

The dangers of emotional driving

As we head to the end of the year people find themselves reaching their height of stress, tiredness, feel easily agitated and struggle to handle other emotions as a result. What many drivers may not be aware of is that driving under these states can be dangerous and one should avoid driving when feeling like this.



Source: <https://motorpress.co.za>

The managing director of MasterDrive, Eugene Herbert, says you need to pay full attention to be ready for a potential hazard.

“When you drive while feeling extreme emotions, it is impossible to pay full attention to the road and your surroundings. You also become more likely to respond negatively when someone cuts you off or blocks you from entering a highway or the like. Studies suggest that South Africans are already more prone to road rage for various reasons without volatile emotions causing you to make a decision you might regret.

“The difficulty with finding a way to manage this challenge is very few people can suddenly decide to not go to work because they feel their emotions may affect their driving. Instead, it is important to identify when you are vulnerable to this and implement ways to deal with it.”

Herbert provides some tips to help keep you safe on the road when your emotions are taking some strain.

- If you feel emotionally uneasy for a major reason such as a death, do not get behind the wheel. Rather get a taxi, Uber, friend or family member to drive you where you need to be
- Delay your trip for 10 to 15 minutes to help yourself regain composure before driving when you are upset.
- Become aware of your triggers in the car, like that person driving in the yellow lane. If you are feeling emotional be aware of what could make you lose your temper and mentally remind yourself to not rise to it should that happen while you are driving
- If you do lose your temper despite your best efforts, find a way to regain your calm, for example by taking deep breaths or taking a break.
- Identify a way to keep yourself calm before leaving. Whether this is taking 15 uninterrupted minutes for a calming drink before you leave or listening to soothing music, find your way of staying calm and alert while driving.
- If you travel with another driver, let them drive instead.
- If you feel agitated in the middle of a trip, find a service station or shopping centre where you feel safe to stop and take a break before getting back onto the road.
- Avoid leaving too late and placing yourself under more pressure by running late.

Ultimately, you need to be aware of your ability to drive safely.

“Assess your emotional state and whether it could affect your attention or ability to remain calm in traffic. If you are distressed enough that none of the above tips can help you make it safely through traffic, rather find another way to get where you need to be,” advises Herbert.

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