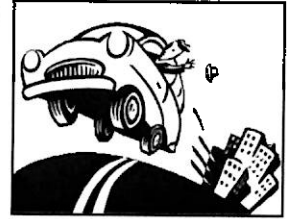


Emotional Driving



Most drivers are aware of the affect that things like drinking and cell phone use have on their driving safety, yet they give little consideration to the many other factors that can be even more distracting. Fatigue, stress, and our emotions have a serious effect on driving, causing serious impairments that we may not even be aware of. When we are worried, upset, frightened, depressed, or even happily excited, our driving skills can be as negatively impacted as they would be if we were engaged in an intense phone call or after having consumed several alcoholic drinks.

THE SERIOUS DISTRACTION OF EMOTIONS

Research has proven that human beings in the grip of negative (and sometimes positive) emotions have exhibited a distraction level even more serious than those experienced by cell phone users.

Such emotions can cause otherwise excellent drivers to experience dimmed or impaired observation and reaction times. They may fail to recognize situations, such as an abrupt slowing of traffic or debris on the road. They can actually reach a point where they are unable to predict or to determine what other drivers around them are doing. They will make risky maneuvers and risky changes, such as: cutting across several lanes of traffic to take an off-ramp, suddenly changing lanes, or even driving on the freeway shoulder. Ultimately, they lose the ability to perform driving skills that require precise timing and become detached from other drivers, vehicles, and conditions on the road.

STEERING CLEAR OF ROAD RAGE

One emotion that has become all too common these days is Road Rage. This strong, potentially harmful emotion is caused by an overreaction and the personalization of a driving situation. According to a survey conducted by doctors on this topic, over half of all drivers in America will either express road rage themselves, or encounter another driver in a fit of road rage focused at them, while they are

driving. The U.S. Highway Safety Office reports that each year, tens of thousands of automobile accidents can be linked directly to the expression of road rage or aggressive driving.

If something happens to make you believe that you could become the focus of another driver's rage, take actions to protect yourself. Remain in your car, and if approached on foot, roll up the windows and lock the doors.

Even if you're just talking with a passenger, avoid making gestures that another driver could interpret as hostile, rude, or otherwise negative. If you accidentally do something that annoys or upsets another driver, make overly-exaggerated expressions of regret, hold hand in a prayer gesture, mouth the word "sorry," make a silly grimace—anything that will send the message that you acknowledge an error. This works very well to diffuse a situation. Some drivers have even begun to carry a printed sign that simply says "sorry" in bold letters, to hold up if they do something that annoys another driver.

CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS

Stay alert to the affects of emotion. Things like increased heartbeat, quickened breathing, slowed digestion, or sweaty palms. Treat any of these as warning signs to check your emotional condition to determine its potential effect on your driving. Take the time to understand your emotional makeup and identify situations that cause you emotional stress. Direct your emotions toward actions, not individuals and delay driving when upset, or ask someone else to drive if available. Expect other drivers to make mistakes and understand that emotions are contagious.

Remember, as long as you are moving, your attention should be on the road and traffic at all times—not diluted by distractions or strong emotions.

October, 2019
The Shield
Emotional Driving
Quiz



Driver Name: _____ Date: _____
Please Print

Driver Signature: _____

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. Our driving skills can be as negatively impacted by our emotions as they would be if
 - a. we were engaged in an intense phone call
 - b. we had consumed several alcoholic drinks
 - c. both a & b
 - d. none of the above
2. A sign that you are possibly beginning to get emotional is
 - a. increased heartbeat
 - b. slow digestion
 - c. sweaty palms
 - d. all of the above
3. Emotions can cause otherwise excellent drivers to experience
 - a. sleepiness
 - b. impaired reaction times
 - c. hunger
 - d. none of the above
4. Each year, _____ of automobile accidents can be linked directly to the expression of road rage or aggressive driving.
 - a. 1%
 - b. 5%
 - c. 25%
 - d. Tens of thousands
5. If you become the focus of another driver's road rage, you should step out of your vehicle and attempt to calm the other driver.
 - a. True
 - b. False

