

before the wheel™

teen driver coaching strategies

2015 Second Edition



2 adult drivers behaving...



3 coaching playbook

emotionally ready for the driver's seat?

Your teen is at the pinnacle of adolescent life and is feeling a rush of power and freedom. He or she is authorized to drive at 65 miles per hour in a vehicle without you overseeing the activity. This is a big jump from you being at your teen's side watching every move and guiding every decision.

You are most likely asking yourself some very uncomfortable questions.

- Will my teen click that seatbelt like he or she does every time I am in the car?
- Will my teen stay focused and avoid picking up the phone to check the incoming text message?
- Will my teen "feel the need for speed" and drive dangerously?

Your teen needs to be aware of how emotions effect driving!

What are some of the precursors to an adrenaline rush? Your teen needs to be aware that he or she cannot drive after receiving very good news or very bad news or after having an argument with a parent or friend. Teens also feel a lot of excitement when there is a big event, a prom or a big football or basketball game.

An adrenaline rush may cause your teen to put the pedal to the metal. All the excitement or anger directs energy into the right leg.

It is up to you to make sure your teen

understands the responsibility that comes with this new undertaking and that it is necessary to reign in emotions.

Be proactive and set up a time to meet with your teen in a comfortable positive setting, a favorite restaurant or coffee shop usually works well.

Your teen needs to be aware of how emotions effect driving!

Ask your teen if he or she ever felt uncomfortable in a vehicle in which an adult was angry while driving. How did your teen feel in this situation? Was he or she uncomfortable? Did the adult display some road rage?

This is an opportunity for your teen to open up about how he or she felt in this situation. Your teen will not be threatened by this conversation because it does not involve his or her behavior or the behavior of friends. It is a great door opener to discuss how emotions can create a more dangerous driving situation.

The early conversations with your teen driver need to be relaxed. You are laying the groundwork for a series of conversations and training activities. The flow of the conversations will come naturally if the parent approaches the teen with a spirit of enthusiasm and a positive problem solving approach. ■



we need to step up our game!

Why are we settling for what is being offered right now? It is not “good enough”!

We have the ability and opportunity to empower our teen with a higher level of technical training and strategizing. Motivate your teen to join you in striving to be a great driver! Yes, offer concert tickets, more vehicle privileges, a day at the golf course or the water park. Get your teen excited about excelling at driving. It is a skill that he or she will use for a lifetime.

Who is ultimately responsible to make the decisions in a crisis situation after entering the vehicle? The teen is ultimately responsible. Your teen driver and your teen as a passenger of another teen will be presented with dangerously developing situations.

There are behaviors and situations that lead up to crashes and collisions. We as parents need to provide information so that our teen can recognize that events are coming together that may lead to a negative outcome. This newsletter provides ideas on how to work with your teen to help the teen recognize that he or she does have control if preventative action is taken sooner rather than later.

I am available to talk with you further and look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

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adult drivers behaving badly, not enuff said!

It is the elephant in the middle of the room that no one is talking about!

Driving is the only activity in which adults feel that it is ok to behave in a manner that is not an acceptable example for youth to see.



Adults are texting, eating, putting on make-up and reading.

Visualize yourself attending a high school basketball game. After singing the Star Spangled Banner, the announcement is made:

“All students are expected to behave appropriately and not swear, push or shove.”

It is more likely that you will hear:

“All individuals displaying unsportsmanlike conduct will be escorted out of the building.”

Adults do not have the freedom to do as they please at a school sponsored event or any major sporting or entertainment event. They do not have the freedom to do as they please at work. They feel they do have the freedom to do what they want while driving.

It is a freedom that comes with a very negative consequence. Teen lives are put at risk! We need to get “in their face” and explain to adult friends, relatives and coworkers that someone pays the price for this freedom.

Teens see the example of adults and draw the conclusion that multitasking while driving is an acceptable behavior.

The words of wisdom from the parent and the driving instructor seem to be lost when there is an overwhelming disregard and loss of focus from other adult drivers.

What can we do to stop this behavior? We need to share this message with friends and family that it is not ok to continue to risk the lives of teens so that we can enjoy the freedom to do what we want in the car.

It is a freedom that comes with a very negative consequence. Teen lives are put at risk!

Also remember to always lead by example and let your teen know the 5 non-negotiable restrictions:

- Seatbelts must be worn by the driver and all passengers
- Follow Graduated Driver License Restrictions
- Park safely in a parking lot and be at a complete stop for all cell-phone communication and texting
- Speed limit must be followed at all times
- Absolute Sobriety – not a drop of alcohol ■

coaching playbook

you need to be the advance team for your teen!

An advance team for the president goes to a location days before the president arrives for an event. Hours before the president arrives, the team becomes more persistent and intent on providing a safe environment for the president and all the individuals attending the event.

Not only does the team “look under every rock” and leave “no stone unturned” in searching for dangerous threats to security, the team also tries to “**anticipate every possible scenario**” that could present a danger or threat.

You need to play this same role for your teen.

He or she does not have the knowledge and experience to anticipate numerous situations that develop on the road. You do have knowledge and have experienced situations in which a split second decision was the difference between a safe trip and a crash. It is important that you share this knowledge with your teen in a positive, proactive sequential manner.

Your teen wants to be a great driver. You are in a position to empower your teen with the skills and strategies to be a great driver.

You can prepare your teen to make the right decision in a variety of situations by practicing more difficult driving maneuvers, discussing possible scenarios and preparing your teen to think ahead!

The three most important areas for you and your teen to focus on are:

- **Technical Skill Building**
- **Situational Decision Making**
- **Peer Pressure Strategizing**

Technical Skill Building:

This can be achieved by taking your teen out for additional driving practice and exposing your teen to different situations. Maneuvering on ice, merging

on the highway, practicing left and right turns at large intersections and practicing getting into and out of roundabouts.

If a defensive driving class is offered in your area, it is worth the time and money to have your teen take this class.

It is important to develop a positive step-by-step tactical approach that is designed for your teen. A plan of action that encompasses the technical and decision making skill level that is aligned with the technical & strategic abilities of your teen.

Situational Decision Making:

All conversations should start on a positive note. You should be guiding your teen to develop a plan on “what to do”. Every time you communicate with your teen driver, you want it to be the beginning of a new conversation. Your instructions and guidance will lead to an open ended ongoing discussion. Your teen will want to discuss and work on more potential situations.

Scare tactics & the word “don’t” shut off communication

It is essential that you do not present the negative “scare tactics” and that you do present the positive “paths” to manage each potential situation.

Peer Pressure Strategizing:

Working with your teen in advance on strategies provides you the closest thing to the dream scenario of having an earpiece in your teen's ear and you are on the other end; coaching and telling your teen what to do next.

Before your teen enters the vehicle as a driver or as a passenger of another teen driver, he or she needs to have a set of options in mind on how to handle different situations.



Four steps that provide options and are easy to remember are:

Prepare, Predict, Prevent, Protect

Prepare

The technical skill building, situational decision making and peer pressure strategizing prepares you and your teen to expect the unexpected; work with your teen on the potential situation samples on the following page. Give your teen the opportunity to write out solutions and then verbally discuss what the best options are for each situation.

Predict

Use examples that help your teen foresee situations that are developing and have potential for a negative outcome. Help your teen visualize the next steps. For example: The driver next to you is involved in a conversation on his cell phone. The driver will not be anticipating harmful situations that are evolving. He is not focused on what is happening on the road. His ability to respond quickly is **impaired by the distraction of the telephone conversation**. You will be responsible to compensate for his possible errors in judgement and expect that this driver may not signal, may change lanes quickly or make other poor decisions.

Prevent

The alert and attentive driver sees far ahead. Why does the vehicle next to me look like it has no driver? The driver has leaned over to grab the bottle of soda that fell out of the holder on the last turn. The distracted driver is not going to be able to anticipate a possible impact. To avoid an interaction with this driver, maintain presence of mind and safely adjust speed, distance and position in your lane.

Protect

The people in our vehicle are the most important people in our lives. We do not drive around with strangers. Advance planning and preparation will lead to safe outcomes for the driver and the passengers. ■

coaching playbook; potential situations

Prepare your teen for “What to do when a situation has been identified as potentially dangerous”. Your teen needs to have ideas and options ready to tactfully come up with an excuse to avoid or exit the situation without ridicule and peer pressure backlash.

Discuss the following with your teen. Your teen should walk away with at least two options in mind on how to handle each situation.

Potential Situation 1

I drive to the coffee shop by myself and am meeting 4 friends. We talk for a while and someone mentions that he is going to the mall and has his van and can take everyone with him.

Should I join the group going in the van? What are the advantages and disadvantages of driving to the mall in my own vehicle versus going with the group?

Potential Situation 2

My friend drove me to a summer graduation party. My friend and I were split up for most of the day and finally hooked up later in the afternoon to drive home. I realized at that point that my friend had been drinking. No one else at the party lives close to me.

Should I offer to drive my friend’s car and drop him off at his house? Should I seek another ride?

Potential Situation 3

My best friend, Mandy, just got her driver’s license. She picks me up at noon to go to lunch and a movie. After lunch, Mandy says she is picking up two other friends. I am uncomfortable with this because I know she is not supposed to have additional passengers yet. What should I do now?

Potential Situation 4

I am the driver and am past the probationary license stage. I am driving 3 friends and we are going to the high school championship soccer game. We are all pretty excited yet I am annoyed that one of them is refusing to wear a seat belt. What should I do now?
