

Texting while driving proves deadly

By Becca Heller
STAFF WRITER

Texting while driving. We all know it's dangerous. We all do it anyways. We're all idiots.

Today, texting and driving is probably the most universally accepted deadly behavior among our generation.

A recent study showed that 50 percent of drivers between the ages of 18 and 24 text while driving. I used to be one of them.

I know all too well the one-handed steering and the quick glances between the road and the screen of my phone. I'd nailed down the strategic placement of my phone in the cup holder nearest me and had begun to fully appreciate the length of red lights.

I also had some close calls. Sometimes I'd look up from a message and realize that I'd drifted into another lane. Sometimes I'd find myself slamming on the brakes, coming upon an unexpected traffic

jam or realize that the light had been green for a while.

Finally one day at the end of this summer, my dad sat me down. He'd prefaced the chat with such gravity, I thought for sure he was going to tell me my grandfather had died.

He turned to me and said gravely: "Becca, I know you text while you drive." I cringed. This was something I'd been denying for years, but he was too clever for me (apparently I'd texted him once while I was driving-great). He looked at me, with more sternness than I'd ever seen him muster up before and said quietly, "I need you to promise me - I need you to really promise that you'll stop." This time I did.

The seriousness in which my dad approached me put all of my stupid carelessness into perspective. It was strange to see such a dramatic departure from his usual easy-going self, and it made me realize that this was not just a simple risk that I had been taking. This decision had life and death implications and

was nothing to take lightly. I'd been smacked in the face by the dangerous reality of texting while driving, and I didn't plan on losing my grip on it again.

Now, everywhere I look, I see people texting and driving with the same sense of disregard and untouchability that I once had. I also hear stories and see statistics that make the danger of texting and driving seem more real than ever.

Sophomore Alyssa Bryan recalled some fatal texting and driving incidents that happened in her hometown just before she left to come here for the fall.

In one case, a girl was texting when she drove off the road and onto the curb, hitting two girls who had been walking on the sidewalk. They'd been visiting their friend in the hospital down the street. One of them died instantly, and the other was left in critical condition.

"That was just one of two fatal text-related incidents that happened that month," Bryan said.



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On a deeper level, texting and driving becomes an issue of selfishness and irresponsibility. While texting so often seems like no big deal, doing it while driving endangers innocent people. No texting conversation - no matter how desperately important it may seem - should take precedence over the lives of others.

The cost is great, and the solution

is simple. Just stop. Close your phone and disconnect from that addictive social network for 30 minutes while you're driving. Try to put the issue into perspective - this choice affects more people than just you and your friends.

It's as simple as: "I'll ttyl I'm driving." These four (or is it seven?) words could someday save your life, or someone else's.

"Fake" news: an era of comedic relief

By Abbey Dean
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So let's say that the average news program is like your run of the mill chain restaurant. Anderson Cooper 360, CSPAN, and the Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer would be the equivalent of Chili's, Applebee's, and Red Lobster. Like the news, the food is the same with some minor variations here and there.

Now, enter The Daily Show and other forms of "fake" news. Unique and entertaining, these compare to the quintessential, funky diner scene: the kind of places that you frequent half for the food, half for the entertainment factor. The menu is unpredictable, and the atmosphere is eclectic and amusing.

The Daily Show, like the diner scenario, entertains and presents the news - granted, with a specific spin.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart is like a sieve. Usually, it gleams from the segments that appear on all the major news networks, sorts through the funny bits, and presents what it feels is the crême of the crop.

For instance, The Daily Show's reporting of strategic options in Afghanistan exemplifies their distinctive approach to news coverage.

After addressing Iraq as the forgotten child, the reporter "in the field" suggested, like all the other news stations, that troop resurgence was one of the best options in the strategic approach to Afghanistan. The second feasible option was to not do anything, and hope Jon and Kate get back together to divert public attention and keep the physical and emotional burden off families of soldiers.

The Daily Show presents serious issues in national and international news, but then proffers a light, comedic touch.

Due to the immense popularity of The

Daily Show, some have begun to question the value of the Comedy Central hit. Accusations of liberally slanting the news, disrespectful allegations towards politicians, and cheapening the integrity of serious topics are consistent sources of contention.

To all of those who agree, take a closer look. There is a reason that The Daily Show and The Colbert Report both air on Comedy Central. Here's a hint: the hosts are comedians. It is their jobs to be funny and make the ordinary hilarious.

The guests who appear on the show are oftentimes serious politicians or players in the world of news and journalism. Guests include authors, activists, musicians, and journalists all of whom add credibility and spice to the show.

To add to the show's credibility, The Daily Show does not disrespect severe news topics. If nothing else it enhances our awareness of pertinent national and international issues by comically presenting perspectives that mainstream media exclude.

Case in point, The Daily Show's recession coverage included a fake segment in which rapper, Slim Thug, adjusts to the economic downturn.

The video reveals how Slim Thug adopted a more economical attitude to coping with his personal financial crisis. Shots of dancing girls holding W-4 forms and clipping coupons coalesce with a Costco logo and a "Cash for Chromes" shout-out. Hilarity ensues, but the driving point remains clear: the economic downturn affects all of us.

The news can be funny. Embrace it, love it, acknowledge it, because it's out there. Spiders crawling on popes, Glenn Beck's Kermit the Frog voice, and so much more. Watch and enjoy, because there's more to come.

Depression overdiagnosed, medicines too readily prescribed

By Gillian Carroll
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There are many solutions to being unhappy. Go out and exercise, eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, consume less caffeine, and take your vitamins.

Be skeptical about ads you see on TV that tell you depression is the catalyst for your unhappiness, because many of the drugs being advertised as "quick fixes" for depression have major side effects and withdrawal symptoms. These medications may work for some people, but nothing is guaranteed.

The following symptoms qualify as diagnosis for depression: sadness, feeling down in the dumps, changes in appetite, problems sleeping, and tiredness. However, determining diagnosis based purely on these symptoms would render one in five adults as depressed.

Depression is over-diagnosed. It is the number-one-treated psychological disorder in the world. A Japanese company promoted its medication for treatment of depression with an appalling awareness campaign stating, "Depression is a disease that anyone can get. It can be cured by medicine. Early detection is important."

Antidepressants are marketed to the public as quick fixes to their problems. The general public uses the information they receive from the television ads to diagnose themselves. They seek medical attention by asking for medication they have seen advertised on TV.

"Too many people are being diagnosed with depression when they are merely unhappy," said Professor Gordon Parker, psychiatrist of the University of New South Wales in Australia to the British Medical Journal. "Depression has become a 'catch all' diagnosis, driven by clever marketing from pharmaceutical companies and

leading to the burgeoning prescription of antidepressant drugs."

The medications available for treating depression have serious side effects because both depression and the medication affect chemical balances in the brain. It is a disorder that can neither be healed nor treated without the aide of a doctor. Depression is a serious disorder being exploited by the pharmaceutical industry for potential profit.

Commercials portray normal unhappiness as a state of depression. Zoloft coaxes their target audience, telling them that if they feel nervous, sad, tired, or alone, they may be depressed.

The wording of the commercial itself is possibly the most futile attempt to convince us that feeling emotion can be a sign of depression. Zoloft goes on to describe the disorder with a brief dramatization after they have the viewer asking either him or herself whether or not they have such mentioned symptoms. The final message left with the audience is "You just shouldn't have to feel this way anymore," coupled with a flower, a change to happier music, and a chirping bird.

Every drug commercial ends the same way: the viewer is told to ask their doctor about it. The most ridiculous part about every one of these commercials is the "oh and by the way" statement of a few miserable side effects, leaving many with harrowing images of nosebleeds and migraines. The deceiving part is that the side effects mentioned in commercials are only the common ones. It's the rare side effects that should worry people.

Depression, although over-diagnosed, remains a serious issue and symptoms are confusing to any individual with emotions. It is extremely important to get help and remember not to diagnose yourself. In the end, a doctor will always know best.