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Road rage - freeway phobia link

Expert throws some light on frightening statistics

Psychotherapist and anxiety expert, Pauline McKinnon, says the recent figures released by Victoria Police showing a 42% increase in driving related assaults between strangers, are indicative of the increasing level of anxiety generally in our community.

“Road rage or anger is caused by a number of factors; on the surface it may seem that drivers are angry about being cut-off, or tail-gated or by someone ‘stealing’ their parking spot. But more often than not the anger stems from high levels of stress and anxiety. The increasing congestion rates on our roads could be contributing to that, but overall it’s people’s inability to remain calm in a relatively insignificant situation, that creates the rage and the violence that often ensues” Pauline says.

Add freeway phobia into the mix and it becomes a dangerous link. Pauline is seeing an increase in the number of clients presenting with various types of ‘traffic’ phobias, such as freeway, tunnel and bridge phobias. “These sufferers can go to great lengths to avoid their anxiety-producing situations; others break into sweats and have panic attacks, often stalling and holding up traffic “.

High congestion rates are not helping. “Getting out of traffic as quickly as possible is the objective and anyone or anything that may present an obstruction to that bears the brunt of that fear and anxiety, which can be expressed as anger or rage” Pauline says.

Pauline McKinnon is the author of *In Stillness Conquer Fear* (1983), the groundbreaking book which pioneered today’s public awareness of anxiety disorders. She is personally very familiar with anxiety and phobias, including freeway phobia. As a young mother of four she suffered from agoraphobia for eight years, which made the prospect of leaving the security of home very difficult. Effective recovery came through Stillness Meditation Therapy (SMT) originated by the eminent psychiatrist Dr Ainslie Meares for the primary purpose of natural anxiety relief.

In Stillness Conquer Fear, is Pauline’s journey of overcoming her anxiety through SMT. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the book’s publication as well as 30 years of her practice, The Stillness Meditation Therapy Centre, in Melbourne.

Throughout this time, Pauline has helped thousands of people from all over Australia and internationally to reduce stress and overcome a wide range of anxiety disorders through Stillness Meditation Therapy. She has also written a number of books for adults and children on the ‘stillness’ approach to anxiety, stress and depression. Her personal experience with anxiety gives her all important empathy with her clients.

“The key to reducing road rage” says Pauline, “is learning to manage our stress levels. Our lives are getting busier, and the congestion on the roads resembles that in our minds. Learn how to decongest our minds and we will soon be free of road rage”

Pauline has implemented stillness meditation in schools and conducts practitioner training course for professionals. She is currently President of ATMA (Australian Teachers of Meditation Association).

Pauline McKinnon’s latest book is *Living Calm, in a Busy World*
www.stillnessmeditation.com.au

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