

Road Rage: One reader notices some bad driving going on



Dear C and Dr. B;

On my way to the grocery store I had three close calls. First, a car nearly drove into me coming out of a side street - the guy didn't even pause at the stop sign! Then, I'm pulling into the parking lot and some bozo starts backing into me. If I hadn't laid on the horn, he would have smashed into the passenger door. For the grand finale, I was nearly home when this old lady in front of me stopped at a green light for no apparent reason - it's a miracle I didn't rear end her.

I know that the stress of the pandemic has turned a lot of people into gas brained sheep who believe in conspiracy theories and think safety regulations are just a pain in the ass mood killer on their personal freedom. Is it my imagination, or have we also turned into complete idiots on the road?

Dr. B says: I've heard similar stories. Someone I know plowed through three cars in a parking lot

because they hit the gas instead of the brake. At my gym, some guy drove through the front wall of the building.

In the routine of everyday life, our brains function mostly on automatic. As a result, we usually don't pay attention what we are doing, it's just part of the routine. COVID restrictions interrupted our routines. The pandemic landed many people at home and they haven't done much driving in this last year. When driving dropped out of our routines, our driving autopilot went to sleep. We need wake up and pay attention.

Another factor is that many people have gotten used to having fewer cars on the road and having the run of empty parking lots. They've been driving faster. Now that people are coming out of their houses more, the traffic and crowds have increased. Pay attention!

Ironically, self driving cars seem to be having similar issues. I can't explain that.

C says: I'm really glad you've noticed that people are driving like idiots, because you should always be on the look out for that. You have to remember how many people in those cars are on some kind of medication or half asleep. Or drunk. Since the pandemic, we have had more psychiatric medicines prescribed, more substance abuse and more drinking. It does not make for safe drivers.

I think some of us have forgotten what it was like to push ourselves out of bed every morning, get presentable and rush off to work. We've gotten used to working at home in pajamas all day, having groceries delivered, and dozing uneasily in suspended animation amid global fear and an uncertain future. When we get in the car now, we're half asleep at the wheel.

Look, people were gas-brained sheep before the pandemic and now they are gas-brained sheep who have forgotten how to drive. I don't mean to insult those of us who are not, but enough people are bad drivers that we should all drive defensively everywhere we go. Many "accidents" really could have been avoided if people just paid attention.

The great thing about summer is that now everyone can get out and enjoy the beautiful state of RI by foot, by bicycle and by boat. But whatever you are going to drive, please be careful. There are gas-brained sheep riding bikes and driving boats too.

You can visit Dr. B's blog at drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com