

She was driving us to the mall. A normal activity for us to do together, so my mom was fine with letting me go. Her and her boyfriend were fighting so she kept checking her phone. Then, she wanted to look for a specific song and did not realize someone in front of us was braking. "BRAKE!" I yelled. She seemed almost like she was not affected by it, like it had happened before and she was used to having to act quickly due to her inability to focus on the road. I was uncomfortable and all I could think of was my mom saying that distracted driving was one of the main causes of wrecks, so I grabbed her phone and said that from then on I will do whatever she needs me to with it but she needed to focus on driving. Such a simple drive to the mall could have ended a million different ways. Sadly, this story may sound all too familiar to kids my age. This experience made me want to talk to people and to make them aware that their actions have consequences. If someone is not focusing on the road you have to speak up, and if you catch yourself wandering instead of watching the road, you need to pull over. Distracted driving is not something that can be taken lightly when it is more than just your own life at risk. We are too worried about changing the radio, sending a text, or making a phone call than to focus on the task at hand- driving! What we need to do to stop distracted driving from occurring at all ages is to stop, drop, and roll!

Like habit, we buckle our seat belts when we get into a car. In order to help stop distracted driving, we also need to "stop." Once we are in the driver's seat of a vehicle we need to stop what we are doing in the day and focus. We should no longer think about the dishes in the sink at home or that it is trash day and we forgot to put out the trash can. Stopping and letting go of these distractions helps us to pick up on more things when we are driving. It can open your

eyes to details and give you a quicker reaction time. After all, our lives and the lives of others on the road are more important than the dishes.

We then need to “drop.” The biggest distractions can be found by what is in our hands when driving. Drop that cell phone that you have had in your hand since you walked out of the office building. Drop the purse, the milkshake, and especially the hamburger you picked up because you missed lunch and were running late. We as a society are so worried about multitasking and getting stuff done fast that we do not realize when we need to drop what we are doing. When you are the passenger in the car, you are also responsible for holding your driver accountable. If you see them reaching for their phone or another item, make them aware of those dangers. You can even offer to do whatever they need for them. Nothing in your car can be more important to have your hands on than the steering wheel in front of you. Drop everything and focus on your commute.

Once you have stopped thinking about the unuseful things on your mind and dropped all distractions, you finally get to roll! This can be the most exciting part. Getting to sit in the driver’s seat of a car is a privilege given to us when we first take our driver’s test at age 16. We should always drive like we did the first time we took that test. Focused and prepared for what may come at you is a good way to go into an unknown journey. Knowing that you are able to drive to your destination with no distractions is a weight off of your shoulders. It gives both you and your family members confidence that you will arrive at your destination safely.

When you follow stop, drop, and roll you can save not only your own life but many of those around you. By following these steps and even making your own preventions and precautions, you set an example for those around you. The more people that practice these safety

tips, the less unnecessary accidents should occur. Thankfully, I was there with my friend to take her distraction away from her. However, there may not always be the second set of eyes in the car with you. We can make the roads a safer place by using stop, drop, and roll to hold ourselves accountable for our car ride.