

## **Harvey says: “Make a laminated ‘SORRY’ sign and use it”**

I have a disease. You may have it, too.

Well, it’s more of a disorder, really. It’s called Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED), which may affect up to 16 million of us over the course of our lives.

Back before every undesirable human trait had a euphemism, it was known as “losing one’s temper.” Now that it’s technically classified as a disorder, anything you do while you are mad is arguably no longer your fault, and you are probably protected by the American Disabilities Act.

One popular manifestation of IED is “road rage.” Studies show that at least 1,500 people are injured or killed every year in road rage incidents.

For example, last week an 11 year-old boy was shot and killed in Gaston, N.C. when he got in between an argument his stepfather was having with a short-fused driver. Evidently the stepfather was walking out of a convenience store and made a comment to the driver of a car (waiting to pull out of the store’s driveway) about failing to use his turn signal, and that was enough to set the guy off.

I am normally a very calm person – in fact, almost comatose. But ever since I bought a car with a 340 horsepower Hemi engine in it, everyone else on the highway seems to be going awfully slowly.

I was driving South on Highway 1 between Solon and Iowa City one night not long ago when I came up behind a pickup truck that was going the speed limit. I typically drive 5 to 10 mph over highway speed limits, so I made a perfectly legal (if quick) pass.

The next thing I know, the truck accelerates and starts to tailgate me with his bright lights on. I quickly thought back to see if I had done something specific that would have irritated a rational human being, but I couldn’t come up with anything.

I instantly became the aggrieved party. I don't deserve this! Where is the Sheriff when you need him? Nobody does this to me and gets away with it! After about 30 seconds of blinding light in my rearview mirror, I weighed my options and brilliantly chose to escalate the situation.

I wasn't really mad and I didn't lose my temper. It was more like, "Okay, Squirrel Bait, two can play this game."

I started slowing down. As my speedometer approached 45 mph, the truck pulled out to pass me and I drifted over into the left lane to prevent it. Fortunately, there was no oncoming traffic.

A little voice in my head started saying, "If this guy has a gun in his glove compartment, he's reaching for it now." The voice also said, "You are an idiot, and you deserve whatever happens next."

I ended up stomping on the accelerator, and he let me speed off. Either he figured I was reaching for my own gun, or he had only a 339 horsepower engine.

Anyway, it's easy for me to understand how road rage incidents can happen. Numerous web sites detail how best to defuse situations like this.

Unfortunately, all of the tips are emasculating. Slow down, don't honk your horn, don't flash your high beams, don't make eye contact and don't retaliate in any way – the Harvey Milquetoast guide to driving.

One site even provides graphics and detailed instructions for you to make your own 4" X 9" laminated "SORRY" sign to wave at enraged drivers to apologize for whatever it was you unwittingly did to make them mad.

Another web site – [www.roadrage.com](http://www.roadrage.com) – takes a different approach. It has for sale a spiral bound book of signs (tab-indexed for quick identification) with 43 useful messages including; YOU'RE AN IDIOT, LEARN HOW TO DRIVE, THE GAS PEDAL IS ON THE RIGHT, I HOPE THAT CELL PHONE GIVES

YOU CANCER, PICK A SPEED AND STICK WITH IT, YOUR MUSIC SUCKS, and I HOPE YOU CRASH AND DIE.

There is also a profane version of each message (some contain only profanity), and on the back of each sign is the same message but reversed, in case the person you are provoking is in front of you looking in his or her rearview mirror. So far, I don't believe there is an illuminated version for use at night.

Disclaimer from the Legal Department: Actual waving of profane signs in road rage situations is NOT recommended. There are some real nut cases out there, many of them have guns, and with our luck we will find them.

I guess discretion may indeed be the better part of valor. From now on, just call me "Harvey."