

# A Conscious Commute

by Buffy Owens, GCFP

Are you one of the many that commute to work every day? I am. My office is nearly 25 minutes from my home. At first, I dreaded the commute. But now I LOVE it! My drive time has become a resource for refining my Awareness Through Movement® skills and building my mindfulness muscles.

Plus, all of this conscious commuting has blessed me with the time to develop several simple everyday awareness practices that can help you reduce your stress and find greater comfort. Now, doesn't that sound like a beautiful way to start and end your workday?

Obviously, when you're driving, it's not recommended that you close your eyes and focus on your breathing or bring all of your attention inward. Instead, I invite you to explore expanding and contracting your awareness as a sort of mindfulness practice. As you may know, mindfulness is a state of "active, open attention on the present moment." So to drive mindfully, you apply similar principles on the road. Just make sure that you drive with an expanded awareness of yourself, your vehicle, and your surroundings—including other drivers.

"YOUR SELF DOES NOT END WHERE YOUR FLESH ENDS, BUT  
SUFFUSES AND BLENDS WITH THE WORLD..."

— SANDRA BLAKESLEE



## #1 TAKE YOUR SEAT

Here is the funny thing about our cars. When we first start driving them, we adjust the seat so that it seems comfortable. We nudge and fudge the mirrors until they are just right. Then that's it. Every time we get into our cars after that, we adjust ourselves to our vehicles and to the way we were on that one day.

Stop this nonsense! When you get into your car, consciously take your seat. Adjust your mirrors, your steering wheel, and your seat. Find what is most comfortable for you right now — in this moment, on this day.

## #2 MIND THE GAP

Not long ago, a fellow meditation practitioner spoke about creating a sense of spaciousness while driving by allowing more space between your car and the car in front of you. I like to think of this as minding the gap. You see, one of the beautiful things about mindfulness-based practices like meditation and awareness-based practices like the Feldenkrais Method®, is that we literally grow our ability to pause and respond to life rather than always reacting.

Now don't get me wrong, there are times when we need to respond quickly. But the more we can mind the gap and 'respond' in daily life, the better we will be able to respond to the big and small stresses of life. So, the next time you are on the road give a little more space and see what shifts in your own experience of yourself and of driving.

## #3 BECOME ONE WITH YOUR CAR OBI WAN KENOBI

Our ability to extend ourselves beyond our flesh is incredibly complex and wonderfully dynamic! Neuroscientists call this space around you the peripersonal

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space. The neurological systems that map this invisible bubble allow you to do such things as hammer a nail and successfully parallel park your car.

However, these neurological maps also impact how you move, and they play a BIG role in your ability to infer the intentions of another person, anticipate a threat or experience empathy, and even mirror the activity of others in your own nervous system for assistance in learning things like language and movement.

I know, I know, it sounds a little like science fiction in the flesh. But having an integrated neural representation of your body (the ‘body schema’) and of the space around your body (‘peripersonal space’) allows you to navigate through this crazy and complex world with fewer personal collisions. So the next time you drive that dandy car of yours, give a little loving attention to how you and your vehicle become one.

Try the following when you are parked or not moving:

- Can you feel the size of your car?
- Do you know where it ends and begins? Get a clear sense of the boundaries of your car.
- Can you sense the distance between the car and the objects around it — other cars, trees, poles, curb, etc.

Begin with these three practices and over time you might become pleasantly surprised to find that your daily commute can have a positive impact on other areas of your life.

A Conscious Commute appeared on the [Conscious Movements blog](#).

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