



Passion for Life Coaching, LLC

Making Deliberate Choices for a Fulfilling Life

Newsletter by Suzette Langley, Certified Life Coach and MSW

What You Can Learn from Aggressive Drivers

May 2009

On my recent visit to Pittsburgh, my friend, husband, and I found ourselves on an unexpected detour through the city due to road closures from the marathon route. As we climbed a steep hill in an unfamiliar neighborhood, we approached a green traffic light. The truck in front of us made the turn slowly and the light turned red. So, we stopped and waited for the next cycle. As we waited, a van made the sharp right onto our street. Admittedly, since we were stuck behind the truck, we were past the sign that told us to "stop here on red." As a result, the van lacked the room to make the turn.

What happened next surprised and shocked us. The van driver climbed out of his vehicle and proceeded to take pictures of our car, its license plate, and the sign. When we asked what he was doing, he said, "Taking pictures to send to the police. Can't you read!? It says "Stop here." And you did not. Now you are in the way." The van driver then climbed back in his vehicle and sat there. Now, we couldn't move, the van couldn't move, no one could proceed up the hill, and no one could come down the hill. Completely blocked from all directions!

What an interesting situation as a metaphor for communication issues in our daily lives! The van driver, out of frustration, turned aggressive. He blamed us for the situation. He assumed we were past the "stop here on red" sign because we were ignorant and lacked reading skills. In his emotional state, he became inflexible and incapable of finding a solution. In fact, he compounded the problem.

For those of us in the car, we moved from feeling embarrassed for blocking the turn to provoked and unsympathetic. We viewed the van driver's behavior as outrageous and unnecessary. He was given a few select names as we made assumptions about his mental capacity and interpersonal skills. Finally, we felt helpless. We literally had no space to move our car out of the way and wondered how the situation would be resolved.

Consider conflicts you have encountered at work and at home. Have you ever been the van driver, becoming aggressive, inflexible, and making assumptions about the situation? Or, perhaps you found yourself like those of us in the car – shocked, unsympathetic, provoked, and feeling helpless?

Regardless of which side of a conflict you find yourself on, when both parties have become part of the problem, it's time to step back, remove the emotional response, and seek a solution. Yes, this means you may have to be the one to offer an olive branch of apology or suggest a solution when you'd rather withdraw or shout. You must decide – are you part of the problem or part of the solution?

In the end, I decided to be part of the solution, though this required taking a deep, deep breath. I got out of the car and asked the van driver if I assisted him in backing up into the intersection so he would not be in danger of oncoming traffic, if he would move his van. He agreed and we were all on our way, with great relief, in a short minute.

Upcoming Events at Big Vanilla Arnold

WOMEN ROCK – Friday, May 15th- 7:30-9:30pm

This 2-hour program will help you tap into your mental and physical strengths as you discover how the rock wall is a metaphor for life and life's challenges. Feedback from this program is **phenomenal!** The women who have participated have learned about their strengths, expanded their comfort zones, understood how they face challenges, and discovered new ways to overcome obstacles. Join us for a ROCKIN' night and walk away feeling empowered!

Fee: \$25 members/ \$35 non-members

4 women MUST BE pre-registered to hold this program.

Women Rock will be held at Big Vanilla Athletic Club, 1209 Ritchie Highway, Arnold, MD. Register online at: <http://www.bigvanilla.com/arnold/adultclasses.html> or call 410-544-2525 to register.

Do have a group of 4 or more friends who like to do fun activities that go beyond dinner, the movies, and drinks at the bar? If so, this event is perfect for you and your group! Contact us about your interest.

Additionally, we can accommodate groups interested in making this a team building activity for work.

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