

Secret Knowledge  
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As I was making notes for this essay and jotting down statistics, I realized that those stats are just numbers on paper. Anyone can quote statistics and tell you that texting and driving is a bad idea and extremely dangerous. I could also throw in quotes from safety experts and people who have experienced this issue to give the words meaning. All this knowledge is just common sense. So, I trashed my notes and decided I would go with my heart instead of my head.

My mom left the Air Force in 2013 and started working for an auto insurance company. One of her duties was to speak to the driver's education classes in the surrounding high schools. She had slides and handouts for the students. There was even a pledge the students would sign promising not to text and drive. But she also had a simple habit she proposed to the students. At the end of every session, she would sit down with the students and ask them to put their phone in the trunk of the car, or the glove box every time they got in. She explained that the temptation to answer or text someone while driving is eliminated because they can't get to their phone unless they park the car. This seems like such a simple idea but take a minute and think about it. She showed pictures of accidents, and gave real life examples from her job, but she did something no one else did. She gave those students an easy plan and left no room for excuses.

Mom dragged me along a few times when she gave her talks but I did not give it much thought being 12 years old at the time. She left the insurance company a couple years later and I forgot all about her sessions until this fall.

Our high school does not allow students to have their phones on during school hours. So most driving students sit in the parking lot texting before they walk in. I took a few minutes every morning to text my friends and check our football blog. My buddy texts and says he is late (as usual) and wants me to make his excuses. A text comes up from mom and just says call me when you can, no rush. I turn my ringer off and head into class. After school I head down to the practice field and remember her text but it didn't seem too important so I put it off till afterwards.

Practice was a little odd that evening. Some of my teammates kept looking at me strangely and I felt like there was something going on the entire practice. I thought maybe someone had scratched my car in the parking lot or maybe they had played a prank and I had not found the decayed fish in my gym bag yet. Asking my buddies and getting only vague answers, I just figured I would find out soon enough. No fish in my locker, no glue or itching powder on anything, and nothing on or in my car. Tired and cold, I drive home anxious for dinner.

I carried my sweaty gear through the basement and drop them in washer before going up stairs to eat. As I come up the stairs, mom looks sick and worried. I quickly realize why my friends were looking at me strangely. Mom sets me down and explains that my

friend and teammate hit my dog this morning on his way to school. He was texting and didn't see a lady that had just crossed to get her mail. He swerved to miss her and went into the yard, hit the fence and Koda. Out of frustration and anger, I yell at her, "Mom why was his phone out?".

Angry and irritated, I want to know who it was. Oh no, was it my buddy that texted me he is running late and to cover for him. My heart drops. I wait for her answer but I interrupt her saying, "no, never mind, I don't want to know". She hugs me and gives me all the details from the vet.

Mom and I sit on the couch and she lets me yell, cry, vent, and just release it all. Once I get it all out of my system, she and I talk about texting and my statement I had just made. I tell her that I remembered her talks and usually put my phone in my glove box on the way to school and in my gym bag in the trunk on the way home. I have told friends and cousins to do the same thing. I just assumed everyone already knew this. I mean, heck I have known it since I was 12 years old. She smiles back at me and I get this feeling that I have secret knowledge that the world needs, like the cure to a disease or the password to a secret entrance.

Statistics give us data to explain the numbers about an issue, but statistics will not solve the problem. Laws are created to force people to make better decisions, but also do not give a plan for prevention. I want everyone to know the answer is simple and just common sense. Don't be the friend that kills your buddy's dog. Don't be the person that

injures or kills a grandma or little sister. Use common sense and be a good friend.

Throw your phone in the trunk. Remove access and temptation. Make it a habit and pass this “not-so-secret” knowledge on to everyone.