

If You Can't Alter Traffic, Alter Your Mood



Cars are inching along bumper to bumper. The weather is foul. You've already been late to work twice this week. Every muscle in your body is beginning to feel tense. What a way to start the morning. Boy, are you in for a bad day!

Auto commutes don't have to be "stress on wheels," though. Here are some ways to avoid commuter stress.

- Before you set out, listen to radio traffic reports to find out if and where traffic is tied up.
- Take less heavily traveled routes.
- Leave 10 to 15 minutes earlier, to allow for unexpected delays.
- Look at a map and plan alternate routes should you encounter unexpected slow-downs along the way.

If, despite such avoidance tactics, you end up caught in traffic anyway, don't let stress get the best of you. Some hints:

- Loosen your grip on the steering wheel.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Don't dwell on negative factors over which you have no control, like rude drivers or the odds of arriving late.
- Listen to a radio talk show or all-news station.
- Play some CDs of pleasant music, narrated books, or self-improvement courses. (Learn French on your way to work, for example.)
- Keep a notebook and pencil or a cassette recorder handy to make notes for planning your day, make shopping lists, and so forth.

Not only do these strategies help you make good use of otherwise wasted time, you might actually enjoy the drive!