

HOW A ROAD RAGE INCIDENT OCCURS

ANGER (THE NORMAL AND NATURAL HUMAN EMOTION)

- A ROAD RAGE INCIDENT STARTS WITH ANGER, A NORMAL AND NATURAL HUMAN EMOTION
- ANGER IS A FACT OF LIFE/THERE IS NO WAY TO AVOID THIS FEELING AT TIMES
 - ...ON THE ROADWAYS AND IN LOTS OF OTHER PLACES IN OUR LIVES
- ANGER IS A NORMAL AND NATURAL EMOTION THAT ARISES FROM HOW WE INTERPRET THE PHYSICAL AROUSAL FROM THE “FLIGHT OR FIGHT” STRESS RESPONSE THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS EXPERIENCE
 - ...SEE THE ARTICLE “UNDERSTANDING YOUR ANGER” ON THIS WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROCESS
- THIS STRESS RESPONSE CAN BE TRIGGERED IN US WHENEVER:
 - ...WE ARE STARTLED
 - ...WE FEEL FEARFUL OR THREATENED
 - ...WE BELIEVE THAT THINGS AROUND US ARE “OUT OF CONTROL”
 - ...WE FEEL INSECURITY, UNCERTAINTY, OR SELF-DOUBT
- ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, OUR ANGER CAN BE A SOURCE OF DISCOVERY
 - ...IT TELLS US THAT “SOMETHING IS GOING ON” THAT NEEDS TO BE ATTENDED TO BY US
- ESPECIALLY RELATED TO DRIVING, ANGER IS OFTEN EXPERIENCED WHEN WE BELIEVE THAT:
 - ...OUR WANTS, NEEDS, OR RIGHTS ARE NOT BEING ADDRESSED AND RESPECTED
 - ...AN INJUSTICE OR A “WRONG” HAS BEEN DONE TO US OR SOMEONE ELSE ON THE ROAD
 - ...OTHERS ARE TRYING TO DOMINATE, CONTROL, OR THREATEN US WITH THEIR VEHICLES

SOME EXAMPLES OF ANGER TRIGGERS FOR MANY PEOPLE ON THE ROAD:

- SOMEONE NEARLY CLIPS YOUR RIGHT FRONT FENDER AS THEY ROAR ONTO THE FREEWAY FROM THE ENTRY RAMP TO THE HIGHWAY
- SOMEONE IS WEAVING IN AND OUT OF TRAFFIC AT A HIGH RATE OF SPEED, ENDANGERING YOU AND OTHER DRIVERS
- SOMEONE IS “ON YOUR BUMPER” AND TAILGATING YOU BECAUSE THEY WANT TO GET BY YOU AND THEY DON’T SEEM TO THINK YOU’RE GOING FAST ENOUGH TO SUIT THEM
- THINK ABOUT AND IDENTIFY SOME OF THE TRIGGERS AND SITUATIONS WHERE YOU GET IMPATIENT, FRUSTRATED, AND ANGRY WHEN YOU ARE DRIVING

WHEN ANGER, THAT NORMAL AND NATURAL HUMAN EMOTION, IS NOT ADDRESSED AND HANDLED EFFECTIVELY AND WE ALLOW OUR ANGER TO BUILD AND FESTER IN THE CAR, OUR ANGER CAN EASILY “MORPH” INTO THE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS THAT ARE TOXIC DISTORTIONS OF ANGER (THE EMOTION) THAT ARE DISCUSSED IN WHAT FOLLOWS IN THIS ARTICLE.

CYNICISM/HOSTILITY/DISGUST/CONTEMPT/A DESIRE TO CONTROL, “TEACH,” AND PUNISH/A SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT (THE NEGATIVE AND PUNISHING ATTITUDES)

- **THESE ARE ATTITUDES THAT CONSIST OF**
 - ...A NEGATIVE MIND SET;**
 - ...A MISTRUST OF OTHER DRIVERS AND THEIR MOTIVES; AND**
 - ...A DESIRE TO CONTROL A PERSON OR SITUATION OR A DESIRE TO GET REVENGE FOR THE “WRONGS” THAT YOU BELIEVE OTHERS ARE DOING TO YOU OR OTHER DRIVERS AROUND YOU**
- **THESE ATTITUDES ALSO LEAD TO VIEWING THE WORLD (AND OUR ROADWAYS) AS UNSAFE AND FRIGHTENING PLACES AND EXPECTING OTHER DRIVERS:**
 - ...TO BE INCOMPETENT AND INADEQUATE**
 - ...TO BE INCONSIDERATE, “RUDE,” UNFAIR, AND UNTRUSTWORTHY**
 - ...TO GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF US AND “VIOLATE” US (OR OTHERS) IN SOME WAY**
- **THIS MIND SET LEADS TO BROODING ABOUT AND FOCUSING ON OTHERS’ REAL OR PERCEIVED INJUSTICES TOWARD US IN THE CAR AND ON WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO “REMEDY” THE SITUATION THAT WE DON’T LIKE**
- **THESE ATTITUDES ALSO CREATE AN ENTITLED BELIEF THAT THESE OTHER DRIVERS DESERVE TO BE PUNISHED OR RETALIATED AGAINST BY US**
- **THESE ATTITUDES PROMOTE THE IDEA THAT WE ARE “VICTIMS” ON THE ROAD AND NEED TO BE:**
 - ...CONSTANTLY “ON GUARD,” HYPERVIGILANT, AND ALWAYS PREPARED TO REACT TO OTHERS’ PROVOCATIVE, DANGEROUS, OR IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR**
 - ...CONTINUALLY READY TO DEFEND OURSELVES AND LASH OUT AND PUNISH OTHERS**
- **THESE ATTITUDES ARE BEST REPRESENTED BY OUR NEGATIVE SELF-TALK OR REHEARSAL (WHAT WE SAY TO OURSELVES/OUR NEGATIVE THOUGHT LANGUAGE)**
 - ...”MOVE IT OR PARK IT, GRANDMA”***
 - ...”THAT YOUNG ‘BUCK’ MUST THINK HE’S QUITE THE HOT SHOT”***
 - ...”THE LIGHT’S NOT GOING TO GET ANY GREENER, ASSHOLE”***
 - ...”THAT JERK ISN’T GOING TO GET AWAY WITH WHAT HE JUST DID TO ME”***
 - ...”KEEP PEDALING, OLD MAN”***
 - ...”WHAT THE HELL IS THE MATTER WITH THAT TURKEY?”***

...”I’M GONNA GET THAT ‘SOB’ FOR CUTTING ME OFF”

...”OK, SUCKER, YOU’VE INVADED MY SPACE; NOW IT’S PAYBACK TIME FOR YOU”

- **WHEN WE ENGAGE IN NEGATIVE THINKING LIKE THIS, WE ARE CONTINUALLY FUELING OUR STRESS RESPONSE AND INCREASING THE INTENSITY OF AND PROLONGING OUR TOXIC ANGER ABOUT WHAT IS OCCURRING OR WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED**
- **IF THESE ATTITUDES BECOME OUR WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD WHEN WE ARE IN THE CAR, THEY THEN CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO THE BELIEF THAT WE HAVE A “RIGHT” TO RETRIBUTION AND TO THE VIOLATION OF ANOTHER DRIVER’S RIGHTS AND BOUNDARIES THROUGH THE BEHAVIORS DISCUSSED BELOW.**

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING ACTIVITIES (THE THREATENING AND INTIMIDATING ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS)

- **AGGRESSIVE DRIVING ACTIONS INVOLVE BEHAVIORS ACTED OUT WITH THE INTENT TO “TEACH,” HURT, PUNISH, INTIMIDATE, CONTROL, AND DOMINATE OTHER DRIVERS WHO WE BELIEVE ARE VIOLATING OUR OWN (OR OTHERS’) RIGHTS**
- **THEY ARE USED AS A MEANS OF GETTING THE “LAST WORD” IN A DRIVING DUEL, GAINING REVENGE FOR THE REAL OR IMAGINED “WRONGS” DONE TO US, “CORRECTING” THE OTHER DRIVER’S BAD BEHAVIOR (I.E. “TEACHING THEM A LESSON”), OR GETTING OUR WAY IN A PARTICULAR SITUATION**
- **THESE ACTIONS EXIST ON A CONTINUUM FROM**
 - ...A SINGLE GESTURE, CURSE, OR FACIAL EXPRESSION**
 - ...TO REPEATED EXCHANGES OF THESE ACTIONS BETWEEN TWO OR MORE DRIVERS, TOGETHER WITH INCREASED ANGER AND IMPAIRED AND POOR JUDGMENT**
 - ...TO ACTIVELY HARASSING AND INTERFERING WITH THE OTHER DRIVER THROUGH THE USE OF BEHAVIORS LIKE:**
 - ...STARING OR GLARING AT ANOTHER MOTORIST**
 - ...MAKING A VISIBLE GESTURE OR “FLIPPING SOMEONE OFF”**
 - ...HONKING OUR HORN**
 - ...FLASHING OUR BRIGHT LIGHTS**
 - ...TAILGATING**
 - ...CUTTING SOMEONE OFF**
 - ...BLOCKING THE PASSING LANE BY SLOWING DOWN**
 - ...SPEEDING UP TO STOP SOMEONE FROM PASSING US**
 - ...TAPPING OR SLAMMING ON OUR BRAKES**
 - ...CHASING OR FOLLOWING ANOTHER VEHICLE**
 - ...SWERVING TOWARD ANOTHER CAR**
- **THESE BEHAVIORS SET THE STAGE FOR AN ACTUAL ROAD RAGE INCIDENT TO THEN OCCUR**

THE ROAD RAGE INCIDENT (THE EVENTUAL AND INEVITABLE DESTRUCTIVE OUTCOME OF THIS ESCALATION PROCESS)

- **A ROAD RAGE INCIDENT OCCURS WHEN AGGRESSIVE DRIVING LEADS TO EXTREME ACTS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR AND ATTEMPTS TO INTENTIONALLY DAMAGE THE OTHER DRIVER'S VEHICLE OR INJURE OR KILL THE PERSON WHO IS IRRITATING US**
- **A ROAD RAGE INCIDENT CAN END IN PROPERTY DAMAGE OR DESTRUCTION, INJURY TO OURSELVES OR TO SOMEONE ELSE, OR EVEN TO THE DEATH OF ONE OR MORE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, AND (POTENTIALLY) EVEN TO INNOCENT BYSTANDERS WHO HAPPEN TO BE AROUND US**
- **IT REPRESENTS THE END RESULT OF AN ESCALATING SEQUENCE OF FEELINGS AND AGGRESSIVE DRIVING ACTIONS AND EVENTS METED OUT FROM ONE DRIVER TO ANOTHER THAT LITERALLY TAKES ON "A LIFE OF ITS OWN" AND CAN END IN A TOTAL CATASTROPHE**
- **SOME EXAMPLES OF ROAD RAGE INCIDENTS:**
 - ...PULLING OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD TO "TALK" TO ANOTHER DRIVER AND THEN ENDING UP IN A SCREAMING OR SHOVING MATCH OR A FIST FIGHT**
 - ...FORCING SOMEONE ELSE'S CAR OFF THE ROAD**
 - ...THROWING A BOTTLE, CAN, OR OTHER OBJECT AT ANOTHER CAR**
 - ...BUMPING INTO OR RAMMING SOMEONE ELSE'S CAR WITH OUR VEHICLE**
 - ...TRYING TO RUN SOMEONE DOWN**
 - ...SHOOTING A GUN AT ANOTHER VEHICLE**