

Distracted driving is a national epidemic and when added to the inexperience of teen drivers the likelihood of a fatality increases dramatically. Statistics reveal that at any given time during the day an estimated 660,000 people are trying to use their phone while driving. It may be surprising to my peers that texting while driving is six times more likely to cause an accident than drunk driving. Discussing the fact that eleven teens die every day due to texting while driving can be a deterrent. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a teen with 2 or more passengers is five times more likely to be involved in a fatal car accident, and according to Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, teen drinking kills 4,700 people each year. This means that more people die due to reckless decisions made by teenagers than the number of people of all ages that die due to the abuse of all illegal drugs combined. Statistics, appealing to a teenager's humanity, will encourage the teen to apply their knowledge regarding the effects of distracted driving, drunk driving, and underage drinking to their personal life while discouraging reckless decisions.

It is a fact that children who start drinking at an early age are seven times more likely to be in an alcohol related accident and high school students who use alcohol are five times more likely to drop out of school. We cannot continue to ignore that car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens. It is our responsibility as young adults to be a good role model for our peers and younger siblings, thus we need to discourage underage drinking, distracted driving, and drunk driving. I often have these discussions with my peers, hoping they will change their minds about committing such crimes.

Presenting the facts can bring about a rude awakening. However, imagining a loved one hit by a drunk

fit in and firmly believe that their ideas are correct, so just telling someone, "It's bad," will not prevent them from making careless decisions. Students will realize the effects that their decisions have on others when presented with the facts on a personal level.

All schools need to talk more about drugs and alcohol while encouraging parents to review expectations, but as long as drinking appears cool many teenagers will follow the crowd unless they are deeply impacted by the laments of others who have been affected by teen drinking and driving. Young leaders whose lives have been influenced need to be encouraged to speak out against drinking and distracted driving, applying peer pressure in a positive manner. Schools should take the initiative and form a task force organization with student members who are willing to speak out and lead through experience and by example. Team members throughout all sports will hold meetings with their teammates and make sure they are on the right path in life. Encouraging safe decisions and explaining the consequences of reckless choices is a discussion that our student leaders will embrace. In order to stop teen drinking and driving, teens need to hold one another accountable.

I have frequent conversations with my friends related to the issue of underage drinking, especially with prom around the corner. Many teens do not realize the true impact that this can have on their future. Yes, it can cause health problems down the road, but I mean a more immediate future. When kids decide to drink despite being underage, they typically have not been told about how it will hinder their future career choices. Underage DUI convictions can follow a person throughout their life even with an expunged charge. An applicant must answer honestly when asked about convictions or face termination in the future. My friends were surprised when I discussed this at the lunch table.



discourage some of them from drinking after prom. Breaking the law is not an option I am willing to take for moral and ethical reasons, however when explaining the risks to my peers I stress the potential consequences to their ability to choose a future career. Just telling them that placing innocents in jeopardy is not always enough to discourage underage drinking and distracted driving.

Is ruining their future college plans really worth a night of underage drinking or distracted driving? I have recently found that discussing this with my peers does influence them to decide against choosing to be involved with underage drinking. One friend in particular has a full scholarship and when I mentioned that his scholarship could be revoked if he were arrested for underage drinking he decided that it was not worth the gamble. He cancelled his plans to go to a beach house where he had planned on drinking with his friends. Many teenagers will make the right decision when presented with the facts especially if they realize how their life and future plans are affected. Sadly telling a teenager that killing an innocent bystander or themselves is frequently not enough to keep them from making these inappropriate choices. I can only hope that the more we discuss this subject the more likely that one of the messages will get through to them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully

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