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Merging is More Than a Traffic Term

By **Germaine Graham**
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On my drive to work I have to merge onto three very busy roadways. I am constantly saying to myself: "Please just let me in."

One day recently this really struck me as I was driving. Why am I always asking for someone to let me in the flow of traffic? This feeling was so familiar and close to other moments in my life when I found myself saying, "Please let me in."

That feeling of being outside and having to rely on the mercy of others resonated in so many ways.

But I also have to acknowledge the other side of the coin. I have also been the person who decided whether to let someone in and I felt justified in not doing so.

This thought about traffic flow really made me aware of how driving behavior translates to our relationships and interactions with others.

Every day on the way to UCF I merge onto State Road 429 west of Orlando. As every driver obviously knows, improper merging can cause accidents.

According to the Florida Driver License Handbook, when merging onto the expressway or highway, the drivers entering the flow of traffic must yield the right of way. They have to be prepared to speed up or slow down to find a way to enter during breaks of traffic. Even though the merger holds a lot of responsibility, every driver is responsible to do whatever they can to avoid accidents.

Merging is an art form that works when there is cooperation and drivers are willing to yield – just like everywhere else in life. On those days that merging does not work well,

it is due largely to the attitude and mood of the drivers. When drivers are considerate, there is more yielding and less screaming, yelling and hand gesturing.

We all have the tendency to become impatient and testy drivers when traffic is heavy, backed up or just not moving fast enough.

But I have become more aware that I must do my part to keep the flow of traffic consistent and safe – on the road and in life.

Here are some principles that guide my interactions with others and enhance my relationships every day:

- **Be willing to yield sometimes.** There are times when it is impossible to slow down or move over into the other lane, however the first thought should be on responsible behaviors in merging. It will not hurt or cause any inconvenience to allow one car to go ahead. *Yielding behavior displays courtesy and kindness in relationships. When we allow others to voice their opinions or feelings, we are yielding.*
- **Think ahead.** When aware that the on ramp is approaching, the driver in the ongoing traffic can move over to allow the incoming cars to merge. *In relationships, it is important to think about how certain behaviors may impact others. Harm to others can be prevented if we prepare our words and actions in advance so that they are effective.*
- **Keep a safe distance from the cars ahead.** Make sure that there is no tailgating and that there is enough room for cars to safely merge. *Always establish healthy boundaries in relationships. This allows others to grow and move at their own pace.*
- **Adjust your speed to get into the flow of traffic.** If you are the merger, you have to do your part to prepare for what is ahead. *This is also true in relationships. There are natural adjustments that have to be made along the way in order to meet the other person half way.*

Merging is more than a traffic term.

Merging is how we navigate our interactions and relationships with others. When we become more aware of this we can make adjustments to how we treat each other on and off the road.

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