

Avoiding Road Rage

Do you think you'll become enraged on the road? Emotions have a huge impact on driving. Long before starting your car, you've had to wake up, deal with morning stress, perhaps get your kids moving, and worry about work (including getting there on time). Now that you're stressed out by the way your day may have started, you start driving and are faced with a variety of drivers who choose to:

- Cruise through intersections during a red light
- Make quick left turns in front of oncoming traffic
- Change lanes six times in the space of two city blocks
- Tail-gate so closely that they threaten to weld their car onto your rear bumper
- Ignore the changing light in order to adjust mascara, shave, eat or comb
- Pay more attention to their cell-phone conversations

Such folks turn every day on the road into a test of patience and may even trigger a dangerous emotional response.

"Road rage" refers to driving incidents involving aggressive or violent behavior. Various sources have blamed increased traffic accidents and fatalities on road rage. Others debunk the term as a "fad." and say that traffic statistics don't reflect increased violence on the part of drivers.

Every driver is guilty of acts that can be blamed lapses in judgment. You or I may make a proper lane change or legally proceed through an intersection 99 out of 100 times. However, the drivers who witness our mistakes may assume that we're hopelessly inept or are doing something deliberate. Take a deep breath from behind your wheel and recognize that the driver who has just done something "stupid" is likely someone who is normally a good driver.

It makes sense to give other drivers the benefit of the doubt. One reason is because it's earned. Most drivers do a terrific job on the road. Especially when you consider the dangers inherent in driving, such as traffic congestion, poor weather, time-pressures and routine road hazards (breakdowns, potholes, pedestrians, etc.)

A better reason for staying calm behind the wheel is that cool-headed drivers make better decisions. They have a better chance of avoiding or minimizing accidents. Finally, you may run into serious problems if you cause an accident while acting too aggressive. There's a greater chance of causing serious injury and a higher likelihood of legal consequences. You also increase your chances of being sued. Oh, and let's not forget that insurers aren't seeking to cover drivers who fail to use common sense.

Driving is tough enough without complicating it with rude or aggressive behavior and car insurance isn't free, so start your car, give other drivers a break, and keep a cool head. It's an attitude that creates the best chance for getting where you need to go....safely.

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