

A Distracted Mind Can be an Unsafe Mind

By Liz Ashe

When you travel by car as much as I do, you see a lot of things on the highway. Recently I saw a man reading the newspaper while driving on Interstate 95. I thought that beat all until I read in the Bangor Daily News about a state trooper who spotted a woman watching a movie on her laptop while driving.

Lt. Christopher Grotton, director of the Maine State Police Traffic Safety Unit said, "Between 30 and 40% of Maine's crashes involve some driver inattention (BDN September 8, 2009) and distracted drivers account for nearly four out of five crashes in the United States. Looking away for just two seconds doubles that danger.

Using your cell phone while driving increases chances of getting in a crash by 400 percent.

Last year, Dr Phil featured a segment on distracted driving and texting. One guest lost her daughter due to a texting driver. She developed, in her daughter's memory, a web site that stresses; **Pay Attention and Stay Focused or Pay the Price.** HangUpSaveALife.com

Distraction isn't always from doing something other than driving. We all know how easy it is to miss an exit while talking, daydreaming, or thinking of something else. One woman shared with me that she went north

on the interstate when she should have been going south. She said, "It was as if the car was driving itself and I was in automatic pilot. I had just learned of some very bad news and I must have been distracted." If the mind isn't fully engaged any number of things can happen.

A man in a mill told me that he had a lost time accident as a result of his preoccupation with a personal problem.

The connection between our thoughts and our bodies is well researched and documented. If you are emotionally upset or stressed out you are at least

partially "tuned out" and you tend to not pay as much attention to visual or audio cues. Dr. Sam Maniar in Worthington, Ohio, said, "The research is there showing that high stress levels do increase the risk of getting injured. Not only are you distracted, but stress increases muscle tension and tense muscles are more susceptible to tearing or can throw a person off balance and affect coordination. (New York Times, Free the Mind and Fewer Injuries May Follow by Sally Wadyka, Jan 4, 2007).

We don't have to tough our way through mental and emotional issues. Talking things out and learning basic breathing and relaxation methods can help relieve stress and keep you focused.

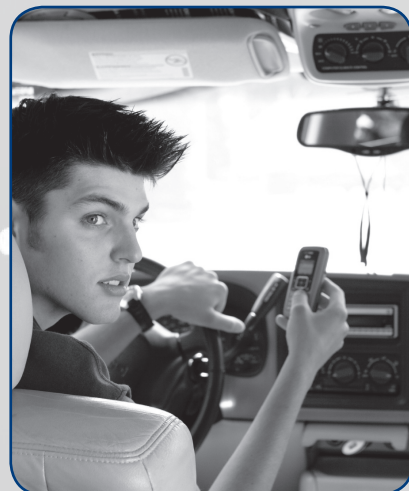


When driving, you are distracted if you ever . . .

- Tune the radio
- Eat, drink or smoke
- Pick something up from the floor
- Write, read
- Reach for glove compartment
- Talk on cell phone
- Clean the inside of the windshield
- Comb or brush hair, clip nails
- Argue with a passenger
- Break up fights with kids in backseat
- Groom self, put on makeup
- Use eye drops

- Turn to talk to a passenger
- Gawk at a crash or other roadside activity
- Having a dog in your lap

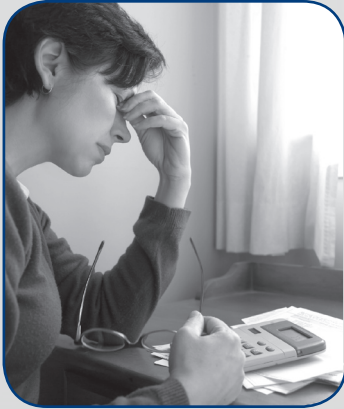
Most of us can answer yes to one or more of these activities. It pays to remember that focusing attention away from any safety sensitive duty or from the roadway can put our families/friends/ and passengers of other vehicles in danger. Not focusing isn't worth a notification to someone's next of kin.



Do's & Don'ts for Tough Times

by Gary Forman
EA Report Sept 2009

1. Do plan for the future. If there is a chance you could lose your job, implement a plan to have some savings to fall back on.
2. Don't worry about the future. It won't change what happens and it will make you stressed and less able to handle a future crisis.
3. Don't blame your partner for all the financial difficulties or throw verbal missiles at each other.
4. Do avoid unnecessary expenses. Allow yourself some pleasures, but don't



- kid yourself about what is really necessary. Food, shelter is necessary for survival, having a luxury car isn't.
5. Don't over use your credit cards.
6. Don't be ashamed to tell people what is going on and that you are struggling. Do ask for help.
7. Don't over indulge alcohol or mind altering medication.
8. Do expect to survive. Chances are you will be able to handle your hardships.
9. Do be grateful for all you still have and be thankful for each day you have with loved ones.
10. Do remember that you don't have to "tough it out alone" You can talk to your EAP: a confidential assessment, short-term counseling and referral program for you and your household members.

Healthy Recipe Protein Power Balls

Ingredients:

- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup sweetened coconut, toasted
- 1 cup cornflakes
- 3.4 cup soy protein power
- ¾ cup finely chopped semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar

Directions

1. Combine peanut butter, cornflakes, protein powder, brown sugar and chocolate chips into mixing bowl. Work mixture with hands to combine well.
2. Use spoon to scoop out mixture and roll into golf-ball size balls. Roll them in the toasted coconut to coat the outside.
3. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

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