

SCIENCE & WELLNESS

Why Texting At Red Lights Is My Biggest Parenting Faux Pas

BY
Sandi SchwartzPOSTED ON
[March 14, 2017 \(March 14, 2017\)](#)

I admit it. I have an addiction that I'm not proud of. I just can't stop checking my phone at red lights.

This might not sound so bad compared to texting while driving, but it is still a terrible habit and one that I regret my children watch me do almost every day. You see, even if I am not texting while the car is in motion, my mind is still focused on what I was reading or typing. I also catch myself getting annoyed when I am interrupted in mid-thought when the light turns green. In addition, some [states' distracted driving laws](#) consider it illegal to text even while the car is idle.

So, why do I do it? Why do any of us do it?

So much of our lives take place on our phones. We are busy and do not want to miss out on the headline news or latest announcement from school or work. One [study](#) found that more than half of drivers indicated pressure to respond quickly to incoming texts from family, friends, and work as a reason for texting and driving.

About a quarter wanted to respond promptly to their significant other, friends, or family, while about nine percent wanted to be responsive to work-related texts. Also, we want to stay on top of all the texts, emails, Facebook posts, and tweets as they come in because we know if we don't, we will be overwhelmed later.

I also find that, as a working mother, my time to get my work done and manage our home life can feel so limiting. I absolutely hate wasting time sitting at traffic lights. I can actually accomplish some easy tasks in these two to three-minute increments of "free" time. However, the problem is that although I can respond to a few emails or text messages while my car is stopped, the habit overall is

problematic in a few critical ways.

It is dangerous

The most concerning issue is that using our phones in the car can literally be a life or death situation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than eight people die every day in America in car crashes that involve a distracted driver. Texting behind the wheel is one of the most dangerous distractions, increasing the risk of an automobile crash eight to 23 times.

Even if I am not literally typing while driving the car, I am distracted because I am still thinking about what I was doing on my phone. Sometimes I even forget that I am still in my car. My kids know it, too, as they often remind me to “stop checking your phone, the light just turned green!”

It leads to more stress

Although I think I am reducing stress by deleting a few emails or responding to a few texts quickly, in the long run, I actually end up feeling more stressed out. The main reason for this is that if I am sitting at a red light and focusing on my phone, I am constantly looking up to check if the light has changed because I do not want other cars honking at me. This whole process puts me on edge, and I notice that I will more easily snap at my children under this self-imposed pressure.

You lose your ability to be mindful

Phones are a complete distraction – the opposite of mindfulness, the act of being fully present in the moment in a non-judgmental way. Sadly, I have noticed that checking my phone in the car inhibits me from paying attention to my kids. They will ask me a question and I do not even hear them the first time, so they have to repeat themselves. I know this is not fair to them. I should be focusing more on them during the ride to and from school, asking them about their day.

My goal is to keep my phone in my purse and out of sight while driving, especially when my kids are in the car. When we are relaxed and focused in the car, our children will be happier and safer.

Here are some ways to be more mindful while driving that you can do along with your kids.

Make Listening To Your Kids Fun

Make it a point to talk to your children when you are stopped at a light. Try creating a game out of these special mindful moments by asking them a question and directing them to answer it in one sentence before the light turns green.

Taillight Meditation

Ronald Siegel, author and assistant clinical professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, suggests drivers practice a taillight meditation while sitting behind other cars. Simply focus on the colors and shapes of the taillights in front of you while remaining relaxed and alert.

Soak In Nature

Driving gives us the opportunity to see new places and enjoy our surroundings. When you are stopped, look around and savor nature’s beauty and feel a sense of awe. Notice the luscious trees, colorful flowers, and ever-changing clouds in the sky. Nature provides so many health benefits to us, offering peace and comfort that can’t be found in any manmade environment.

Loving-kindness Meditation: Author and meditation expert Sharon Salzberg recorded a meditation practice to use while stuck in traffic. She asks the driver to stop, breathe, notice their own bodily sensations, and observe their surroundings such as other cars and drivers. She then explains how we can take the stressful moment of being stuck in traffic and transform it into a positive time to focus on peace and love by practicing a loving-kindness meditation. This is the practice of directing positive thoughts and well wishes to ourselves and others. The four phrases that you either say out loud or think silently are:

May I/you be safe.
May I/you be healthy and strong.
May I/you be happy.
May I/you be peaceful and at ease.

You are not being a positive role-model for your children

Finally, the main reason that I wanted to write this article was because I know I need to change for the sake of my children. I realize that this poor habit is negatively impacting myself and my children. I also know that many of you are struggling with this issue as well.

According to a recent [survey](#), 75 percent of people admitted that they texted behind the wheel. The saddest part is that our kids are watching. A 2012 assessment found that 59 percent of teens reported seeing their parents text and drive. The most important step in making a change is to first admit what we are doing is wrong. I am taking this step now and will do my best to break this dangerous habit. Will you?

f 130
1
✉
🐦

TAGGED IN

- safety
- technology

More Recommendations for You

 <p>Conducting These 3 “Mom Audits” Made Me a Better Parent</p>	 <p>I’m Scared My Child Will Turn out Like Her Dad</p>	 <p>Breadwinning Mothers Carry the Mental Load at Home</p>
---	---	--

NEWSLETTER

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Interesting stories for parents from all over the internet.

Submit



Sandi Schwartz



0 Comments Parent.co

Sandi Schwartz ▾

Recommend Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Add Privacy

