

Flying Off the Handle

The term, "road rage," is new to the American lexicon and bespeaks an explosive, behind-the-wheel ugliness that sometimes ends in tragedy. Experts say there are a number of reasons for it. Crowded highways cause tailgating and near-collisions, they say. Another reason is the great urgency Americans have to reach their destination fast. But a third explanation, they say, is a combination of ignorance and bad manners.

Road rage, to put it another way, is the loss of one's temper -- when we "fly off the handle." This phrase, of course, refers to the head of a hammer coming loose from its handle as the carpenter attempts to use it. It is a fitting description of a temper tantrum -- however it is manifested, including road rage.

When the head flies from the hammer, at least three results occur:

- 1.** The hammer becomes useless -- no longer good for work. In like manner, when a person loses his temper, he often loses his effectiveness. Anything he says may not be taken seriously, and is likely to be unproductive.
- 2.** The hammerhead -- twirling out of control -- is likely to cause some type of damage to anything in its path. The people who lose their temper cause damage even if they don't realize it -- perhaps physically to people or objects in their way, and nearly always emotionally to others who feel they are victims of uncontrolled wrath.
- 3.** The repair of both the hammer and the resulting damage takes time. The people who lose their tempers may recover quickly, but the one who is the victim of a hot temper rarely recovers as quickly.

Your temper is like a fire: It gets very destructive when it gets out of control.

This matter is of the utmost concern to the associates of Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home, for we are in the people business. We must maintain good personal relationships with our peers if we are to deliver the service required by our residents, and, obviously, our patient population and their families deserve the utmost respect and courtesy. People are watching -- and they are always impressed with -- our self-control.

Keep your temper today. Nobody else wants it.

--Beecher Hunter