

Road Rage - How to Deal with It

Road rage is a growing problem on our highways. Learning how to deal with road rage can help you sidestep the dangerous nightmare that often follows an aggressive road rage incident.

Back Off from Aggressive Drivers

You must realize that you can't control another driver's behavior, but you can control your own. When another driver cuts you off, how you react will determine what happens next. If you are able to back off, take a deep breath, and remain calm, then you can defuse a potentially violent situation.

True, you might need to vent about the driver tailgating you all the way from town or the overly cautious motorist who consistently drove 10 mph under the speed limit. Venting your frustration is normal and healthy, so long as you vent appropriately.

Talk to a friend or family member about the driving experience_telling the story can relieve your stress. Some driving clubs or online discussions offer members a chance to vent their frustration.

Know Your Own Driving Style

What if you are the aggressive driver? Analyze your driving style and whether you are susceptible to road rage; then consider changing your own driving habits. Aggressive drivers routinely:

- Tailgate
- Use their horn
- Flash their headlights
- Change lanes quickly and often
- Gesture to other drivers
- Talk on their cell phone

Changing your driving habits is not easy. You'll need to practice and study safer driving habits. Consider signing up for a driver's education course or better yet, personalized training.

Of course, the other extreme is the instigator_the driver who infuriates other drivers by driving under the speed limit, skipping turn signals, slowing down early for exits, accelerating unevenly, and hogging lanes. If this sounds like you, maybe you've already been the victim of road rage.

If you are the instigator and have avoided a road rage confrontation, then congratulations. Regardless, now is the time to improve your own driving habits before you provoke a bad situation.

Remember, you are sharing the road with other motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists. It is only fair for you to recognize that people are going to work, school, or important appointments_and driving under the speed limit is inconsiderate. You can pull over and let others pass by.

Medical Basis for Road Rage

Why do some drivers get worked up during the daily commute? Some doctors believe there is a medical basis for road rage. The National Institute of Health sponsored a study that looked at road rage in drivers.

In 5% to 7% of the nearly 10,000 drivers studied, road rage behavior was present. A general theory came out of the study, and Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED) was identified as the cause of road rage.

Losing your temper used to be just bad form; now it has a diagnosis and can begin in the early teens. People diagnosed with IED have had multiple outbursts that are way out of proportion to the situation at hand. Generally, someone gets hurt or property is damaged.

Whether or not you believe in a medical basis for road rage, you still need to know how to deal with it. Uncertain situations can escalate unpredictably, and the best advice is to avoid confrontations altogether. If you tend to provoke other drivers or are on the aggressive side of road rage, put some effort into learning new driving habits.

And for those of us who run the middle of the road, maintain those defensive driving skills and keep a watchful eye on developing hazardous situations.

To read more about the road rage study, visit the NIH. More information is also available at RoadRagers.com, which offers a free online analysis of your driving style.