

2016 PA NewsMedia Association Foundation It Can Wait Contest Winning Entry

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Picture this: you get a text from your best friend about her new boyfriend. You quickly glance at your phone and you feel it. Your seat belt burns the bare skin on your neck and your head snaps forward from the tremendous momentum of hitting another car. The airbag flies out in a half-second, your face whacks the bag, the thick fabric deflates and you see the gruesome sight of death. The woman's lifeless body is lying on the hood of her car and you hear her baby wailing inside the vehicle. You struggle to get out of the cramped space, but your legs are pinned between the seat and the wheel. You can't do anything about the baby, and you hear the helpless cry fade.

The guilt rises over your body and you know the thought, sight, and feeling of an unnecessary death, the unanswered cries of an infant who will never know what it's like to experience the touch, the words, and the love of a mother again. A few days after your life-altering text you must face the world and the guilt that stems from court, judges, police officers, your horrified parents, and the motherless family of the deceased.

You know that you must face the ramifications of social isolation, the whispers, the stares, the looks that come from your once friends. As you walk through the crowded halls of school you feel the insurmountable weight of judgmental thoughts and glares being directed like daggers at your soul and life meaning. They don't know the guilt, regret, and hurt you feel from the sheer thought of your deadly mistake. It rises from the pit of your stomach to the depths of your heart, the lump of your throat, and finally to the tears in your eyes.

Every night before bed you hear the horrendous cries of the baby, the heinous images of the appalling sight that haunts your dreams and flashes before your eyes. The feeling of that moment bolts through your body and consumes your mind constantly. You don't want tomorrow to arrive at your doorstep with the pressure of life and living with your misjudgment of priorities.

Texting and driving is a deadly mistake that many people, not just teens, make. The consequences of this unnecessary event are a tremendous burden to bear. It's not just you that is affected by this; it is the people around you that must deal with what you have done. You have a life ahead of you, why ruin it for a text? It can wait.

Take the pledge.