

In the blink of an eye, you, your friends, or somebody they love dearly could lose their lives.

These tragedies don't just affect friends or family members. Distracted driving can affect many more people than you think.

Having grown up during this time of enormous electronic advancements, I have noticed that people have become more and more reliant on cell phones and other mobile devices. Babies are no longer given a security blanket or pacifier. From the day they are born, they are given a tablet or cell phone to distract them. This is more apparent as they get older. As people age, they rely on their phones for more and more things. Almost everything can be done on a cell phone from checking social media, buying new clothes, or making an online food order.

Life is a lot more automatic than it used to be. Now we have automatic transmissions as standard equipment in cars, and less face to face communication with others. Some even think that autonomous cars are the solution to distracted driving. They think autonomous cars will be safer because they can send "snaps" and watch Netflix instead of focusing on their responsibility of being the human driver of the vehicle. They like to think it's all like a video game where one never dies. People don't want to be responsible and would rather a computer control their whole lives.

More importance needs to be given to personal responsibility. Miranda Lambert said it best, "It all just seems so good the way we had it, back before everything became, automatic." That's why I like cars with manual transmissions. They give you fewer opportunities to distract yourself because you have to focus more on the car and the road in front of you. I think simulators are also a good idea. Since lots of people have grown up on video games, simulators would give a more accurate view of driving. Once you've "experienced" being in a wreck or a close call, you have a better awareness of the consequences of your actions.

Although I haven't been in an accident that involved distracted driving, I have seen some close calls in my travels. The most dangerous situation I've seen was on a trip to eastern Pennsylvania from my home in Philippi, West Virginia. My mom and I were passing through Cumberland, Maryland. We were in the right lane on a highway overpass. Behind us another driver was texting while in the fast lane. They went to merge into the right lane not realizing how close the tractor-trailer was to us. The distracted driver cut off the semi and was nearly rear-ended. I would have been oblivious to this, but as the distracted driver started to merge the semi driver blew his horn. This made me realize how dangerous distracted driving could be. If the distracted driver would have been a second slower, their car would've been run over by the tractor-trailer. Most likely all of the occupants of the distracted driver's vehicle would have been killed. It would have, also, caused a massive pile-up injuring or killing many more.

I do not find it worth the risk to drive while under the influence of electronics. If I lose focus on the highway and cause a wreck it is not just my life on the line, but possibly many others. These kinds of accidents can be easily avoided in many ways. The first and most obvious choice for me is just to turn off the phone before going on a drive. If you would prefer to use it for Bluetooth music with your radio, set it to whatever music you want to listen to before moving the vehicle. Turn the ringer and notifications off and put it someplace out of eyesight.

As a young adult who has lost a parent due to a car accident, I can tell you first hand it just isn't worth it. No electronics were involved in the accident, but there are other ways to be distracted. In this case, the driver was going too fast for road conditions. Although I realize it was an accident, part of me still blames the other driver for my father's death. Being a teenager is hard, but being a teenage boy without a father is a lot harder. There are a lot of things you just don't want to talk to your mother about. My dad was also a mechanic and we had several

projects in the works. I would be a lot closer to my career goals if my dad was around to help teach me. There are lots of things that I may not get a chance to learn elsewhere. Paying for college is also going to be difficult. Without my father's income, my mother is barely able to pay her bills. Those are just some of the ways my father's death has affected me. All of his friends and family miss him greatly.

Please just put the phone down. Your actions do not only affect you and people you may know. What you do here and now may have a wide range of effects on others. It can greatly affect people far away from the accident and even in the future.