

## NARRATOR

Have you ever been in a car and felt like the driver's mind wasn't completely on the road? Perhaps a persistent notification kept distracting them, or even another passenger in the car.

The thing is, distraction can come in many different forms. Most of us know that we shouldn't pick the phone up and have a conversation while we're behind the wheel but how many of us sneak a quick glance at a text message when stopped in traffic? What about that passenger chatting away in the back seat, are they affecting our ability to drive safely?

As it turns out, ALL of my attention is being taken up by...well...driving. That means that using a mobile phone increases my risk of a serious crash by up to four times.

Think about this... In the time it takes to glance at your phone, your car can travel nearly 30 metres. And that's only at 50km/h. This makes it really hard to respond to hazards on the road. Imagine the damage having a phone conversation could cause, or taking your eyes off the road to respond to a text. This can all contribute to inattention blindness, which is a psychological issue that comes from a lack of attention to unexpected stimulus. Essentially, we fail to see something that's right in front of us because we're focusing on something else.

The brain simply isn't wired to use a phone and drive at the same time and yours is no different. There's nothing you can do about it, it's how you're built. Studies suggest that only two percent of the population can perform multiple tasks at the same time without becoming overloaded. That means there's an awfully high number of impaired drivers on the road.

When I'm distracted, activity diverts to the prefrontal cortex (which handles decision-making). This causes tunnel vision and I become less aware of things in my peripheral vision. It turns out that I'm not as good at multitasking as I thought. But then again, neither is anybody else.

This is Dr. Bridie Scott-Parker. She spends a lot of time considering what drivers and passengers can do to stay focused on the road.

DR. BRIDIE

So, mobile phones are one of the key distractions we find for drivers of all ages but they're particularly risky for young people. A great habit to get into is to turn the phone off altogether so it isn't distracting in any way.

If you don't want to turn it off, put it on silent so you don't hear the notifications. Mobile phones are a very popular way of finding your way around the city or in a country area — an area with which you're not familiar. It's a great idea to actually look all the way through that journey before you get behind the wheel.

Another great idea is to put an app on your phone that sends a notification to everyone to say "I'm sorry I can't reply right now, I'm busy driving and when I get to my destination, I'll call you back."

Another great option for teenagers carrying friends is to nominate someone as the boss of the mobile phones. They get to look after the mobile phone for the entire drive, when you get to the end, they can give everyone an update on what's happened during the drive.

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And when it comes to my friends in the back seat, Bridie says it's okay for me to be a little...stern.

DR. BRIDIE

If you find your friends aren't being a good influence and you're not feeling safe, there's no reason you have to carry those friends as passengers. You're the boss of your car.

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So, next time you feel the urge to send that text, take a breath and hold off. Ask yourself if it's worth risking your life over a text about pizza. The text will be there later — so will the pizza.

Driver distraction is serious, it's part of the Fatal 5. It takes lives. Don't take a call while you're driving — if it's important, they'll call back.