

Becoming a Courteous Driver or At least Trying

By Kate Murphy

When one becomes involved in traffic safety it is sometimes hard to not impress their passion for the subject onto others. I have found this to be true in my life. When my mother calls to tell me she has just been struck by another vehicle she frantically exclaims, "I've been in a crash; I've been in a crash!" She has been trained well to eliminate the word accident from her vocabulary when vehicles are involved. My sister, as she learns to drive, has discovered a whole new world called bike lanes. My friends excitedly like to point out that they are wearing their seat belts when we are traveling together. If only I could ever remember their gold star. However, there is always that one person who seems to enjoy the threshold of the dark side.

It's not that they don't wear their seatbelt; they just wait until they pull out of the driveway or get on the 'main' road to put it on. The majority of the time they travel along in a civilized manner, except when you throw a little congestion into the mix. They instantly become anxious, rapidly change lanes, tail gate, and somehow find small gaps of space to speed. The situation can become even more intense when you don't quite know where you're going and in the midst of all your aggressive driving behaviors you try to decipher a map. The offender is known as Brian. He has participated in these behaviors a time or two. Fortunately in the world of traffic safety we don't give up on anyone. I recently sat down with Brian to interview him about his aggressive driving and how he has worked to change his habits.

Would you consider yourself an aggressive driver? Why or why not?

"I don't think that I am aggressive driver. I feel like I drive defensively."

Do you ever worry about injuring yourself or others?

"No not really. I guess when you tell me to drive better I at least think about my driving."

What measures have you taken to become a more courteous driver? Have these measures changed your attitude towards driving at all?

"I try to stay out of traffic. I get really aggravated about how stupid, people drive. Even if I go a longer way it is worth it to not have to sit in bumper to bumper traffic. I will always hate traffic and I will probably never change the way I drive in it. All I can do is try to avoid it."

Although Brian does not consider himself an aggressive driver he does realize that it is better for him to travel in lower volumes of traffic. Finding alternate routes is one way to combat aggressive driving behavior. Other ways to ensure that you are driving safely in traffic is to keep a four second distance between you and other vehicles. Also make sure that you have lights on not only at night but during inclement weather. Lastly don't drive drowsy. Find a safe place to pull over and take a nap if need be.

For more information on courteous driving visit,

<http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/SafeandCourteousDriving.shtml>