

Jennifer Hart

Arrive Alive

My mother usually returned home by now, but I had convinced myself that she was picking up a few groceries or had a last-minute appointment. It was not a rare occasion if she was late on her way home from work, so I continued to do my AP Statistics homework in hopes that it would be completed before she returned to us to prepare dinner. However, the sun started to sink, as did my heart, when my dad picked up our home phone that restlessly rang to life in the darkened kitchen. It was my mom; she had gotten into a car accident.

My heart started pounding a bit harder and a bit faster as my dad relayed the message. When something inconceivable happens, it can be hard to focus on anything else. She explained that she was fine, but the idea of her alone and isolated inside the white walls of the hospital provoked fear. I could not distinguish the difference between the churning of my stomach from hunger and the churning, tightening sensation of dread and anguish. She was stuck in the hospital thirty minutes away from our awaiting, anticipating minds, unaware of when she would be arriving. When distressing things occur I often turn to academics and studying, but I could do nothing but distract myself. I turned to mindless commercials and episodes of Jeopardy as if background noise would help cancel out the thoughts that intruded my mind.

I could not understand how someone so cautious and careful as my mother could be in this situation. She was the one who drove a little under the speed limit and started slowing down yards before the stop sign. She was the person to account for every

detail. As my dad left to collect my mom to bring her home, I racked my brain to find the source of this bizarre situation and how it could be prevented.

The woman who crashed into my mother was at fault, but the accident made me realize how often these life-threatening collisions occur. I came to the conclusion that there are many people, like the woman who struck me with fear when she endangered my mother, who have become inattentive and dangerous. Why do people become so careless and negligent? How can this common, imperil problem be solved? Simply by giving driving our full attention. No distractions.

When we drive, we sign an invisible contract. This contract says that we know the risks and consequences of driving. We are not only putting our own safety and life in danger, but we are also putting other people's lives in danger: people with friends and families. It is important to remember this every time we sit in the driver's seat.

I could not imagine the guilt and responsibility that would come with endangering another person's life. I could not imagine the struggle I would have trying to convince myself that I have changed and won't ever put another person's life at risk again. I could not imagine if my mom was seriously injured like many other people's mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, and friends who have been severely wounded because of a stranger's choice to drive recklessly.

There are accidents involving distracted driving that are a lot worse than the one my mom was involved in. However, even less crippling accidents should not be occurring. My mother's accident personally affected me. It showed me how many people know someone whose life has been put in danger because of makeup, food, a phone, or other distractions that could have simply waited. I could not imagine

carelessly risking other people's lives by driving distractedly. I only urge everyone I know to answer their phone, eat their food, or apply their makeup either before or after they drive.

So instead of thinking of changing after an accident or depending on a second chance that may not come, stop the potential accident, no matter how big or small, from ever happening in the first place. There is no need to wonder if you will get a second chance if you cease distracted driving and eliminate the chance of causing harm to other drivers altogether. No matter how great your belief is that you can multitask and drive safely, multitasking still distracts you by diverting your full, needed attention to the road and other drivers. So please think twice and remember the consequences before driving distractedly. Someone's life, and their families, may depend on it.