

KEEPING A COOL HEAD

How Your Moods Affect Your Driving

We all have good moods and bad moods. Those are facts of life. But, when you're driving, you have to keep those moods under control—especially the negative ones. Keeping cool, calm and collected under all circumstances is important to your job. A real professional maintains his self-control.

Temper, Temper

It's inevitable that you'll lose your temper once in awhile. Other drivers may do risky things and frustrating circumstances are bound to occur. But learning to handle your anger is important because angry people can become dangerous people when they're driving motor vehicles.

It may be difficult to keep your anger under control but it can be done. Your own attitude is a starting point. For instance, you may be tempted to "get back" at another driver who does something foolish. But, as a professional, you make a wiser choice. You know the other driver has created a dangerous situation and you could make it even worse if you reacted in anger.

Take some deep breaths, keep your lid on and remind yourself that your own safety is more important than any urge to react. Instead, you choose to set a good example for other drivers—including the one who made you angry.

As long as you stay in control, the chances are that the situation won't escalate into something more perilous than it already is. It's all

right to acknowledge your feelings. But the danger comes when you act them out on the highway. Learning how to anticipate other drivers' mistakes and how to react quickly and appropriately are among the ways you can make your driving life safer and easier. You need good judgment when there's risk involved. Emotional responses only make the risk greater.

Impaired Driving

If you start your day in a bad mood, it can actually impair you physically. That's because anger, anxiety or grief may cloud your normal reactions. Starting out under stress will cause you to become tired early and can lead to a headache, upset stomach or other problems.

It's a good idea to know how you may respond to stressful situations and, if possible, to avoid them. If you can't (and sometimes that's the way it is), make sure your driving is orderly and careful. Your good habits will carry you through.



Learn to Relax

If your mood really has you stressed out, try some relaxation techniques. Stop if you can. Get out, stretch and walk around a little. Put some soothing music on the radio. Do some deep breathing while you're at the wheel.

Keep an Even Keel

On the other hand, it can be dangerous to get overly relaxed when you're driving. A blissful mood may be pleasant but it can cause you to daydream. Your mind may wander and, in a tight squeeze, your reactions may be too slow.

Keeping an even keel, not too much up and not too much down, is your best bet.

Keep in Shape

The condition of your body plays a big role in the control of your moods. Avoid fatigue when you're on the road. It's easy to fall into a negative mood when you're tired.

The food you eat also plays a part in your moods. Avoid junk foods and too much sugar. Eat balanced meals, eat moderately and go easy on coffee, caffeinated beverages, as well as spicy foods that can upset your stomach.

There's no doubt that your state of mind governs the way you drive. Make sure your mind is in a positive mode before you start out—and do your utmost to keep it that way. It'll make your day a lot easier.