



Driving ourselves mad

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Imagine upon arrival home from your job that your significant other greets you and proceeds to anger about a near-miss traffic incident. They go into specific details and their anger increases as they recount details.

Eventually, the relieved rage subsides. But driving related anger can, if experienced often, have more lasting effects in the long run than simply causing brief periods of increased tension. When people experience strong anger and rage the brain sends messages to the adrenal glands which inundates the body with stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol.

Other changes directed by the brain include redirecting blood toward the muscles and away from the gastrointestinal tract. The body is now prepared for increased physical exertion, even if the individual is operating a motor vehicle. The increase in stress hormone release also increases the body temperature, skin perspiration, more rapid breathing, elevates the blood pressure and increases the heart rate.

You've heard the phrase: "fight or flight syndrome;" it's not very useful when you are behind the steering wheel of a motor vehicle.

Repeated decisions to become enraged (yes, it is a choice in most cases), will result in chronic adrenaline dumps into the body and can, over time, result in hypertension, cardiac incidents and a host of other chronic physical maladies. It can even spill over into relationships. It behooves us to avoid rage, including the traffic related type, for health and safety reasons.

If you are prone to becoming angry on the road then there are some ways to avoid it:

- Identify traffic situations that trigger your rage and plan to avoid such situations.
- Try a different route to avoid possible high traffic areas where vehicles are in closer proximity.
- Depart for your destination a few minutes earlier or later to avoid traffic congestion.
- Adhere to the posted speed limit when driving and let more traffic pass you rather than trying to get there first.
- Imagine that the other driver's actions on the road such as tailgating, going out of turn at two-or four-way stop intersections, and the "I pay road taxes so I'll sit in the passing lane as long as I want to driver," have nothing to do with you to stay calm.

I find commanding myself in a low drill sergeant tone saying "Just forget it!" followed by regular breathing and I keep myself from honking the horn. It works every time. Never make eye contact with aggressive drivers to avoid risk of further driving aggression. Avoid using the horn in anger because it may increase the chances of your internal anger and anger or aggression in the other driver.

Remember, behaviors of other driver that result in personal anger and rage may indicate accumulated anger from other life situations. Seek

professional help for ways to manage anger in general as the risk of personal injury on the road is already quite high.