

Coping with College Series

What's All the Rage?

by Ron Dow
Staff Counselor

A few weeks ago I went to the grocery store to pick up a few items. I had completed my shopping and had returned to my car. As I was ready to back out of my parking space, I noticed a car that was stopped right behind me. I was in no great hurry, so I waited a minute or so and the car still had not moved. I decided to slowly edge my car out so the driver would know I was ready to leave, but there was no response. I edged out a little more. This time the driver got out of his car, screaming and yelling. I then got out of my car to address the driver and protect my car. The driver stated he was waiting for a parking space, although there were several open in the same area. After using a few select words of profanity, the driver then got into my face and shoved me into my car door and wanted to "fight." This was a grown man in his fifties. A few other drivers nearby noticed what was going on and responded, the driver then got back in his car and drove away--- without a parking space.

A scene from the Twilight Zone? A new Stephen King novel? No. In the same real world that has brought us "road rage" and "school rage," we now have "parking lot rage"? What's going on? Where does all this anger and rage come from?

First of all, anger and rage are not the same thing. Anger is an emotion and is completely normal and usually healthy. Rage, however, is an action; rage means violence, either verbal or physical. Rage is used to punish.

A person in line who has 20 items in the express checkout lane (you know, because you counted each one!). The car in front of you that doesn't put on it's turn signal before it turns. Receiving an annoying sales call at 10 a.m. on a Saturday morning. These events are definitely frustrating, irritating and annoying. But, rage provoking? Of course not. But, in a high-pressure society, many of us have become, quite literally, walking sticks of dynamite and it doesn't take much to light the fuse. The driver in the parking lot might have been angry with a specific person in his life--- a boss, co-worker or spouse. He might have had major personal issues on his mind-- health concerns or a recent death. We will never know, but one thing we do know for sure---the anger had nothing to do with a parking space.

It's not all about us. The sudden and eye-opening realization that there are, in fact, other human beings living on this planet. Each with their own set of

concerns, values, needs and emotions. Are our needs more important than everyone else's? Should I meet my needs at the expense of someone else?

Although we may not have control over our emotions, we are always in control of our actions. Expressing your feelings in an assertive---not aggressive--
- manner is the best way to express anger. After all the rage and profanity, the driver still left without his beloved parking space. And in the end, rage gains us just that, nothing.