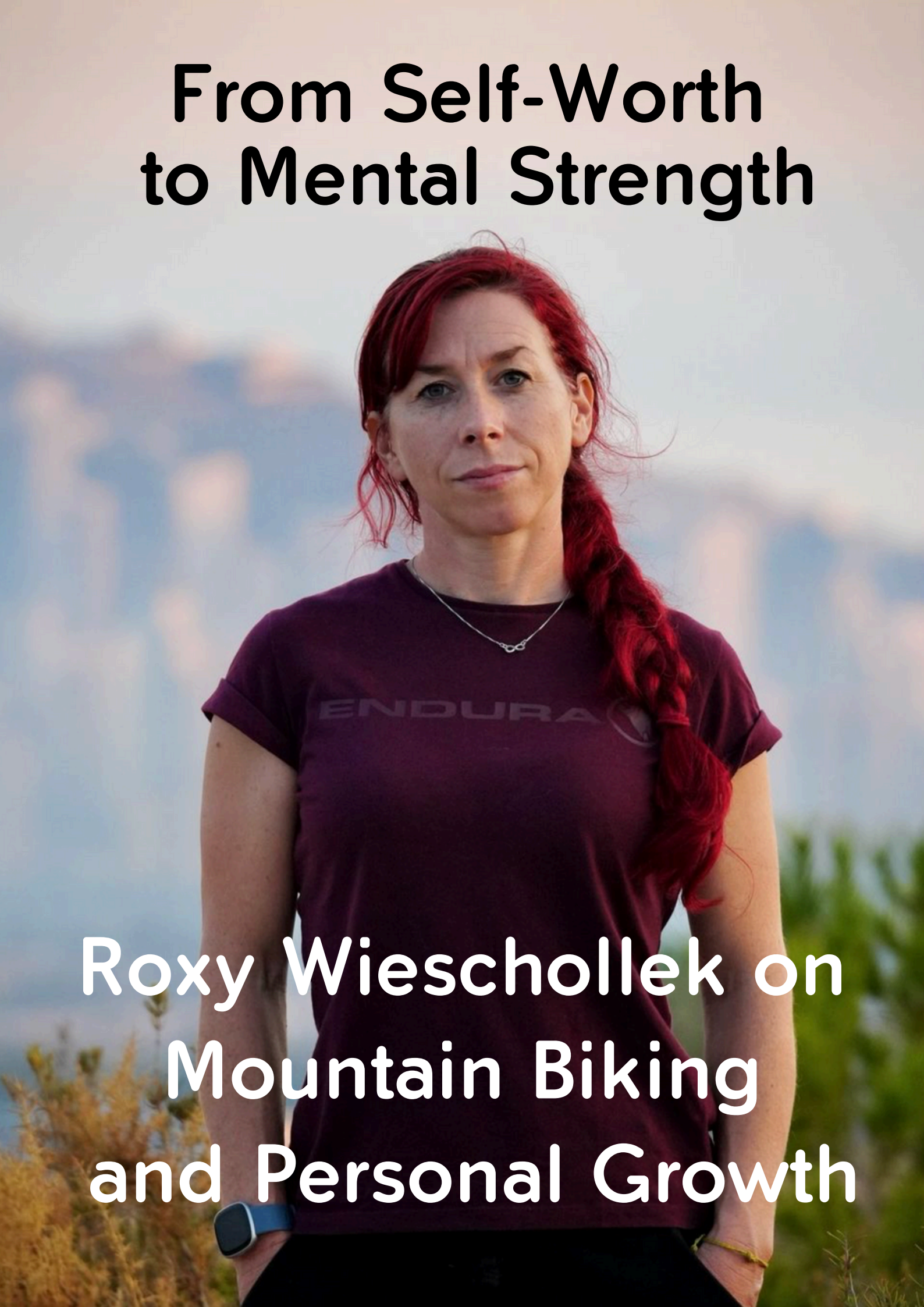


From Self-Worth to Mental Strength



Roxy Wieschollek on
Mountain Biking
and Personal Growth

Mountain Biking: a life saver

By Bay Hagebeek, september 2024

Mountain Bike coach Roxy (Rafaella) Wieschollek (1985) about her journey from struggling with self-worth to using mountain biking as a tool for personal growth. Whether it's about mental training, fun, or authenticity, the lessons she has learned go beyond the sport and apply to life as a whole.

I used to dance a lot, but after injuring my knee, I couldn't continue dancing the way I used to. I started looking for a new sport, something that connected me with nature. That's how I discovered mountain biking. At the time, I was struggling with anorexia and incredibly competitive, always looking for ways to burn calories and prove my worth. Mountain biking seemed like the perfect fit—something cool and badass that would help me feel strong and impressive. Honestly, I just wanted to feel cool. One of the biggest issues in life is victimization—people saying, "I'm this way because of what happened to me" and not taking responsibility. I used to think like that too. My anorexia had nearly starved me to death. I collapsed with less than two percent body fat and woke up realizing, "Why are you doing this to yourself?" I used to blame my past—childhood abuse, sexual harassment, being raped—but then I realized, "No, they're not doing this to me. I'm doing this to myself." That was my wake-up call. I ate something and started my journey of healing. I focused on controlling the things I could—my thoughts, my sense of worth, and how I viewed the world. That shift from victimhood to taking control changed everything for me.'

Crashing and coaching: adapting to what works

When I started mountain biking, I crashed a lot. I was getting all these "bro tips" that didn't work for me.

At just over 40 or 50 kilograms, strength-based advice wasn't right for my body. I began figuring out how to adapt techniques that suited me better. Once I did, I saw much better results, and when I shared these tips with others, they also had more success. That's how I got into coaching—it became clear that I could make a real impact, not just in mountain biking but beyond.

The moment I started coaching, I realized that much of the advice I had been given didn't work for me, and it wasn't helping others either. Once I started giving my own tips, people made more progress. I've had clients in their 50s, 60s, and even over 80 years old, riding safely because they know their limits. When they face difficult sections, they take the time to work on their movement patterns before attempting something beyond their skill level. This approach helps them crash less and enjoy the ride more.

I've specialized in working with hobby athletes because they make up the majority of riders, and I know I can make a deeper impact on their happiness. Pro athletes have to be strict with their routines, but for hobby athletes, it's about making the experience enjoyable.

Gender differences in sports

It's interesting to think about the difference between men and women in sports like mountain biking. Women, like me, tend to be more petite or have less raw strength. In a world that often tries to say all genders are the same, it's important to acknowledge that we're not. And that's a conversation worth having.

I've noticed an increase in female followers, but I'm still surprised by how many men follow me.



On YouTube, about 85 to 90 percent of my followers are male, and on Instagram, it's around 60 percent male and 40 percent female. On one hand, it's great that some men take women seriously in sports, but it's unfortunate that I even have to point that out. To me, gender or ethnicity shouldn't matter—we're all equal. But it's still mostly men, although the number of women in the sport is growing.

"Part of the reason more women are engaging in mountain biking is that I've started addressing topics like female empowerment and mansplaining."

These topics resonate with women, either through their insecurities or confidence. Women either relate to my experiences, find me inspiring, or aspire to be like me.


People often comment on my appearance, like "Your hair looks good." I rarely see similar comments directed at men, which highlights the different ways women and men are treated in the sports world.

Mental training: the power of the mind

Sports mental training is often seen as a way to improve performance or cope with injury, but I've found it's much more than that. There's an interesting balance between neuroscience and meditation. Meditation teaches that thoughts are temporary and don't define us, while neuroscience suggests that our thoughts shape who we are. The key is choosing the thoughts you want to embody.

Your brain is like a "cosmic Google." If you focus on negative thoughts like "I'm not worthy," you'll find evidence to support that belief. But if you think, "I'm strong" or "I'm capable," you'll start to find affirmations for those thoughts too. Mental training takes time—it's not an instant process. Real change requires consistent practice, repetition, and correction.





“One of the biggest realizations I’ve had is that nothing anyone says is actually about me. People’s comments reflect their own views, not my worth.”

I first discovered the power of mental training during a program at the Red Bull Academy in Austria, where young football players regularly trained their minds. It was eye-opening to see how valued mental training is in sports like football but how underappreciated it is in mountain biking. Once I integrated mental training into my own life, I started making real progress, not just in sports but in all areas of life.

Personal growth and authenticity: being true to yourself

Therapy helped me, but what truly saved me was working on myself—reading, meditating, practicing yoga, and finding my own worth. Therapy is important, but some therapists seemed to be doing it just as a job without much care, so I had to find my own way. The journey is ongoing; I know I’ll always have things to work on, but the difference between how I was and how I am now is immense.

Just like I used to, many people are stuck in a victim mentality, blaming external factors like the weather for their bad mood. But it’s not the weather—it’s how they choose to react to it. The same goes for mountain biking. People blame crashes on equipment or their riding group, rather than owning their choices.

Through my videos and content, I aim to challenge this mindset in a playful way. One of the biggest realizations I’ve had is that nothing anyone says is actually about me. People’s comments reflect their own views, not my worth. That realization helped me stop taking things personally, which was a huge breakthrough for me. Now, I don’t take negative comments to heart.

Enjoyment over ambition

Finding your true self is one of the hardest but most important things in life. When people ask why I do what I do, I tell them I use mountain biking as a tool to help people find their authenticity. If you like who you are, you’ll attract people who like you for you. But if you don’t, you’ll end up trying to impress people you don’t even like, creating a negative cycle.

Mountain biking is a great way to strip away the ego. Many people, like I did at first, try to impress others with jumps or tricks. But the real question is: Are you impressing yourself? Are you becoming the person you want to see in the mirror? It’s about feeding your soul, not your ego. I’ve changed a lot from the victim mentality I used to have. Now, I recognize that my mood and choices are mine to control. That’s the message I try to convey through my content, and I think that’s why people connect with it.



As I've gotten older, I've realized how important fun is. When I was younger, I prioritized ambition over enjoyment, but now I see that **fun is key to life**. For hobby athletes, fun should always come first. Many riders beat themselves up for not completing a section, but at the end of the day, who cares? What matters is whether you had fun. For leisure athletes, it's important to focus on the joy of the ride rather than perfection. Professional athletes have different goals, but for the rest of us, it's about enjoying the moment.

Empathy and compassion: how to deal with suffering

As an empath, I feel things deeply, especially suffering. It's both a gift and a challenge, particularly when it comes to the mistreatment of animals, which breaks my heart.

One concept that has helped me is the belief that our souls choose their experiences in this life. Life is temporary for a soul that will live forever, and the suffering we see might be part of a soul's journey to grow. This idea has helped me accept that I can't change everything, and feeling bad doesn't help anyone, including myself.

This perspective ties back to online negativity. People who feel good about themselves don't spread hate—they might offer constructive criticism, but they don't attack others. When I get negative comments, I remind myself that those people are struggling with something in their own lives.



Empathy is key, though it's not always easy.
But small, mindful shifts can make a big difference.

Photo: Fritz Photography

Coaching philosophy: a tailored approach

In my free time, I'm deeply involved in content creation with my partner, Berni. We're not married, but we've been together for years. We both love learning and have taught ourselves everything from filming and editing to voiceovers. It's been a challenging learning curve, but we continue to improve and grow.

You can learn anything if you're willing, but you have to be cautious because not everything online is reliable. Mountain biking tutorials work for some people, but they're not one-size-fits-all. YouTube can't replace real coaching, where you get personalized feedback that truly makes a difference.

People often ask how they can join my programs when everything seems booked. The usual entry point is my home training courses or remote coaching. This helps me see who is genuinely committed to change and practice. If they are, I might invite them to a retreat or put them on a waiting list. I select people for retreats based on how well they vibe together, not just their skill level. It's important that everyone shares similar values and enjoys the experience.

For those looking to work with me long-term, starting with the fundamentals is key. Sending me videos is crucial because it's not just about practice—it's about practicing the right movement patterns. Most people try to fix the symptoms of their mistakes without addressing the root cause, but I help identify and correct those foundational issues.

For me, the goal isn't money—it's about having a good time with my clients. Since adopting this approach, I've found more joy in my work and a greater ability to impact people's lives in a meaningful way.

More info? Check Roxy and Berni online:

<https://roxybike.podia.com>

https://www.youtube.com/@Roxybike_Ride.and.Inspire

https://www.instagram.com/roxybike_coaching

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