



FIVE STEPS TO A BETTER COMMUTE

ARRIVE RENEWED, RELAXED, AND RARIN' TO GO!

FIVE PART E-COURSE

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PART ONE OF A FIVE PART E-COURSE

Lesson One:

**HOW THE COMMUTE CHANGES YOU AND HOW TO
CHANGE YOURSELF BACK**

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In my years of commuting and in talking to long time commuters, I've accumulated a list of commuter characteristics. And some of them are not pretty. For example, we know that commuters can get testy, sometimes downright angry and mean. They can lose their good judgment and even do things that are dangerous. We've all seen the "finger" pointing and even the reckless cutting off by someone who's been "slighted." And after sitting in traffic, the fumes can make us feel punchy and tired. But the sad part of this experience is that it stays with us and carries into our work, into our family, and into our communities.

Commuter stress causes health problems (high stress is one of the causes of health problems, weight gain can be another), relationship problems (long hours away from home and family causes strain on the commuter and his/her relationship to the family), and emotional problems (anger and loss of temper are characteristic of many long time commuters). Road rage often moves into the office as work stress and then seeps into the home as marital problems.

However, I have also accumulated a number of remedies and techniques to prevent the challenging experience of commuting from ruining our days. In fact, I have found a simple five step technique that can help you to turn your commute not only into something you can get through but, perhaps, into something that can be a pleasant part of your day. And, certainly, when you implement these steps, it will make the rest of your day so much better.

Over the next ten days, I'll be sending you one step at a time every other day that will help you to improve your commuting experience and to lower your commuting stress significantly. Following this five-step plan can lower stress and help you gain control of your health, your relationships, your emotions and your life.

So now that you have the rationale for this program, let's begin.

The first step in making the commute to and from work better is to answer this question: What is it about the commute that drains me? An answer to this question will help you move quickly to a better commute.

Here are the most common answers:

The time. So many people see the commute as a waste of a big block of time. There are so many other things that could be done with this time if you weren't commuting: playing, working, relaxing, getting a degree or certificate in something of interest or in something that could advance your career, sleeping, or talking with family or friends.

The crowds. Even a people-lover can have trouble with crowds of people trying to get to or from work. If you're on public transportation, you have to cope with the quirks of the crowd, the smells, the sights and the sounds. Multiculturalism to the nth degree. And all trying to get into the same spot you're in. If you drive, you have to contend with the speeders, the laggards, and road rules that often don't make sense.

Being so far from home in case a problem occurs. Day care and nannies are great. They allow us to work and have a broader life. But in emergencies, you are the one they call and – so far from home – it can be disconcerting. Even if nothing ever happens, the thought alone can be upsetting.

Fear of breaking down or having an accident whether in public or private transportation. The loss of control while commuting is a huge problem for many people. Some people refuse to be passengers because of this.

The boredom. Day in, day out. Twice a day, ten times a week, forty times a month, over four hundred times a year.

Commuting the same route over and over and over again is boring...unless you can do something about it.

Boredom is the devil's playground. Think of what you eat when you're bored. Many commuters stop at the local quick mart for a coffee and a bagel with cream cheese or a donut. Not only is it unhealthy, but the pounds pile up easily. A little preparation the night before or in the morning will save you money and calories. My suggestion is a pita half smeared with peanut butter or filled with fruit. Check out PocketDiet.com for recipes. This is a good way to control portion size but not feel deprived.

In order to change yourself back to where you were before the stress of the commute got hold of you, you need to articulate what about the commute is draining. Then, you need to do something about it. Having specific words for the problem will help you move to a solution, so don't skip this step.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY

1. What is it about the commute that drains me?
2. Where do I feel this draining...in my body?
...in my thinking?
...in my emotions?

If the draining is in some part of your body, the relaxation that is introduced in the next article will make a reduction in that feeling. In the meantime, do know that being aware of these feelings is very helpful. In fact, some people see that the awareness alone can have a positive effect.

If the draining is in your thinking, a change in attitude toward the commute will reduce that feeling. The next article addresses this.

If the draining is emotional, distraction, such as listening to music, talking to someone who's next to you, using a mantra can be very effective.

Signing up for a share-ride or using public transportation at least part of the week are also good ways to stop the draining of the commute. Even having a plan for the days off work can be energizing.

The next article will tackle the question: What will I do about the stress? In the meantime, send your answers for disliking your commute, as well as any solutions you have, to info@Commuter-Assist.com and we will publish them.

Dr. Mastria is founder of Commuter-Assist, which publishes e-books, CDs and cassettes to help commuters get the most out of their commute and life in general. Dr. Mastria speaks, offers workshops, and consults to businesses. She also provides life, wellness, and business coaching to groups and individuals. To contact Dr. Mastria email info@Commuter-Assist.com or call 570-839-6394.

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We feature only products that we have used and find valuable or have studied and sampled. We hope you will try them.

Use this worksheet to answer the Questions of the day. Writing your thoughts down does make things clearer and will help as you go through the program.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE COMMUTE THAT DRAINS ME?

WHERE DO I FEEL THIS DRAINING...

In my body? _____

In my thinking? _____

In my emotions? _____
