

## Preventing Aggressive Driving

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An incident several weeks back in which a motorcyclist was “killed” is no doubt still fresh in our minds. The follow on (which includes grief, remorse, possibly many more emotions) no doubt being analysed by many people and or organisations. Of course we empathise and also sympathise with all parties involved.

We all recognize the signs of an aggressive driver: speeding, making sudden and dangerous lane changes and turns, refusing to yield to another driver trying to merge, racing through yellow lights, hooting to express impatience, etc. Aggressive driving greatly increases the likelihood of a collision, raises driver stress levels and wastes fuel and, taken to extreme, results in the death of a fellow human being. So why are some drivers so prone to this behaviour?

Clearly there are many issues, many of which we can only but theorise on, but common to all is the fact that if one – or both drivers – had done something different, the outcome of many of these incidents could be less catastrophic.

In full recognition of the fact that there are deeper underlying issues, we have listed below some things that you and I could implement so as to prevent incidents escalating out of control. These “tips”, sourced from authorities in the US are equally as applicable in South Africa

### **To avoid becoming an aggressive driver:**

- Allow enough travel time to reach your destination on schedule.
- If possible, alter your schedule to avoid driving during peak highway congestion periods.
- If you're running late, call ahead so you can relax.
- Don't drive when you're angry, upset or overly tired.
- Make your vehicle comfortable. Listen to relaxing music and avoid situations that raise your anxiety.
- When driving, relax and remain aware of your posture. Sit back in your seat, loosen your grip on the steering wheel and don't clench your teeth.
- Give others the benefit of the doubt; be polite, courteous and forgiving.
- You can control your own reactions to other drivers. If someone else drives aggressively, do not retaliate.

### **When confronted by an aggressive driver:**

- Avoid eye contact.
- Stay calm and relaxed.
- Make every attempt to get out of the way safely. Don't escalate the situation.
- Put your pride in the back seat. Don't challenge an aggressive driver by speeding up or attempting to hold your position in your travel lane.

- Wear a seat belt and encourage your passengers to do the same.
- Ignore harassing gestures and name calling, and do not return them.
- If an aggressive or threatening driver starts following you, don't stop or get out of your vehicle. Drive directly to the nearest police station or place of safety.
- If an aggressive driver is involved in a crash, stop a safe distance from the crash scene. When the police arrive, report the driving behaviour you witnessed.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, which explores this question and provides advice, has produced a video which readers are free to request – we will happily provide the link.

As a matter of interest we have also included two tests, courtesy of the British Association of Anger Management. Please feel free to try these simple but revealing exercises

	<p>How Cool Are You? Try the Stress Test and see how relaxed you really are. This will take you approximately 5 minutes. At the end you will be given an overall stress score, and stress scores in 10 sub-categories as well as information on what this means and how you can instantly lower your stress.</p>
	<p>Everyone knows what anger is, but how do you express it without hurting others or hurting yourself? Uncontrolled anger can cost you your marriage, your job, the respect of your loved ones. Do this little self-diagnostic test and see where you stand today. You could be on the threshold of a whole new life.</p>

Till next time – drive safe and leave the attitude behind.