

Can a simple distraction  
change your life  
**FOREVER?**



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# “That is never going to happen to me”

## Distracted driving and its consequences

Do we know driving is? Since childhood, we dream to be behind the wheel driving a vehicle, which serves as a means of transport to go from one place to another. However, at that time we never think about the implications that are required to drive, as it is the knowledge of the standards, the level of awareness and understanding of them, and the consequences the non-compliance of them may cause. When we grow up we start to become aware of these factors and however, accidents related to the breach of rules and incontinence occur.

There are currently approximately two hundred million people who drive cars in America, according to the Federal Highway Administration, part of the United States Department of Transportation. As we can observe on a daily basis, the most frequent causes of automobile accidents are speeding, the use of alcoholic beverages, the lack of distance between vehicles and the handle distracted with the use of technology such as the mobile phone, among others. However, distracted driving is one of the most frequent causes that we can observe daily in our community. For example, people who write a text message while the traffic light is red and when it is time to move forward, for being distracted, they don't advance on time, making other people angry. This not only makes people angry, it also represents the great lack of inadequacy of the driver.

So, what is distracted driving? Is driving while you are doing something else that takes your attention and impedes the concentration while driving. The types of distractions that take place while driving are: visual, which happens when you are not looking at the road; manual, that happens when you take your hands off the wheel and cognitive, that happens when you take your mind off of driving. All these distractions are very frequent and equally dangerous and inclined to cause accidents. Some examples are: sending a text message, talking on the phone, surfing the web, lack of concentration, seeing movies or videos in the devices of the car, among others.

Since we know the types of dis-

traction, the question that we should ask ourselves is: why drivers, despite of seeing others driving distractedly, do not change their own behavior? Many people assume a position about in which they think, “nothing is going to happen to me, maybe to others, but not me”. This type of behavior reflects the great recklessness and lack of consideration towards other drivers, leading them to check their cell phones, text or talk while driving. At the same time, the externality, that consists in seeing others as the causers to fulfill the laws and not seeing yourself as the responsible of your own actions makes an influence in the problems of distracted driving. Also, the pace of life that the people take influence at the moment of driving for the need to maximize the time and not to waste a second. The multiplicity of audiovisual resources such as screens in the car, tablets, GPS (Global Positioning System), propaganda and music, can be included in the reasons of distraction, since having to remove the hands off the steering wheel to change the radio station, to see the GPS, or to relax with the movie that this being projected in the vehicle, something unexpectedly could happen.



Nowadays, some states of the United States have implemented laws related with distracted driving due to the fact that it has turned into a great problem in our society representing this way more than nine deaths and more than 1,060 people injured in crashes that are reported to involve distracted driving each day according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2013). Nevertheless, some of these laws cannot be effective un-

less the people are not aware of the damage that they can cause for driving distractively and until the authorities do not apply them in an effective and strict way. Because of it, the states not only should implement laws, the capture of measures as the implementation of campaigns for the awareness of driving distractively, school chats that are able to educate the future drivers and his representatives, the use of technology for the creation of applications that prevent the driver to send text messages while driving, and the increase of the quantity of money that has to be paid for fines, among others, can cause a better and major awareness and reduction of driving distractively.

At the same time, every person can turn into an advocate, which spreads his knowledge about distracted driving to other people to contribute for an improvement in their friends and family's awareness, making these collaboration to turn in a chain of knowledge and awareness among people. Also, on having taken part in voluntary activities of prevention and care on distracted driving, as meetings, workshops, treks, among others. In this way, driving would be safer because each driver would be aware of his actions and the damage that they can produce.

In conclusion, the main thing learned about distracted driving and its impact in society can be summarized in: it is necessary to take individual conscience of the dangers that it represents to drive distractively, it is important to modify the belief that the utilization of technological means, specially the cell phone ones, while driving, means a saving of time, when one can lose more by causing an accident. Also, to be able to affect the society in a positive way, it is necessary to possess regulations that can be applied in a suitable way and to create campaigns of awareness to demonstrate the big dangers that distracted driving represents. The impact of distracted driving in our society transforms in innumerable annual loss of lives and material losses that affect families and people decreasing the well being of the society.

# The Risks Of Distracted Driving

In a split second, many lives can change forever. It was February 10, 2011 when Aaron Deveau, 18, was texting while driving as he crossed the center line on a street in Haverhill, Massachusetts which caused him to crash against the vehicle of 55 year old Donald Bowley Jr. Donald's girlfriend, 59 year old Luz Roman, suffered serious injuries. Donald was the most affected in the crash, as he died on March 10, 2011 after he was taken off life support.

Distracted driving can bring many consequences. When a person is distracted while driving, they are not only risking their lives but the lives of those around them. Many ways one can be involved in distracted driving includes texting or calling, eating or drinking, smoking, etc. Transportation officials stated in a report that 5,870 people were killed and 515,000 were injured in crashes where at least one type of driver distraction was reported. Driver distraction was involved in 16% of all fatal crashes in 2011. The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration stated that 5,474 people were killed and 448,000 individuals were injured in other vehicle crashes that involved distracted drivers. 80% of accidents and 16% of highway fatalities are the result of distracted drivers.

According to the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, younger drivers have a greater tendency to be involved in distracted driving than other individuals of other age groups. Due to their lack of driving experience, younger drivers have an inability to consistently recognize the conditions that are risky when driving. Many young drivers are in denial about their distracted behavior, as parents often set bad examples.

Amongst the most popular of the activities of distracted driving, is the use of cellular phones. The National Safety Council estimated that 1 Million (25%) of crashes annually were due to cell phone use. The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states that nearly 11% of drivers, approximately one million individuals used a mobile device at some point while

driving. Additionally, 35-50% of drivers have admitted on using a cell phone while driving.

Many individuals believe that, sending a text message while driving is not going to affect them. Many think that it can happen to someone else not to them. In many cases, a one word text message caused someone their life, even causing them to accidentally take someone else's life.

In the case of Aaron Deveau, sending text messages while driving caused him to permanently injure 59 year old Luz Roman and kill 55 year old

**“I made a mistake, if I could take it back, I would take it back”.**

**-Aaron Deveau**

Donald Bowley. He was sentenced for two years, charged for vehicular homicide and charged with another 2 years for texting while driving.

Not only was Aaron put behind bars, but his driver's license was suspended for 15 years. Accidents caused by distracted driving can happen to anyone. “I made a mistake”, Aaron Deveau said, “If I could take it back, I would take it back”.



*Aaron Deveau after sentencing.*

# Surveying the Factors

To learn if adults or teens drive more distractedly than the other, a survey was conducted. This survey was implemented to seek out if what people say is true; teens are more distracted on the road, and more prone to accidents, than adults. In the survey, two groups of fifty people; one of 16-19 year olds; and another of 20 years old and older; were asked a series of questions about distracted driving:

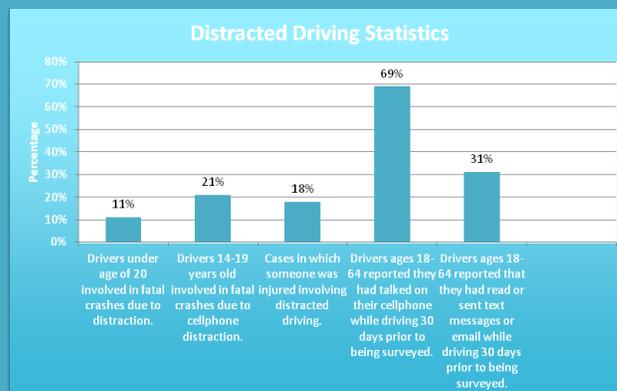
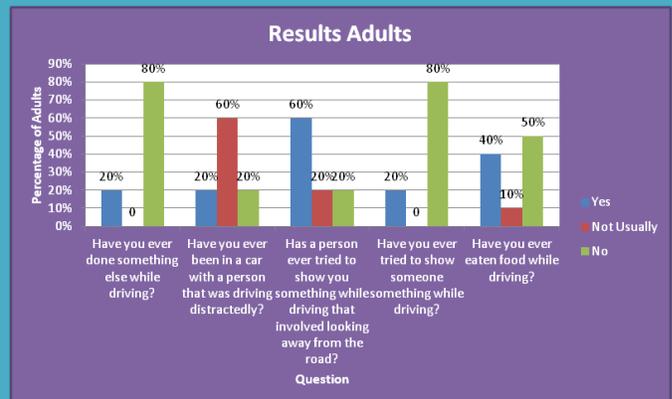
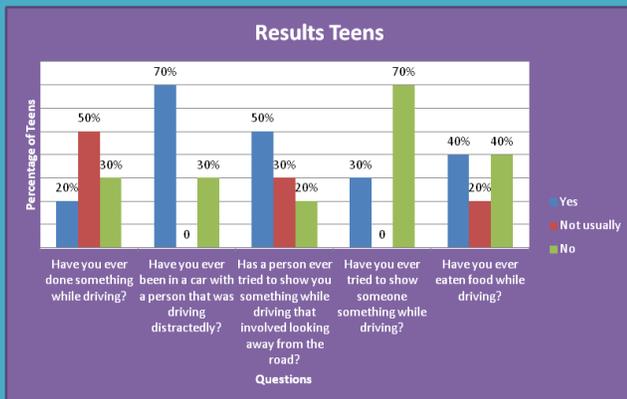
1. Have you ever done something else while driving? (text-messaging, answering the phone, changing the radio station)
2. Have you ever been in a car with a person that was driving distractedly?
3. Has a person ever tried to show you something while driving that involved looking away from the road?
4. Have you ever tried to show someone something while driving?
5. Have you ever eaten food while driving?

Out of the fifty adults, 20% of them responded yes and 80% responded no for the first question. For the second question 20% of the fifty adults responded yes, 60% answered not usually, and 20% said no. For the third question, 60% of the fifty adults responded yes, 20% said not usually, and 20% said no. 20% of the fifty adults responded yes and 80% said no for the fourth question. For the fifth question 40% of the fifty adults said yes, 10% said not

usually, and 50% said no.

Out of fifty teens, 20% of them said yes, 50% said not usually, and 30% said no to survey question number 1. For survey question number 2, 70% of the fifty teens said yes, and 30% said no. For the third question, 50% of the fifty teens said yes, 30% said not usually, and 20% said no. For the fourth question 30% of the fifty teens answered yes and 70% said no. For the fifth and last question 40% of the fifty teens answered yes, 20% answered not usually and 40% said no.

The results have shown that teens are more prone to be subjected to bad behavior on the road than adults. This means, that they have either seen one of their friends drive distractedly or their parents. Because of being subjected to this type of behavior, they act out this way. Also, according to the data collected, both parties are bothered while driving, which can also lead to an accident. Teens are also more likely to try to show someone something while they are driving, which means they don't keep in mind the consequences of their actions and what they could lead to. Both parties do not eat as much while driving than anticipated, which is a very pleasing outcome of this survey. Since our results concluded that teens are in fact the most dangerous factor on the road, don't forget not all teens are like this. Some are in fact more careful than many adults.



# Advocacy Tips

1. As a general rule, if you cannot devote your full attention to driving because of some other activity, it's a distraction. Take care of it before or after your trip, not while behind the wheel.
2. If another activity demands your attention, instead of trying to attempt it while driving, pull off the road and stop your vehicle in a safe place. To avoid temptation, power down or stow devices before heading out.
3. If you have passengers, enlist their help so you can focus safely on driving.
4. Put aside your electronic distractions. Don't use cell phones while driving – handheld or hands-free – except in absolute emergencies. Never use text messaging, email functions, video games or the internet with a wireless device, including those built into the vehicle, while driving.
5. Secure children and pets before getting underway. If they need your attention, pull off the road safely to care for them. Reaching into the backseat can cause you to lose control of the vehicle.
6. Snack smart. If possible, eat meals or snacks before or after your trip, not while driving. On the road, avoid messy foods that can be difficult to manage.
7. Finish dressing and personal grooming at home – before you get on the road.
8. Make adjustments before your get underway. Address vehicle systems like your GPS, seats, mirrors, climate controls and sound systems before hitting the road. Decide on your route and check traffic conditions ahead of time.
9. Store loose gear, possessions and other distractions that could roll around in the car, so you do not feel tempted to reach for them on the floor or the seat.
10. Fully focus on driving. Do not let anything divert your attention, actively scan the road, use your mirrors and watch out for pedestrians and cyclists.

