

Solutions

FAMILY SERVICES EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

Issue 17

ROAD

RAGE

Road Rage is a catchy phrase, one that attracts media interest and fuels conversation. The term is used to describe any act of driver aggression including actual or attempted assault on other drivers. Drivers caught up in this phenomenon are seen as experiencing near primal rage – reflexive, powerful, and passionate. Another term commonly used in media reports is “aggressive driving”. A long list of behaviors are associated with this term, including tailgating, unsafe lane changes, speeding, excessive honking, rude hand gestures, and verbal abuse.

According to media reports and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, incidents of road rage and aggressive driving have increased dramatically in the past decade. Most drivers experience some degree of anger and frustration while driving, yet only a few respond with aggression or road rage. The key may be the difference in their attitudes, beliefs, personalities, coping strategies, and personal stress levels. Other factors,

including temperature, noise and traffic congestion, may contribute to aggressive driving.

“Members of the Road Rage Club”

Research suggests that young males between 18 and 30 are most likely to experience road rage. According to psychologists, people from this age group tend to see themselves as invincible and omnipotent and are, therefore, more likely to participate in high-risk behaviors. However, they are not the only members of the road-rage club. Evidence suggests that women of all ages and older men also can, and do, succumb to anger while driving.

Behaviors associated with road rage:

- **tailgating**
- **unsafe lane changes**
- **speeding**
- **excessive honking**
- **rude hand gestures**
- **verbal abuse.**

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ROAD RAGE (continued)

====Tips on How to Cope====

The following are some tips for dealing with aggressive drivers:

- 1.** Stay clear of angry drivers. They can be unpredictable. Avoid eye contact as some people see it as a threat, intimidation tactic, or invitation to a stand off.
- 2.** If you are being tailgated, don't slam on the brakes. Signal, pull over, and let the tailgater pass you.
- 3.** If you make a mistake or accidentally cut someone off apologize with an appropriate gesture.
- 4.** Don't make rude gestures. This insults other drivers who may respond in kind or escalate the situation.
- 5.** Put yourself in the other driver's shoes. The other driver may have reason for his/her driving behaviors. Don't take the driving behavior personally or turn into an aggressive driver by retaliating.
- 6.** Get help if you feel threatened. If another driver is following you or trying to start a fight, do not get out of your vehicle. Call the police or go to a safe, populated area. Use your horn to draw attention to yourself.

====Tips on How to Stay Calm====

The following tips may help you to stay calm and prevent frustration leading to aggressive driving:

- 1.** Know where you are going, how to get there and how long you will need. If you are running late remember that getting there late and alive is better than not at all.
- 2.** Be aware of your emotional state before you get into the car. Take a few moments to settle into your task of driving safely to your next destination. Don't drive while you are upset.
- 3.** If you do get upset while driving, try to talk yourself out of it, make decisions or plans to solve the problem, or resign yourself to the fact that you will not change much while driving. Get focused for safety.

Family Services offers confidential professional assistance on a wide variety of personal and work-related issues. For more information on your EAP, call:
1-800-668-9920