

Drinking and driving took 10,000 lives in 2016. Of those, 1,200 of them were children under 14. Impaired driving kills one person every 50 minutes. Not everyone who perishes due to drunk driving made a decision to drink and then get into a mechanized weapon of death but they did become victims of people who did.

People are egocentric, teens especially. It is actually proven. Davis Elkind, a well-known developmental psychologist, concludes teens and young adults have a sense of personal fable in which they feel indestructible and therefore participate in risk-taking behavior. They have a sense of personal invincibility bringing them to believe in their own inability to be affected. They feel as if the bad things will never happen to them. This invincibility misconception increases with alcohol consumption. Individuals under the influence take more risks, including the mistake to drive.

This mistake can also be attributed to not enough support from friends and/or hosts and bars. Friends should never let friends drive home impaired. Hosts or bars should not let guests or visitors do the same. Drinking can be a safe form of socialization, as long as friend, hosts, and bars encourage safe, non-impaired driving. With the rise of Uber and Lyft, impaired driving should be a shrinking occurrence. Even most recently in Chesterfield, VA, there is an initiative to curb impaired driving with Uber, the locality, and a grant to reduce injuries and death. Drinkers who drive lack preemptive strategies to prevent this dangerous risk to themselves and the community. They lack a designated driver or a plan to avoid drinking and driving. And in an age where it only takes a click of a button, drinking a driving has no excuse.

Initiatives must decrease the unfortunate decision to drink and drive including education starting that starts in elementary school and carries into middle and high schools. Education and grassroots efforts must occur even before the decision making process is learned therefore instilling the belief and value of responsible consumption. When decision making skills begin to be formed, values will then interject and create the best possible outcome. Punishment for impaired driving alone will never be a deterrent for underage impaired drivers but a real life visual with guests, damaged cars, heartbroken parents, and others missing victims of this crime will resonate with the emotional side of teenagers. Educators need to teach practically and emotionally. Almost everyone knows the logic that drinking and driving is dangerous, but educators need to relate to a person's emotions. Teenager's brains haven't fully developed the pre-frontal cortex, the area responsible for logic and decision making; however, the amygdala, the center for emotion is fully developed, making teaching via emotion (pathos) the more effective route to educate teenagers and prevent drinking and driving. We need to emphasize the tragedies that result from the decision to drink and drive; show and demonstrate how devastating the impact of death and serious injury from impaired driving actually can be. Just inspect the effectiveness of:



Figure 1: "Drinking, Driving Can Kill a Friendship!" Duke Digital Collections, Duke University Libraries, library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/oaarchives_BBB4178/.

Through a play on words and visuals, this billboard advertisement effectively personalizes the argument and forces readers and teens to envision a life in which they killed their friend via drinking and driving. Students are more willing to listen, not just during the lesson but also when it really matters. Even extreme learning lessons such as removing one student from each class for one week by having them dress in all black and banning all communication with that student could simulate their death from a drinking and driving fatality and could prove effective.

We also need to more heavily highlight to teens that buzzed drivers can be just as dangerous, if not more, than full-on drunk drivers. That buzzed driving is drunk driving, both in nature but also in the eyes of the law. Buzzed drinkers have the same diminished reaction time but take more risks such as driving faster than as full-on drunk drivers. It's always "I'm fine" or "I'm not drunk." But when you kill your neighbor or are on the prosecuting stand, that will not be an excuse. Take for example a recent advertisement by the US Department of Transportation warning of buzzed driving:



Figure 2: "Photos: Safe Driving Ad Campaigns." *The Boston Globe*, www.bostonglobe.com/2013/10/06/photos-safe-driving-campaigns/tw7VjEva3FuVROuiiOWIZM/story.html?pic=8

We need to address teenager's misconceptions about alcohol usage. We need to put it in the forefront of drinker's thoughts. Not just for those affected but also for the future. Not just for the families effected but for the whole community. Let's make the right choice.