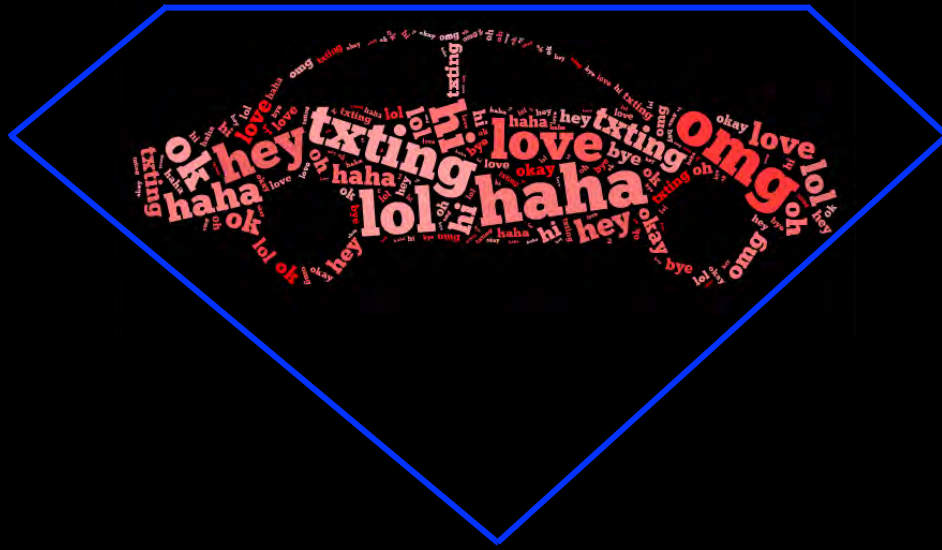


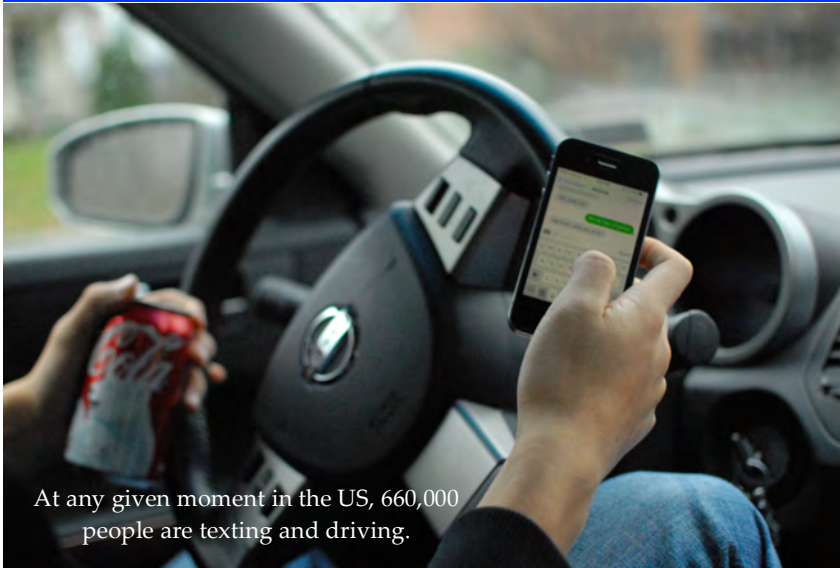
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# Kryptonite: Distracted Driving



# Distracted Driving

November 2013



At any given moment in the US, 660,000 people are texting and driving.

## Every distraction

brings you, your passengers, and surrounding drivers one step closer to a crash- and often fatality. Most teenagers think that they are Superman; they believe that the consequences of distracted driving will always "happen to someone else." Unfortunately, that couldn't be farther from the truth.

Distracted driving is our kryptonite.

*The number one killer of teens ages 16-20 is automobile crashes.*

## Types of Distractions

### Cognitive Distractions

Driving takes focus, and focus takes brainpower. It's a myth that driving is "second nature": you must always be tuned in. If your head is in the clouds, you are driving distractedly. These include:

- Hands-free cell phone devices
- Talking on a cell phone
- Talking to another passenger

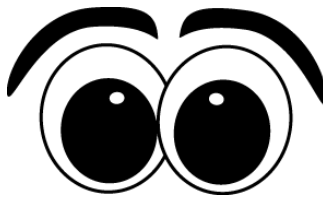


The power of the thinking cap is awesome- just not when you're behind the wheel

### Visual Distractions

Without visual aid, even for a second, your reaction time is impaired and the chance of fatality increases, especially if you are closely following the car ahead of you. Don't get distracted by:

- Signs/Billboards
- Reading
- Watching the car ahead of you



It's simple- eyes on the road!

### Manual Distractions

Often the most preventable, manual distractions include all distractions that occur within the car, such as:

- Reaching into the back seat
- Adjusting the radio
- Eating and drinking
- Smoking
- Adjusting a GPS device



Text you LATER: Texting and driving is a combination of all three types of distractions- a recipe for disaster.

*"One of you teenagers might have a cure for something, and if you get killed in an accident, we're never going to know about it."*

*-Jim Clair, Founder of Ultimate Defensive Driving School*

# We Are Not Super-humans

It can happen to anyone

"It's an epidemic," says Jim Clair, who founded the Ultimate Defensive Driving School in Cranberry, PA.

Everyone does it. Reading a text and replying only takes a couple of seconds, and sometimes we just *have* to answer that phone call. When someone is in the passenger seat, it is way too awkward to sit there in silence, so we have no other choice but to talk and goof off. Nothing bad will happen. Nothing has ever happened before. And besides, it won't happen to ME...right?

As teenagers, the statistics have been drilled into our heads. When adults say they are going to speak to us about "distracted driving," most of us tune out. I was guilty of it myself until I started to drive. It's a scary place out there on the roads. You take your life and place it on that bold yellow line: the only thing separating you from the vehicles travelling the other direction. There are actual people in those cars: moms, dads, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, with only a little bit of metal to protect them in a crash.

"When you get behind the wheel of a four thousand pound car, you think you can get away with it once or twice. But the third time, maybe you're not going to get away with it. You might hurt somebody else," says Jim Clair.

As drivers, we are responsible for not only our lives, but for the lives of all of our passengers and the lives of people in surrounding cars. And when you realize just how much pressure that is on you, the

statistics start to mean something.

Before diving deeper into the numbers, it is important to note the difference between an accident and a crash. A crash is an automobile collision that was preventable. Distracted driving is 100% preventable--and so are the fatal crashes that 11 percent of all drivers 15-19 years old are involved in. We are the worst offenders of distracted driving, which explains why automobile crashes are the greatest threat to

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teenage lives.

Think it won't happen to you? Sure, sending a text only takes a couple of seconds. To be more precise, it takes 4.2 seconds per text. But if someone told you to close your eyes for 4.2 seconds, take your hands off the wheel, and drive on the freeway, would you do it? Of course not. If you're going 55 miles an hour, that's the equivalent of driving blind across the length of a football field.

On June 20, 2008, Amanda Kloehr was driving to visit one of her friends. It was a long, boring drive, so she spent a lot of time on her smartphone, checking social media, texting, and definitely not focusing on the road. Before she could react, she collided with the back of a tractor-trailer that happened to be carrying a forklift. "It all happened so fast," she said. Her car was totaled, and it was a miracle that she made it out of the crash alive. She underwent 20 surgeries, was put in a medically-induced coma, and lost an eye. "It is not easy to get up and relive those moments," she said, but

she claimed that "this is what lucky looks like."

Amanda survived what should have been a fatal car crash. She was part of the 21% of those distracted-driving-related crashes in which the driver was distracted by the use of a cell phone. For those of you who text and drive, you are far from alone. At any given moment, 660,000 drivers are using their cell phones behind the wheel. You and some 559,999 others (who may or may not be driving directly towards you) are 23 times more likely to get in a crash, 23 times more likely to lose your lives, and 23 times more likely to take

someone else's life: the life of someone who was doing everything right.

In order to reduce the chances of getting in a car crash, state legislators have enacted laws against distracted driving. Texting while driving is illegal in 41 states, and handheld cell phone use is illegal in 12 states. Legislation is essential to stopping this epidemic; the offenders who are cited for texting and driving are less likely to do so again. "Strong laws combined with highly visible police enforcement can significantly reduce dangerous texting and cell phone use behind the wheel," says U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. One "highly visible police enforcement" member, Penn Hills police officer Tim Brickner, says that "[if] people are hurt or someone is killed, it makes the crimes involved with the crash much more serious, especially if the driver is on the phone at the time."

Not only are there legal consequences, but there are also emotional consequences. "If you kill or

*The average text message takes 4.2 seconds to write. At 55 mph, one text is the equivalent of driving the length of a football field blind.*

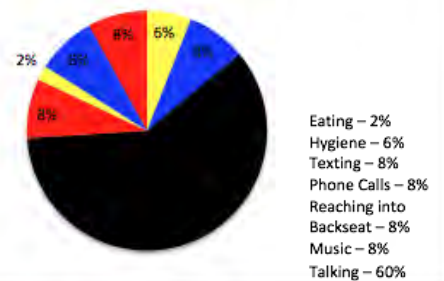
main someone while you are driving distractedly, that's going to be with you for the rest of your life," says Jim Clair, founder of the Ultimate Defensive Driving School in Cranberry, Pennsylvania.

Chandler Gerber knows this burden. He was driving through his town of Bluffton, Indiana when he took his eyes off the road to read a text from his wife: "I love you." It happened in one second. His window was smashed in and a body fell from the roof of his van. Three children were killed when Chandler hit an Amish buggy from behind. "Did I dream that accident?" Chandler would ask himself in the days after. "I'm just a guy...I'm just a young guy. I've got a wife, and a daughter on the way. This couldn't have happened to me." Chandler knows he has to live with his choice for the rest of his life. "I wish so bad that I could go back to that day and change my focus," he says. "There's just nothing that important. It's life. You get one chance, and you live with the choices you make."

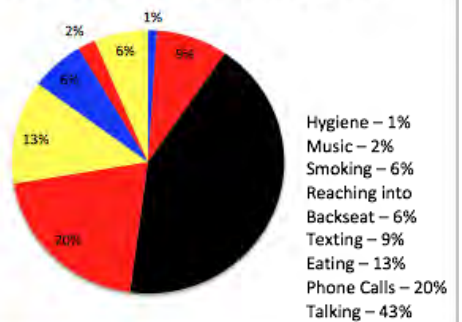
Perhaps if Chandler and Amanda had been exposed to the true threat of distracted driving, their lives would be different. Educating new drivers is an essential step in reducing car crashes caused by distracted driving. If there is a driving school in your area, take advantage of it. Putting the time in now could save your life later.

We are not super-humans. Every person who drives distractedly, whether by texting, calling, eating, drinking, smoking, or even talking, makes a choice. Everything could change in just one second. I promise you, your life is worth more than that. Sometimes, all it takes is a little less confidence and a little more caution. The evidence is there. So open your eyes, Superman. It could happen to anyone.

### Distracted Driving in Our High School



### Distracted Driving in the General Public



Data was collected on six hundred and thirty-five drivers through multiple surveys. About one-fourth of drivers were visibly distracted, but many more could have been cognitively distracted. Talking was by far the biggest distraction, followed by phone calls. Not surprisingly, a significant chunk of drivers were texting while driving, which is currently against the law in Pennsylvania. Any of the drivers who were texting and driving could have been ticketed by a police officer.

## Student Advocacy: What can I do to help?

### 4 Tips to Stop Distracted Driving

**Avoid:** The best way distracted driving can be eliminated is if every driver resolves to remain focused. Take a pledge not to drive distracted, such as the one provided by [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov). Purchase new apps such as Cellcontrol, which shuts off your phone when it detects that you are driving. Better yet, turn off your phone altogether. Statistics show that you are more likely to be in a crash if you have more passengers, so if you're worried your passengers will be disruptive, set boundaries before the car is in motion. If you must make a phone call or send a text, pull your car over before you pull out the phone.

**Advise against:** Speak up, save a life. If the driver is texting or driving recklessly, say something, even if it is a friend or parent. Remind your parents that they need to set a good example for their children. Friends and family members need to use their influence to steer others toward responsible driving behaviors. Use positive peer pressure to your advantage.

**Attack beforehand:** Plan ahead and manage time wisely so that you don't have to multitask while driving. Make any final texts in the parking lot. Eat and drink when the car is stationary. Set a playlist so that you don't have to adjust the radio or your music device when you should be focused on driving. And never, ever text and drive. As important as that text may seem, it is nothing when compared to the value of your life. Recruit a passenger to send that text for you.

**Advocate against:** Advocate against distracted driving in your community. Distribute flyers or wristbands, and encourage people not to text and drive. Join your school's SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Club, or if you don't have one, create your own. Consider sharing the stories of people who have been affected by distracted driving, such as Amanda Koehler.

