



# Rider Road Rage

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“Hey man, what’s your problem!” This muffled phrase has been shouted from the inside of many motorcycle helmets. Why do motorcyclists seem to get pushed around in traffic? Let’s shine some light on the dark subject of road rage, specifically as it applies to riding.

Before getting into the nitty gritty, here are some facts about stress that help us understand the root causes behind road rage. Stress is contagious. That means it spreads like wildfire. Our caveman instincts are to fight or flight under stress. Come across the wrong dude when he’s having a bad day and watch out. It’s not uncommon for a tiny insult to explode into a massive ordeal.

It may be hard to accept, but much of the hostility on the street has to do with plain ol’ misunderstanding. As riders, we often cope with our vulnerability by operating our motorcycles in a way that minimizes risk. Taking advantage of the maneuverability and performance characteristics of a motorcycle may appear reckless and self-centered to the general public. Sharply accelerating into open space on an expressway may cause others to gasp or become resentful. Cars and trucks aren’t as nimble in traffic, perhaps causing an “us versus them” mentality.

Adding to the confusion, car drivers really do have a difficult time seeing motorcycles in traffic. In other words, people don’t ignore us on purpose. The size and shape of a motorcycle makes it more difficult for the human brain to recognize in the mix. True, drivers should take extra care to “look twice for bikes.” Either we can complain about not being seen or compensate for that flaw in others. Which choice is more likely to save your bacon?

Indulgence can lead to conflict. Aggressive riding may feel energizing to the rider, but it aggravates and annoys other roadway users. Ever pass that car on a twisty back road? While that overtake opened up a stretch of riding bliss ahead of you, it may have dissed that driver left in your dust. Surprisingly, even passing another motorcyclist can incite anger.

If you want a more relaxing ride, get control of yourself first before pointing the finger at others. Sure, there are some real jerks out there. That’s why we need to keep our cool. Riders are exposed while moving and stopped. Chances are you know a fellow rider that has been chewed out at a stop light by an enraged cager. Ego on a motorcycle can backfire.

Because you love motorcycling, it may be difficult to realize that lots of folks don’t. To them you’re nothing more than a hot shot. Therefore, we need

to work a bit on our reputation to keep road rage from creeping in on either side. Never forget that you have way more to lose on your bike than the car driver does.

It’s also a good idea to make yourself more visible in traffic. This can be accomplished through brightly colored gear or appropriate lane positioning.

Try the “2-for-1 rule”. For every situation where you might offend one roadway user, be courteous to two others. It could be a friendly wave or giving up that parking space. But the next rider they encounter might get fair treatment based on your paying it forward.

So here’s your call to action: Let your stress roll away with the miles, as it should be. Try to be a more courteous and tolerant rider. You’ll enjoy it more.