

# Take The High Road

Out of the corner of my eye, I see a flash of red. Instantly my foot hits the brakes before my brain registers what is happening: a sports car pulled into the parking lane, then swerved in front of me and cut me off from the right. Under my breath I mutter, "What are you thinking?"

It happens all the time. Drivers do squirrely things, dangerous antics that could cause a wreck. When I am on the receiving end and feeling Zen-like, I wish the driver a safe journey. Otherwise, I fling a few choice words at the driver as he zooms past.

Occasionally, we all do stupid things while driving. I do them. Not intentionally, but it happens. And when it does, I usually have a rational explanation to justify my reckless behavior. I'll bet you do, too. In fact, I would wager most people could defend their risky behavior behind the wheel. That's why I propose we cut each other a bit of slack.

The truth is, we will never know why a driver cut us off, drives over or under the speed limit, or runs a red light. While resorting to tailgating those drivers who have angered us or screaming obscenities might make us momentarily feel better, neither response makes the situation any better. If you look at the situation from a karmic point of view, any negative energy or action you toss out into the world will boomerang back at you.

What if we assume other drivers have reasons for their misbehavior? Those reasons may not be valid or even legal, but if you stopped offenders in mid-act, they could tell

you what prompted their transgression.

If you enjoy coming up with reasons for people's behavior, then think up good reasons instead of bad ones. Here are a few situations with plausible explanations.

A guy cuts you off on your way to work. Until he hears the squeal of your brakes, you and your car are not even on his mental screen. He just got laid off, and he has no idea how he'll pay his mortgage. Not only is he unaware he came within three inches of being slammed in the rear end, he is so preoccupied with his worries, that he barely knows he is behind the wheel of a two-ton sedan barreling down the freeway at 65 miles-per-hour.

Should he be on the road? Probably not. But sending him on his way with a negative gesture will not improve his day or yours.

Then there is



the slo-mo who goes five miles under the 30-miles-per-hour speed limit through your residential neighborhood. Most drivers are aching to go faster. But not this driver, who is recovering from a stroke. This is his first foray behind the wheel. He plans to drive a couple of miles from home, then reverse his route. Unfortunately, you're the one behind him until he turns around.

What about the driver that ran the signal two full seconds after it turned red? She just learned her son was in a serious car accident and is speeding to the hospital emergency room.

Does everyone who drives erratically have a reason? If you count, "because I wanted to" as a reason, the answer is probably yes.

The point is, cutting people slack actually benefits you more than the other driver. Getting in a stew and fuming about someone who cut you off can ruin your day. Tailgating can cause a wreck. Gesturing at other drivers has the potential of leading to a physical altercation. Nothing is gained by any of those reactions.

Instead of getting steamed by others' foolhardy driving, try taking a few deep breaths and chanting. This too shall pass. If you are feeling especially virtuous, send them



## Everyday Spirituality

by Colleen Foye Bollen

a prayer for protected travel. Otherwise, know that you are doing all the drivers on the road a favor by not exacerbating the situation and putting more people in danger.

An attitude adjustment on your part can help keep your stress level in check. Let go of your mental road rage and assume everyone is doing the best they can in any given situation. This will allow you to avoid a toxic dose of aggravation that could ruin your day.

And, if you follow the principles of karma, by cutting other drivers some slack, people may do the same for you. Of course, it might not happen in this lifetime. But that's another story.

Colleen Foye Bollen offers gentle *Jin Shin Jyutsu* treatments at *East West Bookshop in Seattle* and at her *Shoreline* location. For appointments or more information contact her at [colleen@flowingstillness.com](mailto:colleen@flowingstillness.com) or call (206) 367-0491 or visit Colleen's website [www.flowingstillness.com](http://www.flowingstillness.com). To read more about this topic, visit her blog at <http://flowingstillness.blogspot.com>

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