

AGGRESSIVE DRIVER CHANGE PROCESS CHEAT SHEET

Here are a few tools that you may find helpful

Reducing Stress

Stresses, as a result of the driving situation or as a result of family or work, affect your emotions and add to the fatigue factor. When you are stressed, here are some tools you can use to reduce the stress.



1. Deep Breathing: This should first be practiced at home and then you can use a modified version when you are in the car. Once you get the hang of it, you will find that you can use it anywhere to reduce stress and give your body a bit of an energy boost.

To practice deep breathing, you should sit in a comfortable recliner chair or lay down. You want to be in a position where your body can fully relax. To begin:

- Take in a deep breath while mentally counting to five.
- Hold the breath for a count of five (feel your body tense up).
- Slowly exhale while counting to five (feel the muscles in your body relax).
- Repeat this process while concentrating on the feeling of relaxation as you exhale

Once you have learned this skill at home, you can then use it in the car to relax as you drive. While stopped, keeping your eyes open and on the road, you will still be able to concentrate on the muscles you want to relax and you will find you have less stress and a little more energy at the end of your commute.

2. Visualization: Sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.

- Remember or imagine a place that is peaceful or relaxing for you such as a beach or quiet forest.
- Think of as many details about your peaceful place as you can.

This process should take at least ten minutes. If you practice this technique frequently, just the thought of your peaceful place will calm you down in a stressful situation.

3. Progressive Relaxation: Sit up straight in a comfortable chair. Starting with either your head or your feet, alternate flexing or tensing each muscle group with relaxing that muscle group. For example:

- Tense your toes by curling them downward and holding that position for about two seconds.
- Then uncurl your toes to relax them.
- Learn the difference between when parts of your body are tense and when they are relaxed.
- Repeat this process, then, move on to the next muscle group.

This way, you can learn to recognize tension in your body and relax those parts of your body as you go through your day.

4. Meditation: The purpose of meditating is to eliminate stressful and/or unnecessary thoughts that cloud your mind. Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit and focus your mind on one peaceful, repetitive thought. Some people choose a single word to repeat. For example:

- Focus on the word "peace" when you inhale and "worry" when you exhale,
- Symbolizing that you are allowing peace in and letting go of worry.

Others choose phrases to repeat that suggest rules or attitudes to live by. Experimenting will help you decide what type of meditation works best for you.

Other Factors That Affect Your Emotions

Remember that other drivers aren't the only thing that can affect your emotions. Other factors can impact your state of mind while you drive such as:

1. Sleep: Sacrificing as little as one to two hours of sleep can affect our ability to stay awake during the day. Lack of sleep can make us more irritated and that can lead to greater anger.

- Try to get more sleep.
- Get to bed earlier
- Avoid highly caffeinated drinks to keep you awake.

2. Medications: Both over-the-counter and prescriptions drugs can affect your emotions and your driving skills. A common over-the-counter cold and allergy medication, cause drowsiness and can affect your driving as much as alcohol.

- Whether the drug is prescription or over-the-counter, check the warning labels and don't attempt to drive if there are warnings such as "may cause drowsiness" or "do not operate machinery while taking this medication."

3. Alcohol: If you are already stressed and angry, alcohol is going to enhance that emotion as well as reduce those razor sharp reaction skills.

Prepare Ahead

1. The Night Before: If, like a lot of people, you aren't a morning person and you have a hard time getting to work on time, prepare for your morning the night before.

- Lay out all your clothes and anything you need to take to work.
- If you have to take children to daycare, have their clothes and anything they need laid out too.
- Get a coffee pot with a timer and have it set to go before you wake up.
- Don't keep your alarm clock within reach of the bed and don't hit the snooze button. Get up when the alarm first goes off!
- Get to bed earlier (See above)

2. The Commute:

- If you like to read the paper with your morning coffee, get a to-go cup and take your newspaper to work with you. You should get to work earlier this way and you can read the paper and drink your coffee in the parking lot without any fear of being late.

- If you run out of time to shave or do your make-up, wait until you get to work and shave or apply your make-up in the parking lot. **Do not do it in traffic!** Someone out there is waiting to shoot you if you do.
- Don't use your commute time to read reports or other paperwork. It is too dangerous. Do your homework before bed.
- Don't use the morning commute to start your phone calls. Hand-held or hands-off, cell phones take your mind off of driving and they are dangerous distractions.
- Plan on bad traffic. Leave home earlier!
- During the evening commute, remember that everyone is tired and even more prone to anger. Be careful and don't provoke anyone.

3. Cruise Control: The best anti-speeding device on your car is your cruise control. Use it whenever you are driving. When you see the speed limit sign, set your cruise control and don't let the urge to override it get to you. If you are on cruise control, at the speed limit, you can pass police officers all day without fear of being pulled over for speeding.

Avoiding Road Rage

To avoid getting involved in a road rage situation, the American Automobile Association (AAA) gives the following tips.

1. Don't offend.

- Don't cut off another driver. Make sure you have plenty of room to pass.
- Don't drive in the left lane. Use the left lane for passing only.
- Don't tailgate. Drivers get angry when they are followed too closely.
- Don't use obscene gestures. They are offensive to other drivers
- Get help. If another driver is trying to provoke you, call the police.

2. Don't Engage

- Steer Clear. Get out of the way of an angry driver, a fight can't break out if there aren't two people involved.
- Avoid eye contact. Eye contact makes it personal.
- Put yourself in the other driver's shoes. Don't judge the other driver
- Get help. If you think you have a problem with anger, seek out an anger management program.

3. Adjust your attitude

- Forget about winning. No one wins in a road rage situation.

4. Revenge: If you feel like you just have to punish another driver, do it safely. Record his tag number and vent your anger on-line at www.platewire.com.

5. Be Courteous to Other Drivers – Even If They Aren't Courteous In Return.

This will cut way down on the chances of becoming involved in a road game or even a road rage incident. Getting in this habit may save your life one day.

Your Radio

The type of music you listen to can help keep you calm. You don't have to listen to elevator music, just choose a slower, more relaxed form of your favorite musical style.

Turn Down the Volume: People react physically to noise. At 90 decibels or above, studies have shown that the adrenaline reaction is so powerful that people can become openly hostile and belligerent. 120 to 130 decibels is the normal threshold for pain in the ears. Remember, in Florida, you can be ticketed and receive points against your driving record for a loud stereo

Remember the Change Process

1. **Recognition** - Recognize your emotions and goals.
2. **Validation** - Are your goals valid and are your emotions preventing you from reaching your goals?
3. **Redirection** - Change the negative thoughts into more positive, calming thoughts to stop feeding the anger.
4. **Change** - Change your driving behavior.

Change Your Driving Habits Today

1. **Change Now:** For this change to be effective, the change has to be made now. Not tomorrow or next week. Setting a date in the future to start the change just gives you permission to keep postponing it.
2. **Make It Public:** Make your intentions to change public. Let your family, co-workers, and friends know that you are going to change your driving habits. They will help keep you honest and remember, when they give you a gentle reminder that you are supposed to be changing, keep your anger in check. They are trying to help.
3. **Resist the Urge:** Don't give into the urge to return to your old driving behaviors. The biggest challenge in the change process will be to start, and then, keep up your new, safer driving behaviors. Each day you will face the temptation to return to your old aggressive driving behaviors. You will have to decide each day to maintain your new driving behaviors and worry about tomorrow when tomorrow comes. Remember the benefits of driving safely mean your stress level will be reduced by no longer having to worry about being ticketed, losing your license, or your life.

Is the time I save worth the risk?

