

ask



Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q I am a sales professional and have to travel for 4 to 5 hours daily, meeting clients at various locations. I am often irritated, particularly on the way to work, shouting and screaming at people who cross my path. My day starts poorly and that rubs on to my work. I cannot relax, and have disturbed sleep. Please advise.

Commuting hassle is not new to any of us, given the state of infrastructure (or rather the lack of any) and traffic (mis)management. This adds to the never-ending list of stress factors of our fast paced lifestyles.

It appears that your problem seems to be one of 'road rage' with underlying stress. Road rage is typically described as aggressive behaviour such as rude gestures, verbal abuse and hostile driving by a motorist. Many of us have been a recipient or perpetrator of such rage. It can lead to arguments, assaults and accidents resulting in injuries and even death.

Keep your rage under control by allowing extra time for travel, so you are not rushed, find quieter routes and avoid distractions such as talking on the phone. Everyone - pedestrians and motorists - have equal rights to be on the road. Most importantly, remember that others may be experiencing the same rage as you do, so speak politely and avoid confrontations. Finally, reduce commuting and try walking, when possible.

To deal with stress, try to – reduce work hours if possible, spend time

with your family, exercise regularly which will improve your resilience, eat a balanced diet, pursue your interests and sleep well. Importantly, learn to say NO. In modern work environment, it is almost stigmatising to decline work. But remember, saying 'no' to something may open doors for saying 'yes' to something else.

Q I work rotating shifts at an IT company and often have difficulties sleeping well. During working hours, I am not able to focus fully and during my off time, I feel tired and lethargic. Lately, I have lost zest for things, and my friends think I am no longer fun! Please advise on what I should do.

Shift work is not new. Soldiers, fire fighters and doctors have always been accustomed to night shifts. In the past, shift work was required to provide vital services and emergency cover for day and night, but today shift work is found in IT and financial fields, where services are delivered round-the-clock, mostly for international clients.

We have imported stress at the expense of the health of our generation next, with common complications of stress and burnout. Shift work may be unavoidable in many professions, and the relentless and recurrent rotating shifts disturb the internal clock and sleep-wake cycle.

Frequently changing shifts can increase risk of fatigue (irritability, tiredness and loss of motivation), anxiety and depression, cardiovascular and

gastrointestinal problems, and sexual problems including reproductive difficulties. Frequent sleep disturbance and associated excessive sleepiness can lead to poor concentration, accidents and fatalities.

I suggest, you request your HR to take you off shift work altogether, at least for some time, or avoid rotating shifts – instead, do either day or night shift for prolonged period. This would help in readjusting sleep timings. HR should be supportive as optimisation of shift work would minimise the occupational health hazards and maximise performance.

You should pay attention to diet and exercise. Try not to alter sleep schedule too much on off days and take frequent breaks. Restrict or avoid caffeine, cigarettes and alcohol, and keep yourself well hydrated. For long term sleep problems, a short course of sleeping pills will help to restructure the rhythm.

Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com

Or write to

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