

# *The JourneySafe Challenge ... for parents.*

*Protect your teen, your teen's friends and all teens.*



*“It’s like having a knife in your heart; you can’t take a deep breath. Every parent has this fear ... I’m living someone else's nightmare.”*

*David Sabet - father of Jill Sabet (killed in 2005)*

# *JourneySafe Parent Challenge:*

**Protect your teen, your teen's friends and all teens. Get the facts, get rid of your misconceptions ... and spread the word.**



Whether you realize it or not, the biggest threat to your teen's life may be parked just outside your home ... or in the driveway at your teen's best friend's house. Ironically, we've all been saturated and thoroughly conditioned to worry about the very same things our parents worried about. Sex, drugs and rock 'n roll, so to speak still represent public enemy number one in the minds of most parents. It's all well and good that you talk to your teen about safe sex; that you know the warning signs for drug abuse or monitor the kind of music you allow them to listen to. You're not the only one who looks your teen in the eyes and takes a good whiff as they come through the door at night. We've all been taking the same parent education classes. But worrying about keeping your teen relatively "sex, drugs and rock 'n roll" free will **NOT** protect them from the most dangerous threat to their health and safety.

- Automobile crashes are the number one cause of teen fatalities in America
- More teens deaths result from car crashes than drugs, alcohol, violence and suicide combined.
- Nearly 6,000 young people are killed in car crashes every year - an average of 17 a day
- Another 300,000 teens are injured, many seriously and permanently.

As a parent these statistics should alarm you; in fact, they should **enrage** you. If 6,000 teens were dying from a contagious "teen-specific" disease each year, you'd be up in arms along with every other parent in the nation demanding that something be done about it. This current crisis may not be spread by a contagion, but it is certainly an epidemic of incredible and unacceptable proportions. And there is plenty YOU can do about it.

## *The #1 Killers of Teens ...*



*are other teens!*

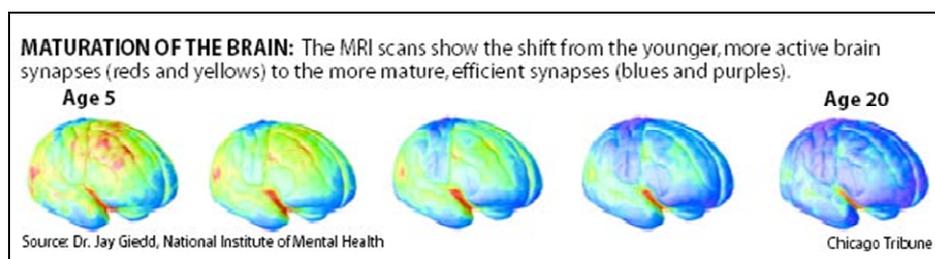
*They don't carry firearms; they carry car keys!*

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## Protecting Your Teen - Get the Facts

- **Approximately 35,000 American teens have died in automobile crashes in the past 5 years (6,000 per year; 500 per month; 17- 19 per day).** Almost 65% of all teen passenger deaths occurred when another teen was driving. In over 70% of these crashes, the teen driver was at fault.
- **16 – 18 year-olds have higher crash rates** than drivers in any other age group and driver error due to **inexperience behind the wheel is the leading cause of teenage crashes.**
- **Teens are more likely to be involved in a single vehicle crash** than any other age group.
- **Alcohol or drugs were NOT factors** in nearly 70% of these fatal crashes, rather **inexperience behind the wheel and driver distraction is the leading cause** of young driver crashes, especially in the 16—18 year-old age group.
- **The number of passengers is the most critical factor** related to teen automobile related fatalities. Recent studies indicate that **fatal crash rate risks increase by 100%** with each additional teen passenger in a car driven by another teen.
- **Teens have the lowest seat belt use of all drivers** and they are far more likely to forget to buckle up when there are other teens in the car.
- Studies by the National Institute of Health and other trauma prevention institutions demonstrate that **the teen brain is particularly susceptible to distraction and risk taking behaviors and limited in its capacity to multi-task behind the wheel.** Although teens can often think as logically as adults, flaring emotions and distractions often undermine their better judgment and decision making skills.
- Multi-tasking and decision making skills are controlled by the *prefrontal cortex* – the last part of the brain to mature. This part of the brain does not fully develop until the mid-20s in females, often later in males. **Yet 90% of teens admit to doing multiple tasks while driving**, such as talking on the cell phone, eating, playing loud music, channel surfing, using an iPod like device, and interacting with friends in the car even when they admit they find it distracting. **(An overwhelming 70% even admit to text messaging while driving according to our JourneySafe surveys).**



- **Peer pressure is the primary motivator among teens.** Teen surveys show that a large majority of teens admit to having felt unsafe while driving with friends, yet **only 45% said they might dare to say something to the driver** and 50% of those who said they would risk speaking up feared the driver wouldn't listen or would ridicule them.

### The good news

In spite of peer pressure, a majority of teens still say their parents have the strongest influence on their driving behavior. What you say and do matters most of all and programs like JourneySafe are all about teaching teens how to use **“positive peer pressure”** as a tool to protect themselves and each other while driving and/or riding in cars with friends.

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*Protect your teen, protect your teen's friends ... protect all teens.*

***Protecting your teen: Get rid of your misconceptions ... and call a crash a "crash."***

Most parents understand the serious nature of the teen driving crisis but **many are misinformed** about the main causes of teen-involved automobile crashes.

- 59% of parents surveyed by the Allstate Foundation correctly identified automobile crashes as the number one killer of teens.
- Nearly half (49%) **incorrectly** believe that driving drunk or under the influence of drugs is the main cause of teen crashes.
- **"Not my teen" syndrome is as common among parents as "It won't happen to me" syndrome is among teens.**
- Less than 1/3 of parents say "teens are good drivers", yet 88% say **their** teen is a good driver.
- 55% of parents believe that if their teen got in a crash, it would be someone else's fault.
- 93% of parents feel prepared to teach their teens how to drive, but 60% have never heard of or are only vaguely familiar with the graduated licensing laws in their state.
- According to JourneySafe surveys, kids say that 45% of parents who know about graduated and provisional licensing laws have allowed their teen to "break" those laws on occasion and either ride with or give a ride to another teen during their provisional driving period.
- The majority of parents allow their teens to drive in dangerous situations in the first few months after licensure (at night, during bad weather, with friends in the car, etc.)

## **Stop using the term "automobile accident" and call a crash "a crash."**

You do your teen a disservice if you allow him/her (or yourself) to fall into the trap of calling a car crash (in which anything other than an act of God or nature is responsible) an "accident."

By nature, most crashes are unintentional happenings, hence the term "accidental" is easily applied. But, because we use the **same** term to describe so many other ordinary, usually harmless happenings, (spilled milk, forgetting an assignment, over-sleeping) to call **any** car crash an "accident" sets a dangerous precedent for a teen on the brink of being legally allowed to operate 5,000 pound lethal weapon. Never before has the concept of "an accident" been anything significant enough for your teen to lose sleep over. They've grown up in a tolerant society, in a loving family where the words, "It's okay, don't worry, it was **an accident**," have become a coverall, a protective mantra to soothe their consciences and absolve them of any real sense of guilt or responsibility.

Unintended or not, whether it's a fender bender or a fatal crash, in almost every case there is a reason that can be traced back to simple human error(s). Perhaps, as adults we can fully differentiate between "at fault" levels. Certainly, according to law, a person who gets into a car intoxicated, with full knowledge that their actions could put others at risk should be held more accountable than someone entirely sober who causes a fatal car crash while fiddling with the radio. But for the victim, or the victim's family ... wherein lies the difference?

Even law enforcement strengthens this slippery slope into denial by calling a car crash an MVA (motor vehicle accident) as if an MVA is as relatively inexplicable as a CVA (cerebral vascular accident - the medical term for stroke) in terms of who's to blame. And yet inevitably, when police officers file their "**accident**" reports, they determine liability.

Hopefully you'll never have to deal with this topic on a personal basis with your teen. **But** ... if you want your teen to be responsible ... **teach them about the true nature and weight of real responsibility** and the potentially deadly consequences of irresponsibility. **Call a crash a crash, rather than an "accident."** You're one step ahead of the game if your teen starts to drive really knowing (and sadly, many don't) that "I made a mistake" behind the wheel, isn't in any way comparable to "I made a mistake ... and overslept ... or forgot to study ... or missed the ball."

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***Protecting your teen: Be a good example & don't be influenced by your peers***

It all comes back to YOU. Parents understand that they are role models for their teens and 93% say they are prepared for the process of teaching their teen to drive. Still, more than 60% say they aren't familiar with the current laws or the main causes of teen related automobile crashes. Meanwhile, their own driving behaviors very often send the wrong messages to their teens. According to the most recent surveys:

- 99% of parents believe that demonstrating good driving behavior is helpful in teaching their teen how to be a safe driver, yet many parents admit to displaying behaviors they wouldn't want their teen to emulate while driving.
  - 71% use their cell phones frequently while driving
  - 62% fiddle with the radio or operate an iPod, MP3 player or other device while driving.
  - 26% admit they have broken the law (they don't say which law)
  - 25% admit they have been stopped for speeding or some other moving violation.
  - 25% admit they have been involved in a car crash.

And, in case you thought you'd grown indifferent to peer pressure yourself, you should know that parents, for better or worse are definitely influenced by their peers when making decisions about the circumstances in which their teen will be allowed to drive or ride with friends. (Even to the point where they cannot stand together on specific issues.)

- 48% of parents say that other more lenient parents make it difficult for them to control their own teen's driving privileges.
- 24% have allowed their teens driving privileges against their better judgment because "other parents do the same".
- 38% of parents say they often disagree with their teen's other parent about the ground rules and how best to enforce them.
- More dads (56%) than moms (42%) are affected by other more lenient parents.
- More dads (63%) than moms (49%) believe it would be someone else's fault if their teens were in a crash.

***Protecting your teen: Communicate!***

Talk to your teen often about driving **and** riding in cars with friends, just like you talk to them about the dangers of smoking and drinking, taking drugs and unsafe sex. Don't wait until they're ready for their learner's permit; talk to them early. Understand the role of peer pressure in a teen's world, but **don't under estimate the power of your influence**. Your influence counts most when you start exerting it early. Most parents have had the "sex" talk and/or the "drugs" talk by the time their kids start middle school. Unfortunately, most parents place greater emphasis on talking with their teens about sex and drugs than about how to protect themselves behind the wheel or while riding in cars with friends, **even though car crashes pose the greatest threat to their teen's safety**.

- When their teens are 12 or younger: (Source: The Allstate Foundation 2005 Parent Survey)
  - 77% discuss the dangers of smoking.
  - 72% discuss the dangers of taking drugs.
  - 70% discuss peer pressure.
  - 51% discuss underage drinking.
  - 40% discuss **drunk** driving.
  - 32% discuss safe sex
  - **Only 27% discuss safe driving**

Maybe you think it's unreasonable to talk about safe driving with a 12-year-old; if so, why do we celebrate Red Ribbon Week and teach them to "just say no to drugs" starting in elementary school? The earlier you start talking the more chance you're child will actually be listening and retaining some of what you have to say. None of the major surveys bothered to ask what percentage of parents started talking to their teens early about the possible dangers of **riding** in cars with their teen driver friends, **or** about how teen passengers affect the risk potential for a fatal crash. **JourneySafe suggests you do this first.** It's more likely that your teen will accept a ride from a friend before they're able to offer one.

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## **Protecting your teen: The 5 most important choices you can make.**

As a parent, there are many things you can do to help protect your teen driver and help them make safe decisions behind the wheel. JourneySafe encourages teens to "Remember the Five," — five activities they can practice to help reduce their risk of being involved in a crash. As a parent you should be familiar with that handout and those five things that we encourage your teen to think about every time they get behind the wheel or climb into the passenger seat of a friend's car. As well, **there are five things parents should also memorize and practice**, if they truly want to decrease the odds of a fatal crash involving their teen.

- **Talk early and often with your teen about safe driving and safe passenger habits and help them "find their voice."** Use JourneySafe techniques to help you.
- **Make careful decisions about your teen's driver education and training.** Don't just use the yellow pages to find a driver's training course for your child, or do price comparisons to determine which one to go with. Think about all the money you spend on SAT prep courses and/or tutors, trying to get your kid into a good college. Have you ever balked about what you have to pay for their music lessons, or sports? At JourneySafe, we're not so concerned about your child's chances of getting accepted to a good university as **we're concerned about whether they'll live long enough to have that opportunity.** Generally speaking, you get what you pay for in life and this is one area in which you just can't scrimp. If you need a recommendation or list of what to look for in a driving school, contact us at [www.journeysafe.org](http://www.journeysafe.org).
- **Don't rush your teen into driving or push them into driving in conditions that make them feel uncomfortable!** (Bad weather, late night driving, etc.) When presented with the actual facts and statistics, many teens are choosing on their own to wait longer to get their drivers' licenses. If that's their choice, support them wholeheartedly and rather than focusing on the inconvenience, be glad for the opportunity to drive them around a bit longer.
- **Exercise your parental rights.** Monitor situations in which your teens travel in groups/with friends ... or may have the opportunity to engage in risky behaviors. **Set the rules** about when, where and with whom your teen may drive or ride ... and stick by them.
- **Insist on a driving contract between you and your teen.** Many organizations recommend a **PARENT-teen** driving contract and there are dozens to choose from. JourneySafe, prefers to call our version of this agreement a **TEEN-parent** driving contract. Simply changing around the word order lets the teen driver know that they're not the only person in the "hot" seat". It proves to them that as a parent you recognize your own risks and responsibilities and that you're also willing to make promises and abide by a set of rules. What better way to show your love?

### Find out what JourneySafe is telling your teen:

- Please read all of the material in the JourneySafe Teen Challenge; download it from the internet or ask us for a copy. Understanding the JourneySafe message to teens and reinforcing it at home is critical.



# The JourneySafe Parent Challenge

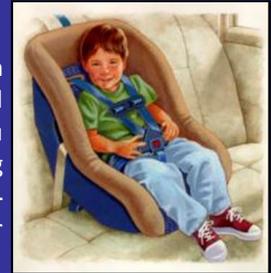
*Protect your teen, protect your teen's friends ... protect all teens.*

Protecting your teen's friends: *Reversing a cultural trend toward negligence.*

## **Keeping your teen safe is NOT just about YOUR teen ...**

Most parents would agree that protecting their children was a lot easier before their kids entered adolescence and certainly before they became old enough to drive. Maybe it was more time consuming following your toddler around and carpooling kids back and forth from school, sports, music lessons and tutors. But **just being able** to follow them around, always knowing where they were and with whom kept that powerless feeling at bay. The very control you had over their lives made all the difference. You trusted in your own ability to take care of them. Other parents trusted you to be responsible for their kids, as well. They sent their little ones over to play or let them ride along with you to a birthday party or back and forth to school. In reverse, you trusted other parents to protect your child in the same way.

In those days, you were likely over-zealous about child safety, maybe even more so when other parent's children were your responsibility. You held their hands while they crossed the street; you made sure every toddler had a car seat, you checked every seatbelt. You made sure kids wore bike helmets, knee and elbow pads and no one ever went swimming without an adult seated right there by the pool. **Anything less would have been unthinkable irresponsible.** Only a foolishly negligent parent would fail to do everything in their power to keep their own or someone else's child from harm.



Regrettably once teens begin to take on more responsibility for themselves, many parents unconsciously relax their guard. They don't stop "worrying" about their **own** child once he or she becomes a teenager, but their **sense of concern for teens in general wanes**. Inevitably, most parents start subconsciously believing that the welfare of their neighbor's teen isn't really any of "their business."

For instance, you might slow down and stop if you pass your own daughter walking around the neighborhood with an unfamiliar group of kids, but chances are you won't do the same if it's your neighbor's daughter or one of your own daughter's friends. There are lots of reasons for this change in perspective —the psychology is certainly interesting and the question of whether or not it's appropriate to monitor the behaviors of your teen's friends is a parent's personal decision. The issue and the message is simply that, **as a society, we clearly have stronger instincts to protect our tots more than we do our teens, even though the threat to our teens is thousands of times greater.**

**Every parent must agree ... their teen is NOT the only teen they need to protect.** In the same way you assumed responsibility for another parent's 6-year old, you **must** accept responsibility for their 16-year old, especially if that teen is in your home or may be riding in a car with your own teen and/or others. Being a teen advocate and a vigilant protector will never be more important.

- **If teens are at your house ... YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE for whatever happens to them.** There are no *MORAL* excuses for negligence. If teens trust you enough to gather at your house, you must be worthy of that trust and willing to bear the same responsibility for their welfare that you would assume if they were toddlers. **NEVER leave teens home alone to make important decisions without your counsel and** don't assume your teen will think like you, or even in the same way they might think and act if their friends were not watching. Remember, when teens gather in groups, the group mentality usually takes over.
- If it's a special occasion (prom, winter formal, grad night, etc.) and teens gather at your house before hand, **YOU are responsible for making sure they leave your home safely. BE THERE** when friends arrive, when they leave and when your own child comes home again. **Walk all the way out to the car with the them.** You don't have to make a big deal of it, but be sure everyone remembers their seatbelt and no one persuades the group into making an unsafe decision ... like having everyone cram into the same car, just to save gas, or continue the fun.

# *The JourneySafe Parent Challenge*

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**Protecting your teen, your teen's friends and all teens: *Spread the JourneySafe message.***

## **Take Action - What each parent, grandparent or concerned adult can do to help save lives.**

**Teens don't just kill teens in car crashes.** The teen driving crisis is a national public health issue which everyone must take an interest in and do their part to help. As a parent, it starts with you, but it can't end there. Commit yourself to the following goals and get passionate about raising awareness and motivating your entire community to JourneySafe.

- **Understand your state's laws.**

Every state has Graduated Driver's Licensing laws to help new drivers get their initial on the road experience under lower-risk conditions. The first year and the first 1000 hours are the most dangerous for new drivers. Be familiar with these laws and restrictions; don't allow your teen to break them and discourage other parents from allowing their teens to break them.

- **Empower teenagers to find their voice and reinforce how important it is to speak up in dangerous situations.**

Don't hesitate to initiate conversations about safe driver and passenger habits when your teen's friends are around. Being a passenger in another teen's car is often more risky than being a teen driver. Talk about the JourneySafe pledge with your teen and don't forget to stress the passenger responsibility part. Let teens know that passengers often have the power to prevent a crash.

- **Exert positive peer pressure yourself.**

Bring the issue up with other parents and encourage them to find out more about JourneySafe. Parents must present a unified front in setting appropriate rules for their teens about when, where, how and with whom their teens may drive or ride.

- **Practice what you preach.**

You still have the strongest influence on your teen. They've been watching you in the driver's seat for years and learning your behaviors. Your teen is far more likely to be a calm and courteous driver, wear a seatbelt and drive or ride safely if they see you doing the same.

- **Teach teens what it means to be a "designated passenger."**

When you're driving with your teen and/or your teen's friends in the car, make a point of handing your cell phone to someone else and explaining the reason. It will be so much more natural for your teen to resist temptation and do the wise thing when they're behind the wheel in cars with friends, if they've seen you model safe driver and passenger habits.

- **Encourage your local high schools and youth groups to create a safe driving culture and teach JourneySafe.**

Bring it up at your next PTSA meeting, book club or church social. A few words here and there will go further than you realize. Even the softest voice has great power when it's telling the truth and the message matters.

- **Use the internet**

There are countless internet websites and resources you can tap into. A list of helpful sources can be found at [www.journeysafe.org](http://www.journeysafe.org). Visit [www.journeysafe.org](http://www.journeysafe.org) often and sign up for our e-mail newsletter.

## **Take this JourneySafe Challenge TODAY**

- **You could save a life just sitting at your computer ... how hard is that?**

Copy and paste the following link into an e-mail to a few of your friends — <http://www.journeysafe.org/Links/presentation.asp>. Ask them to take a few minutes to watch this online JourneySafe presentation. It could save their child's life. **Remind them to be sure their sound is on.** Ask them to forward it on to other families they care about. It's not a chain letter; they don't have to send it back to you, just send it on to other parents. There are no guarantees; no one will receive a million dollars or extraordinary luck by doing it. In fact, their reward will simply be what they WON'T read in the paper one Sunday morning in the future — the story of another teen killed in a senseless easily preventable car crash.