

Lessons on the highway

Written by Roxanne Converse-Whiting
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Driving down the highway, I was in no particular hurry and had my cruise control set. I came upon a car ahead and slowed to accommodate its speed. In a short amount of time, I discovered that the car was not maintaining a speed but rather fluctuating right around the speed limit. Just as it would drop five miles per hour and I would think about passing while the gap between bumpers was closing, the car would speed up and the gap widened.

I began to feel the irritation rise. Judgmental thoughts of “Doesn’t this guy know what cruise control is?” or “How hard is it to keep a steady speed?” floated through my mind. My serenity was fleeing quickly, yet a significant lesson surfaced in its place.

Acceptance of reality is not something that comes easily for me. I want what I want, and I also create illusions of how I think things ought to be. Although I wanted the car to drive a steady speed, this was not my reality. I create a great deal of stress for myself because I do not accept the reality of what is. This can be applied to every arena of my life from relationships and occupations to parenting and finances. Non-acceptance of reality only further agitates the situation and blocks me from seeing the options that are available to me.

Driving behind the car with fluctuating speeds, I made a decision. I pressed on the gas and passed the car. Again the open road stretched ahead, and I set my cruise on my desired speed. The rearview mirror reflected the car left to continue at its speed of choice or fluctuation. Serenity returned bringing more lessons.

What I’m not changing, I’m choosing. I can stay in frustration, misery, anger, etc., but it is my choice. I also have the option to change the circumstance. Passing the car took action that produced change that allowed serenity to return. Rather than live my life complaining about the circumstances that I do not like or enjoy, I have the choice to take action and make changes. This applies to every area of life.

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Acceptance and choosing to change may seem opposing or contradictory. Yet, I am aware that they both exist for me. I have a choice of accepting within myself or changing an outside circumstance, and sometimes I need to incorporate both. Letting go of my irritation and accepting the speeds of the car ahead certainly could have been my choice, leaving my outside circumstances the same. Yet, changing my outside circumstances by passing the car doesn't necessarily mean acceptance is present. I could choose to travel the next 15 miles being irritated that the car didn't keep a constant speed and I had to pass it.

Today, I will practice both acceptance and choice. I will also remember that it is okay to allow others to do the same. The car in the rearview mirror was perfectly content to continue in its fluctuation of speed. I need not impose on others but am free to accept my own realities and make choices for myself. Life is a highway rich with many lessons along the journey