

WINTER 2014

drive®

THE MAGAZINE FROM SUBARU

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Inspired by owner passion for more than 25 years.



SUBARU

Confidence in Motion

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

A FATHER WHO LOST HIS CHILD WANTS TO SAVE YOURS

BY JOEL FELDMAN

My daughter, Casey, was 21 when she was killed by a distracted driver. Before her death, I often drove distracted – checking emails, eating, and texting.

I also drove distracted with Casey and her brother, Brett, in the vehicle. Even though my children are important to me, I took chances driving with them as passengers. I rationalized my risky driving by telling myself that I had never been in a crash, that I was an experienced driver, and that checking emails or texting took only a few seconds.

During speaking engagements with almost 30,000 teens across the country in the past two years, nearly 70 percent told me that their moms and dads drive distracted with them in the vehicle. Looking back, it's hard to believe that, through rationalization, I placed expediency over the safety of my children. Doing so was not congruent with professing that I would do anything to keep them safe.

Perhaps it's not just teens who believe they are invincible when behind the wheel of a vehicle.

Studies show that teens whose parents drive distracted are between two and four times more likely to drive distracted, too⁶

2-4x

MORE LIKELY TO
DRIVE DISTRACTED

⁶ University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute and Toyota, November 2012.

Almost half of teen drivers report having sent or read texts while driving⁴



Some studies show that texting is almost six times more dangerous than drunken driving⁵

6x

MORE DANGEROUS

⁴ The 2013 Teen Driving Report, sponsored by Liberty Mutual and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions).

⁵ Driving a vehicle while texting is six times more dangerous than driving while intoxicated according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

But to make matters worse, as I drove distracted with Casey and Brett in the vehicle, I was unwittingly teaching them that it was okay for them to drive distracted. Our children learn by watching us, and they learn both good and bad habits.

I was not a very good role model.

Some parents whose children have died while texting ask me whether their child was texting while driving because he or she had seen mom or dad do it. While I believe that may be the case, compassion prevents me from saying so to grieving parents.

Like most parents, I had told Casey and Brett that it was not safe to use their cellphones while driving, nor should they eat or apply makeup or do a number of other things while driving.

But what I had **shown** them was different.

About the author: Joel Feldman is an attorney who lives with his wife, Dianne, in the Philadelphia area. After his daughter, Casey, was killed by a distracted driver in 2009, he obtained his master's in counseling and created End Distracted Driving – EndDD.org. With help from researchers and medical professionals, he developed a teen distracted-driving presentation that has been experienced by more than 225,000 teens across the United States and Canada. Feldman regularly speaks at traffic safety, legal, and medical conferences; high schools and colleges; and businesses.



LEAD BY EXAMPLE

A great way to have a nonconfrontational conversation with your teen – and even younger children – about driving is to tell them that you have changed the way that you drive. Admit that your driving was not safe, and show them that while driving you now put the phone away, no longer have meals in the vehicle, and wait until you are stopped to put on makeup or retrieve texts and voice messages.

BE THE DRIVER YOU WANT YOUR TEENS TO BE.

Let them know that you realize distracted driving is not just a teen problem, but that you were part of the problem, and now you want to be part of the solution. Apologize for driving distracted with them in the vehicle. Don't lecture, and make the conversation about you. They will listen. And while you've got them listening, tell them that you love them. Because that's what this is all about.

Ask them to watch you and to help you drive safer because distracted driving may have become a habit. Ask them to work with you to develop a Family Safe Driving Agreement that all family members will commit to following.

Also, you can watch short videos with them that tell compelling stories and can lead to reflection about driving behaviors and attitudes. These can be viewed at enddd.org/category/videos/presentation-videos/. (They are not overly graphic.)

EMPOWER THEM TO ACT ON THEIR OWN

Teens tell me that their friends' parents, often in car pools, drive distracted at an even greater frequency than their own parents. Yes, other adults are taking chances driving with your children. So are their peers.

Studies show that teens are the least likely of any age group to speak up when in a vehicle with a distracted driver.⁸ Parents need to ask their children about the driving habits of anyone who drives them. Once you've talked with your children about your distracted driving, they'll be more likely to be honest when it comes to other drivers.

If you learn that other adults are driving your children while distracted, it's up to you to talk with that adult or switch car pools.

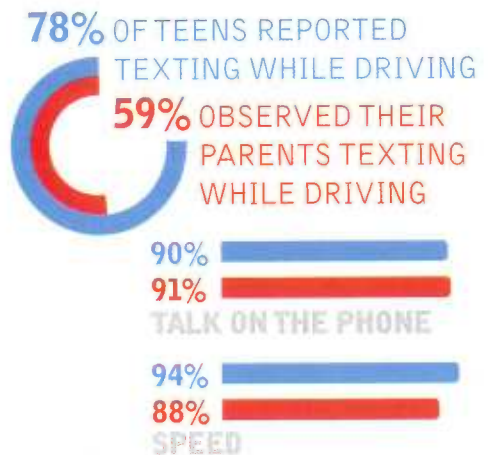
Teens, and even younger children, need to learn that they have a right to be driven safely even if it is someone else's vehicle. Distracted-driving passenger-intervention programs can teach the skills necessary to intervene successfully and give them the confidence to do so.



View Subaru partner Liberty Mutual Insurance Teen Driving program at drive.subaru.com/w14-15-distracted-driving.aspx.

WE CAN
ALL COMMIT

TEEN DRIVING SURVEY⁷



⁷ Data from a 2012 Liberty Mutual Insurance and SADD survey of more than 1,700 teens from across the country. The survey found teens exhibit or observe their parents exhibiting the illustrated behavior at least occasionally.

START THE CONVERSATION TODAY.

↓ Download the parent-teen driving contract at drive.subaru.com/w14-15-distracted-driving.aspx.

MAKE THE CHANGE

It took my daughter's death for me to change the way that I drive. Don't wait for a tragedy in your life. We can all commit to drive without distraction.

As parents, we can be better role models and help our children change the culture of driving so that distraction-free driving will not only be accepted but expected. ■

⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation Survey "Young Drivers Report the Highest Level of Phone Involvement in Crash or Near-crash Incidences."