
ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: *MENTAL CONDITION AFFECTS YOUR DRIVING*

Safe and successful driving requires your mental condition to be under control. Know your mental condition . . . your: Attitude, Emotions, and Stress. All come into play in the safe operation of a vehicle. Is your mental condition under control? Are you focused on driving as opposed to something else?

Guidelines to Consider

You need to be aware of your condition to be able to address it. Denial does not help. If you recognize the presence of stress, depression, or emotions at work, address them in your attitude right now. Before you start the car. Denial or ignoring them only makes matters worse.

1. **Stress.** We can't avoid some stress in our lives. But too much stress can interfere with your driving. Stress creates physical and mental fatigue, slowing your reaction time, and reducing your ability to concentrate. It may cause you to behave erratically or be less tolerant of other drivers and road conditions. Stress can be lessened by rest, life partners, seeking help. But the key is recognition it's there. Stress is not bad, but uncontrolled stress leads to distractions both mental and physical.
2. **Emotions.** Anger, sorrow, grief, worry are all emotions that can consume us. They impact concentration, and that impacts the ability to drive safely. Happiness, joy, excitement can also be a hindrance to safe driving. All must be lessened and controlled when driving.
3. **Attitude.** Attitude is a broad-based word. All of the above affect your attitude, and attitude impacts your reactions. Road rage is an emotion that affects attitude which impacts safe driving. Fatigue is a physical condition that affects your mental condition and that can cause inattentiveness which impacts your driving. Daydreaming affects your attitude and your ability to drive safely. You need to control other situations that can impact your attitude.

How to Survive Changing Mental Conditions

1. When you get behind the wheel of a vehicle, ask yourself if it is safe for you to drive.
2. Before you drive:
 - Sit and take a few breaths.
 - Remind yourself to be calm.
 - Take control of your emotions.
3. Stay within the speed limit. Resist the urge to act out your tensions.
4. Don't follow other vehicles too closely. Give yourself time to react.
5. Try to avoid places of stress, such as heavy traffic.
6. Cope with your daily stress through diet, exercise, reading, and meditation.
7. Re-examine your life. Are there changes you can make to put you more in control?

Remember: Safety does not begin when you are behind the wheel. It could end, though. Stay Alert, Stay Safe, Stay Alive!

Provided by the ASA – Houston Chapter Safety & Health Committee and 

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