

Over time, awareness towards driving and vehicle safety have made their influence across our world, yet we still face many alarming issues related to accidents. The main influencer of these accidents are the psychological factors. Whether its driving with friends, listening to loud music, driving under the influence, or having the constant notifications from cell phones being thrust into our everyday lives, distracted driving comes with consequences once behind the wheel. The second one of these actions is made, a person is no longer responsible for their own life, but for the lives of the friendly strangers they share the road with.

These lessons have been instilled in me since I can remember. My mother, who works for an insurance company, has constantly preached these lessons to my siblings and I, as she is constantly upset because of yet another senseless fatality. Growing up, I have always had these concepts in the back of my mind and have just recently begun to carry out these actions as I can now drive and are responsible for any reckless actions. I find these lessons to be worth of value and a practical solution when faced with the open road. With the amount of information and research we know about the safety risks of distracted driving, I am dumbfounded by how many people, of all ages, still fall victim to this altruistic crime. With that said, teenagers have contributed the most to the safety risks of distracted driving, with forced societal pressures and expectations, finding it hard to put the phone down rather than to automatically put the phone out of sight and out of mind.

Since my time at Fairmont Senior High School, two vehicle fatalities have occurred with Fairmont Senior students as the victims. The first happened my freshmen year of high school where a senior was involved in a motor cycle fatality. The second occurred about a year ago involving our first snow fall of winter and an alumnus of Fairmont Senior who had just graduated that prior spring. These fatalities have not been proven to be the result of distracted

driving, yet they still caused a great sense of change among our community. Change in the way people tackle the safety risks for distracted driving, especially for the teenagers of our community.

The solution to demolishing distracted driving seems impossible, yet it is quite simple. These changes and solutions, however, must begin within the home of the teenagers where parents or guardians can influence their children to make the right decisions, rather than the “do as I say, not as I do” mindset parents enforce upon their children. Children are mirror images of their parents. So, if the parents are not practicing safe driving habits, then how do we expect teenagers to battle these safety risks for distracted driving? A simple way to start would be to turn off your cell phone completely, place it in your car’s console or in a purse/bag and store that bag in the back seat (this follows back to the “out of sight, out of mind” concept). Being millennials, growing up in a world full of innovative technology, such as social media, can really impact the daily lives of teenagers. But people didn’t realize how serious this toxic relationship with social media was until the rise of car accidents where distracted driving was once again, the prime culprit. From experience, of being in a car with teenagers I can tell you that cell phones have a major influence on the drivers’ capability to focus. Checking messages and social media and finding the perfect road trip playlists have all become the “norm” in a teenager’s car. Ways that I’ve helped improve this safety flaw, is to offer to be the drivers’ “switchboard operator” with anything that is needed: music, checking messages, calls, etc...like the drivers’ personal receptionist if you will. These simple, every day, solutions can be started within a family where these actions can be passed on for the good of the people.

In order to see the global improvements against the safety risks of distracted driving, a call to action must be made. I think taking advantage of the technology within our world would

be a great benefit towards ending these selfless crimes. Now a days, cars have Bluetooth that allows a “hands free” drive, in which it is promoting safety from any type of distractions. To add, apps have begun to act as well. A popular app, True Motion Family Safe Driving, is known for alerting the where about of a family member, as well as how they arrived in particular to texting, speeding, braking, etc.... However, I think we could improve our safety innovations for the long haul, by allowing car and phone companies, like Apple, to join forces in defeating distracted driving. A great idea would be for the car’s Bluetooth to recognize when the vehicle is in motion and temporarily turn the phone off until no motion is detected.

With these concepts in mind, we can bring an end to distracted driving. After all, death recognizes no race, gender, culture, religion, or financial background and neither does distracted driving. Ignore your instincts to pick up your phone and practice safe driving before it’s too late.

