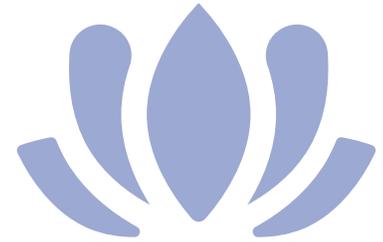


# How to Keep Traffic From Getting Under Your Skin



**Does traffic fuel the Mr. or Ms. Hyde in you?** Here's how to keep your cool behind the wheel:

- **Allow enough time.** Many people underestimate driving time and get frustrated when they run late.
- **Avoid peak traffic times, if possible.** For instance, you might join a gym near the office and exercise after work so you're hitting the highway after rush hour.
- **Create a peaceful atmosphere in your car.** Listen to your favorite music or books on tape.
- **Acknowledge your emotions.** The first step in dealing with emotions is to be aware of them. Is your heart rate elevated? Can you feel your face reddening? Don't brush it off—acknowledge it, if only to yourself.
- **Learn to control anger and stress.** When you feel yourself tensing up, take a few deep breaths and slowly repeat a word or phrase, such as “relax.”
- **Refrain from rude gestures or behavior.** These actions could provoke anger or could lead to you becoming a victim of road rage.
- **Give yourself a break.** A few days each week, try carpooling.



## Tips from Meditation

Even though you have to keep your eyes open when you're on the road, you can use some meditation strategies to help you stay calm during your commute. Here's how.

- **Get centered in “now.”** Notice sights and sounds, or pay attention to your breath to cultivate mindfulness.
- **Be kind.** Meditation isn't about having no thoughts—it's about not being judge-y about them. If something pops into your head, let it pass. Re-center on your breath.
- **Just breathe.** Breathe deeply, hold briefly, exhale, and repeat—perhaps while counting to five on the inhale and exhale, or thinking of a word like love or joy. Or pizza. Whatever works for you!

\* While generally considered safe, in very rare cases, meditation may worsen psychiatric symptoms. If you have a serious mental health condition, contact your physician to see whether meditation is right for you.

Sources include Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, National Highway Safety Administration, Foundation for a Meaningful Life, National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health, and Federal Occupational Health.