



HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE

CONFRONTATION!

MOST PEOPLE GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO AVOID ANY KIND OF CONFLICT, BUT WHEN YOU ARE WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC EVERY DAY YOU ARE BOUND TO ENCOUNTER SOME KIND OF CONFRONTATION.

WHETHER IT IS AN ANGRY HONK OF THE HORN, A QUARREL OVER A FARE, OR FRIGHTENING ALTERCATION - CONFRONTATION IS AN INEVITABLE PART OF A TAXI DRIVER'S LIFE.

These situations can occur most commonly in the following forms:

ROAD RAGE

Most drivers have expressed or encountered different forms of rage at some stage in their life as a result of stress, frustration or anger on the road. Among the different forms of road rage, are tailgating, offensive gestures, yelling and cursing or physical violence.

Here are some simple ways to manage confrontation while driving:

1. Avoid angry outbursts behind the wheel that might be frightening to passengers in stressful traffic situations - never swear or curse while driving a customer.
2. If you are on the receiving end of road rage, don't retaliate as this will probably only aggravate the other driver further. In most cases it is best to remain calm and to concentrate on driving. If you are involved in an accident with another driver who becomes irate, stay composed and allow the driver time to calm down before speaking. If the situation escalates, seek police mediation.

3. If a driver becomes increasingly threatening, avoid eye contact and choose an alternate route to your destination.

4. Be polite and courteous, even when other drivers or passengers are not.

5. If you are being harassed, report the offender.

Remember, **you** are the **professional** driver out there. Never let the actions of amateur drivers make you forget that.

ALTERCATIONS WITH PASSENGERS

Altercations between passengers and drivers can range from minor verbal disputes, like squabbling over a fare, to major incidents, where drivers or passengers are threatened with physical violence. In many cases, the potential for these situations to escalate can be curbed using calm responses.

As we approach the silly season, taxi drivers know they will encounter more intoxicated passengers in the afternoons and evenings, heading home after end of year celebrations. It is important to pay attention to the behaviour of passengers who appear to be under the influence as they can be unpredictable and irrational.

Confrontations involving passengers who appear to be intoxicated often arise from the refusal to pay the fare, threats to start fights and arguments over poor directions and driver taking the wrong route. If at any time the behaviour becomes too distracting

or threatening to the driver or to other passengers, drivers should take them to the police station or find a way to calmly get them out of the vehicle.

CHALLENGING CONVERSATION

Some passengers enjoy light-hearted conversation with drivers while travelling in taxis. However, not everyone enjoys speaking with strangers and many people actually enjoy the quiet time in a taxi. Keep in mind that you do not know what events the passenger has experienced that day or what mood they are in. No one expects you to be a mind reader, but passengers do appreciate it when drivers are perceptive. If you sense that a passenger does not want to speak or does not want to discuss a particular topic, they probably don't - so respect their wish and don't push them to.

Some people like to argue for the sake of arguing. While a lively debate in conversation can be entertaining amongst friends, it is not advised that you try to instigate debate with passengers for fear of accidentally offending them. What's more, these conversations can sometimes escalate a fiery argument that could be unnecessarily distressing, not to mention distracting. In most situations like this, the passenger will cut their trip short and get out of the taxi early, causing the driver to lose a portion of the fare. This doesn't help anyone!

Remember if the passenger feels comfortable and relaxed in your taxi, they will be more likely to leave you a tip!

SKILLS FOR DEALING WITH CONFRONTATION

Some people are naturally good at managing confrontation. For those of us who require some extra help, the following points offer some handy hints for negotiating confrontation professionally, while looking out for your personal safety:

• SAFETY FIRST

When you feel threatened during confrontation, inside or outside of your taxi, always ensure that you put your personal safety first - even if it means losing your fare. If you are dealing with an aggressive person who appears to be intoxicated or a violent offender remain calm, talk quietly and remember your emergency radio procedures that operate on your authorised network.

• PLANNING IS EVERYTHING

Develop a personal safety plan for what to do in different situations where your safety could be threatened. It might sound excessive, but you will most likely be surprised how often you need to call on this plan.

• LISTEN TO YOUR GUT

Do your best to trust your instincts and assess the agenda of the person antagonising you when deciding the best way to respond to a threat.

• THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Sometimes confronting an aggressive person will only increase aggression, be careful not to aggravate them further. Be careful not to say anything that will further enrage an already aggressive passenger.

• AGREE TO DISAGREE

When speaking with passengers, don't let conversations get too personal. Try not to say anything that could offend a passenger's personal beliefs and avoid issues that could potentially lead to any form of conflict or heated disagreement.

• VERBAL HARASSMENT

In situations where you feel you are being verbally harassed, do your best to ignore it. If this escalates, try to appease the passenger without raising your voice.

• HAVE EMPATHY

In order to avoid running into confrontation is important to display empathy. If a passenger is overly emotional or worked up, try to understand what the passenger is going through. Listen to what the passenger is telling you in a sympathetic and empathetic manner. But never, never get involved in other people's problems.

Remember that confrontation should not always be seen as a bad thing, because there are many different forms it can take. Sometimes rational and well thought out confrontation is necessary to air concerns and take an informed stance on something. However, this kind of opposition should never become violent or aggressive.

Confrontation can also be a colourful aspect of any healthy debate when used appropriately, but most people don't like to argue just for the sake of it - so make sure to use it sparingly!