



## The Zen of Roller Skiing

*If we don't occupy ourself with everything, then peaceful mind will have nowhere to abide.” — Shen-hui*



Roller skiing is sort of a weird thing. It's at once all angles and flow, gawky and graceful. And, while many of us know what an amazing workout roller skiing can be for our bodies, we don't often connect that with the benefit it has on our minds. New Moon owner and resident roller ski guru, Joel, finds that for all the positive physical health aspects roller skiing provides him with, it is, perhaps, the boost to his mental health that keeps him rolling back for more.

The physical health benefits of roller skiing may seem obvious, but are really nothing short of amazing. It is both anaerobic and aerobic at once. It uses 90 percent of the body's muscles—feet, legs, butt, hips, back, core, shoulders, and arms; yet it is low-impact and friendly on the joints. Employing these large muscle groups makes huge demands on your heart and lungs (in a good way) and has the potential to burn 500-1000 calories per hour. It is even said to be a better aerobic workout than running

and cycling (gasp)! Roller skiing also combines cardio with strength training, encouraging your body systems to work together to gain stamina, strength, and balance. And, no matter what level a skier you are (for the most part), both your XC technique and your fitness will improve.



*Joel appreciating the beauty of an area lake and a great roller ski road.*

Over 30 years ago, even just starting out, Joel could feel that roller skiing was more than just a way to get ready for competition. Eventually becoming Junior National Biathlon Champion in both 1987 and 1989, Joel was full of ambition. As he trained with

and surpassed many experienced athletes, there was something about roller skiing that tapped into more than just the thrill of competition for him.



Joel's home base was McCall, a resort town located on the southern shore of Payette Lake, near the center of the Payette National Forest in Idaho's west central mountains. With the highest average snowfall in the Idaho, skiing is key; and with an abundance of warm Summer days and cool nights there was ample time for Joel to hone his roller ski technique. The exhilaration of exercise paired with the beauty of the natural surroundings soon became just as important to him as winning events. Imagine roller skiing on traffic-free roads among old-growth trees and craggy peaks, filling your bottle at the nearest waterfall, and returning home physically drained but euphoric and full to the brim with an appreciation of nature and the experience of the day. Like "forest bathing" with the addition of physical exertion, roller

skiing in this environment did something for Joel's peace of mind.

Over the years, Joel realized that the rhythmic structure of roller skiing has also had a profound calming effect on his thoughts. Like the changing of time signatures on a score, different rhythms over varying terrain can alter his mindset, from measured and serene to upbeat and energetic. For him, changing destinations comes with not only the excitement of exploring a new route, but the intrigue about what effect the terrain will have on the tempo of his workout and therefore his mental state.

Turns out Joel is onto something. Studies have shown that repetitive motions can soothe anxiety. Repeating motions allows the brain to focus on returning to that movement or refining that technique (in the case of roller skiing) rather than revisiting worrying thoughts or destructive emotions. Some experts believe that activities with repetitive motions can lower your brain wave frequency therefore having the same effect on the brain as meditation.

Listening to the repetitive rhythm of his skis rolling over the pavement, Joel can think more clearly and tune out any useless brain chatter, getting lost in the soothing familiarity of his movement and the response of his body. Add to that increased blood flow and oxygen to the body and the release of endorphins, and Joel has definitely entered his happy place.

If you haven't tried roller to check it out. Joel's Or, if roller skiing isn't for exercise, particularly in the to that "high" that athletes Joel do—Drain the body with him about roller skiing



skiing, maybe it's time for you always up for a giving a lesson. you, another repetitive aerobic beautiful outdoors can get you often talk about. What would and feed the mind. Call to talk today!



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