

Take a look at the members of the Domiva family as they start their day. Mel is on the road with his business partner. Neither is paying that much attention to what's in front of him. Sara, The Domiva's 16-year-old, has just gotten her license. Uh-oh, she's dialing her cell phone while making a left-hand turn. And Mel's wife, Lisa, has their ten-year-old twins in the backseat, fighting over a Game boy.

What do the Domivas have in common right now? They're all ignoring the deadly power of an automobile. It's thirty-five hundred pounds of steel. When they fill up their tank, that's almost two dozen gallons of volatile liquid, moving at a hundred feet a second on the highway. What does that remind you of? A gun? Much more deadly than a gun, and much easier to obtain. Don't forget the gasoline. In the wrong hands, you've got a bomb.

Lisa's about to park her SUV on a hill with the twins inside. They're too preoccupied to notice that she hasn't curbed her wheels. She did put the car in gear and set the parking brake. As she clickety-clacks down the hill in her clogs, let's hope the SUV's brakes hold.

### *What Would You Do?*

- a. When parking your car facing downhill, turn your wheels toward the curb, and rest them on the curb.
- b. When parking your car facing uphill, turn your wheels away from the curb, and rest the tires on the curb.
- c. If you're parking where there is no curb, position your wheels so that if your brakes fail, the car will not roll into the middle of the street.
- d. All of the above.

*The correct answer is d.*

Mel's radio begins the spooky static that tells him The Voice is about to take control again. "Do you know the fifth most common cause of accidents?"



"No, but I have a feeling you're about to tell me," complained Mel.

"Not making a full and complete stop at a stop sign," The Voice smugly announces.

"No way," says Ralph.

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"Way," says the radio. "Making a rolling stop just doesn't give you the extra seconds you need to fully scan the intersection for people, the occasional dog and other cars. Be sure to stop at the white painted line spanning the intersection, or the shorter painted line before it that gives an extra safety buffer for pedestrians."

Mel's other teenager, Tom, just ignored a yield sign. He's a 15-year-old with an attitude.

Tom's driving instructor Mr. Pupkin says, "What is the correct response to a yield sign?"

"Huh?"

“This is important, Tom. You need to take road signs literally. Yield means drivers in the road or lane of traffic you’re entering have the right of way. They don’t have to stop. You have to at least slow down and carefully look for oncoming traffic. In some cases, yield means stop until the way is clear.”

Hopefully, Tom will have learned to *yield* more of his attention to vital driving rules when we visit him next.

Mel and Ralph are driving through farm country, and a horse-drawn wagon appears ahead of them in the slow lane. Mel leans on his horn rudely.

Ralph says, “I think they’re entitled to share the road with us.”

Mel says, “No, they have to drive off the shoulder.”

Ralph pulls a DMV manual out of the glove compartment and leafs through it. “It says here that that wagon has as much right to be on the road as us!”

Mel grabs the manual, taking his eyes off the road. “Let me see that.”  
Ralph manages to keep the car from hitting the horse as they pass.

“It’s true,” blares the radio. “Not only do other drivers have equal rights, but you have to make room for horses, trolleys, light rail, mopeds and bicycles.”

Mel frowns into the rearview mirror. “There won’t be any room left for me.”

The Voice begins lecturing Mel about driver courtesy. “Being rude on the road is just plain irresponsible and downright dangerous. We all know that driving can be frustrating. However, showing a lack of respect for the other guy and venting your anger at speeds over 60 mph could be fatal for both of you. Courtesy isn’t a luxury—it’s a necessity for safe driving.”

“Courtesy, schmurtesy,” mumbles Mel.

For the next hour, Ralph observes him running red lights, passing dangerously and on the right, crowding out other drivers, and running a stop sign. Mel’s mood ranges from anger to impatience to competitiveness. “Mel you’re a salesman, not a professional wrestler.”

“Huh?”



The radio blares in a singsong voice: “Let’s talk about road rage.” Mel stabs the ‘off’ button, to no avail. “Mel, are *you* following the Golden Rule when it comes to sharing the road?”

“The Golden.... \*#^?!@! This isn’t Sunday school!”

“Pretending you’re going to Sunday school whenever you get behind the wheel isn’t a bad idea. Let me ask you this: do you feel like your car is your own anonymous little world, where you aren’t accountable for your actions?”

“Well...” Mel tries to think of a plausible answer.

The Voice takes on its ‘inspirational’ tone. “The problem is that drivers don’t feel they’re part of a community, so they don’t establish mutual respect. Everybody looks out for Number One...”

“What’s wrong with that?” Fred put his hand over Mel’s mouth.

The Voice becomes wistful. “If only drivers could be as intelligent at the wheel as they are at work. Or as angelic as they are in spiritual pursuits.”



We've been watching you for a long time, Mel..."

"Who's 'we'?" Mel looks scared.

"You seem stressed out, Mel. Are you stressed out?" Ralph nods his head vigorously.

The Voice ignores him. "You've got a problem, Mel. The first step is admitting it. Does this sound like you: 'a driver who forces his (or her) way ahead in traffic by engaging in reckless and dangerous driving maneuvers.'" Ralph nods again. Mel pokes him in the stomach.

"Ow!"

"Aggressive driving doesn't get you to your destination any faster. It tends to have the opposite effect. Drivers, being human, are also stubborn. They're not going to speed up just because you think they should. Now, when you saw that horse and wagon, what if you'd taken a deep breath and gotten out of your angry thoughts for a moment?"

Fred offers, "Like putting soft music on the radio. Or eating a healthy snack."

Mel frowns. "Sounds like a blast."