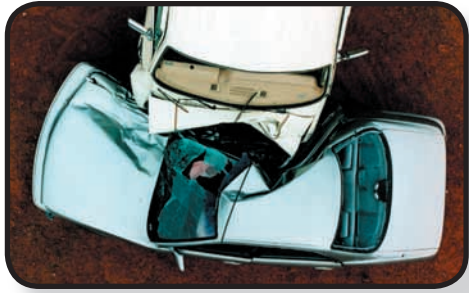


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How To Persuade Teens *To Listen and Believe*

There are two groups of teens in a typical driver's education program:

Group #1: Teens who have never been in a car accident or known anyone who was hurt in a car accident. This group has a higher probability of taking risks and will be less inclined to listen to you. These kids suffer from the "it can't happen to me" syndrome!

Group #2: Teens who have either been in a car accident or known someone who was hurt in a car accident. This group has a lower probability of taking risks and is already at least somewhat persuaded that getting behind the wheel can be a dangerous activity.

Your most difficult to reach audience in the driver's education program will be those teens who have never been exposed to the horror of a car crash through personal experiences.

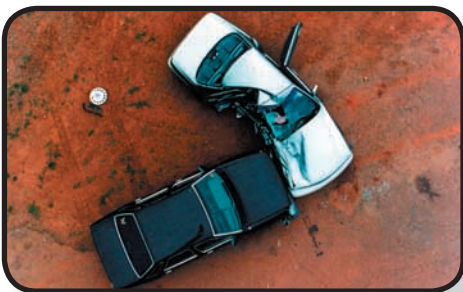
PROBLEM: How to convince teens (especially Group #1) that they are not invincible?

SOLUTION: Use the exercises in the Student Manual to start chipping away at your students' false sense of security. Present crash statistics in a way that puts a human face on the numbers and places the student into the victim's shoes. Enlist the help of the teens in Group #2 whenever possible as a positive form of peer pressure.



"The only way (teens) learn is if they are personally affected. If they've lost somebody in an accident or if they've been injured themselves. Otherwise, they won't even think about it."

Cobb County Teen, "Dying To Get There"



Answer Keys

Video Quiz Answers

1. B
2. D
3. B
4. Girl sits in back of car without a seat, too many passengers, no seatbelts, adjusting radio, using cell phone, drinking water, hands off wheel
5. D
6. C
7. A
8. Brain injury, can't hear or speak very well, tremors and lack of physical coordination, loss of friends, loss of freedom, dependence on parents. Point out how difficult it is for Wesley to communicate; there is so much personality and energy in his eyes but he can't express any of it.
9. Slow Down!
10. 50 percent of teen deaths occur on the weekends.
11. "Responsible"

"You Be The Producer" Exercise

Have students pretend they have been hired to be the next "production team" for a new teen driving video. Hold a brainstorming session where students generate creative ideas they feel would really make an impact on their peers. Find out what kind of scenes, interviews, facts, music, etc., they would include in their video to dramatically impact their peers.





Lesson Plans ...

Class Discussions

1. Open a discussion about the “Dying To Get There” video. Go around the classroom and ask each student to mention one segment of the video that affected them the most. What new segments would they add to the video to reach teen drivers if they were asked to join the next production team?
2. Ask each student to write down some of the driving errors portrayed in the video. Then have a brainstorming session where students list common teen driving errors that were not shown in the video (applying make-up while driving, allowing pets to roam in the car, tailgating, drunk driving, wearing shoulder seatbelt without lap belt, etc.) Ask teens to raise hands for each driving error they commit on a regular basis. Write down percentages next to each item to determine which errors are the most common in your class.
3. Have students list some of the new safety features in cars (airbags, seatbelts, steel cages, shatterproof windshields, padded seats) that protect drivers during a crash. Find out if the features are creating a false sense of security among teens that makes them feel safer when speeding or driving recklessly, then have students list injuries that can be caused by each of the safety features. Point out that their feeling of safety is a deadly illusion because, although seatbelts and airbags do save lives, they do not prevent all injuries. Demonstrate how airbag injuries in low speed crashes include facial burns and the loss of front teeth. Discuss how seatbelt injuries include broken pelvic and ribcage bones even when seatbelts are fastened properly. Mention that car seats and belts often break completely off in crashes exceeding 50 mph and send occupants crashing through the windshield. The goal of this discussion is to help teens realize that safety features protect drivers from many injuries —but do not make them 100% invincible in a crash.





4. Ask students to name famous celebrities who have been injured or killed in car crashes. What driving mistakes did they make? What injuries did they suffer? Some examples: Niki Taylor, supermodel who didn't fasten her lap belt and suffered massive liver injuries in a low speed wreck (42 surgeries). Princess Diana died as a result of excessive speed in a Mercedes Benz that is considered one of the safest vehicles in the world. Lisa Left Eye Lopes died in a crash caused by excessive speed just one week after being a passenger in another car that killed a child, Dale Earnhardt crashed due to excessive speed in vehicle that had state-of-the-art safety features.

5. Have students raise their hands if they or a close friend have ever been in a car accident. Talk about the details of each accident. Did the event scare any of the students into better driving habits?

“More Than Just a Name” Project

1. Tell students to locate a newspaper, magazine, or internet article about a teen who died in a car accident. (If a student personally knew a local teen who died in a crash, they can conduct their research by talking to friends and family of the deceased victim.) Have students present facts and physical objects to the class that show the teen's life before the accident, such as cheerleading pom-poms, football jackets, etc. Each student should also discuss why the accident occurred, what injuries resulted from the crash, and the lingering financial/emotional effects on family and friends. Stress the importance of using compassionate sensitivity in interviews with loved ones who are providing information. The goal of this exercise is to transform the “names” of crash victims into real-life people so students begin viewing





crash statistics in a new light.

2. If time constraints prevent students from doing the research assignment themselves, the instructor could do an in-depth presentation about one of the crash victims.

“It’s Your Life Now” Exercise

Tell students to rip out the “It’s Your Life Now” page from their workbook and carry it wherever they go for the next 24 hours. Their assignment is to jot down every activity they do and evaluate how the activity would have to be altered if they were paralyzed from a car accident. Stress that mundane activities, such as bathing, going to the bathroom, eating, wiping tears, blowing noses, etc., are very important aspects that need to be examined. The goal of this exercise is to make students aware of the lifelong consequences of a split-second driving mistake. Spend the next class period discussing student insights about the exercise.

“It Can’t Happen to Me . . .?!” Field Trip/Exercise

This obituary-writing exercise can be combined with a field trip to a local cemetery or hospital morgue for maximum impact. The goal? To shock hard-to-persuade students into the harsh realities of reckless driving. Have students contemplate how even their smallest driving mistakes could lead to their untimely death in a car crash. Make sure students include the following information in their obituaries:

- Date the obituary for tomorrow’s date
- Student’s name and age
- List of surviving family members and friends





- Cause of the crash: driving mistakes that most likely caused the crash
- Injuries suffered in the crash
- Past accomplishments and future plans that were cut short due to the crash
- Funeral arrangements and burial site

“Take Action” Exercise

Ask students to identify one bad driving habit that they do every time they get behind the wheel. Have each student write down ways that this habit could eventually lead to a car crash. Tell students that it takes six weeks to turn new behavior into a habit. Ask each student to make a serious commitment to changing their bad driving habit over the next six weeks. Have students make their commitment public by coming to the front of the classroom to sign a large sign-up sheet. Follow up over the next six weeks with weekly oral student progress reports.

“Hey Mom! Let’s Take A Drive” Exercise

Explain to teens that many of their bad driving habits were unconsciously learned by watching how other people drive (especially parents). Have students monitor the driving habits of their parents, siblings, and friends closely over the next week and jot down any driving errors they notice. Then have students compare their observations to their own bad driving habits. Are their own habits rubbing off on younger siblings or friends? The goal of this exercise is to show students how bad driving habits often become contagious.





Role-playing Skits

Divide the class into small groups of at least four people. Assign each group one of the following topics that they will develop into a short skit:

1. How To Stop A Friend From Driving Drunk After A Party
2. Ten Driving Mistakes Made By The Typical Teen Driver
3. Driving Recklessly Last Weekend Changed Our Lives Forever

Exhibits, Murals, Collages

Divide students into teams of four people. Provide each group with a large sheet of sturdy paper (4'x3'), scissors, glue, colored markers, and old newspapers/magazines. Encourage artistic creativity! Assign each team one of the following topics to be transformed into a colorful exhibit, mural, or collage that will be displayed in the school cafeteria or lobby.

1. Drunk Driving
2. Speeding
3. Seatbelt Use
4. Teen Car Accidents
5. Driver Distractions





“On Your Mark . . . Get Set . . . Go?” Exercise

Most teens are uneducated about the major differences between their illegal drag races and the professional NASCAR races they see on television. Examine through class discussions how different your students’ car safety features are when compared to those of a professional racecar driver (different seatbelts, helmets, braking systems, etc.) Stress that even with state-of-the-art safety features, Dale Earnhardt and other professional racers die every day. If students bring up the topic of nitrous oxide fuel injection during class discussions, be sure to warn them of the dangers they face when using this substance to supercharge their cars in a drag race (explosion, leakage of fumes into car, and severe engine damage, legal issues, etc.). Depending on the severity of the drag racing problem in your town, a field trip to a legal drag racing venue could be very an excellent tool that visually demonstrates to teens the differences in car safety features, allowable car models, pavements, medical crews on standby, bystander safety measures, etc.

“Movie Critic” Exercise

Ask your students to watch three movies or t.v. shows during the next week that were produced for teen audiences. Have students analyze any overt or subliminal messages about teen driving being portrayed by Hollywood. Are seatbelts portrayed as un-cool? Are teen characters having a blast drinking and driving with no negative consequences? Is speeding used as a symbol of power? Are the actors talking on cell phones or engaging in other distracting behaviors while driving? Is drag racing portrayed as a macho rite of passage for boys (as in the film “Grease”)?





Class Debates

Split the class into six small groups. Have each group pick one of the following debate topics out of a hat and prepare strong arguments for their topic. Each topic should have one “Yes” and one “No” group assigned to it. After 15 minutes of prep time, send first two groups up to front of classroom to debate the first topic. Topics are:

1. Should the legal driving age be raised to 18 years old?
2. Do airbags and seatbelts make drivers virtually invincible in crashes today?
3. Should powerful “muscle cars” be banned from teen drivers to save lives?
4. Are teens who are given cars by parents more reckless behind the wheel than teens who purchase cars themselves?
5. Would a new “passenger law” that limits the number of passengers teens can carry in a vehicle to one person help reduce teen accidents?
6. Boys pay higher insurance rates than girls do because statistics suggest that boys are more reckless behind the wheel. Do boys really take more risks than girls?

Research Notebook

Ask students to collect three articles about teen driving each week. The articles can come from newspapers, magazines, brochures, or the internet. Each article will be placed in the student’s research notebook and include at least five sentences of personal commentary from the student about his/her thoughts and insights. Encourage students to vary their topics so that they gain a broad base of knowledge about different teen driving issues.





Driver's Ed Website

Have students plan, write, and design a driver's education link for your school's website. The goal is to design an exciting online forum that is created by teens—for teens. Links on the website should list info that is pertinent to your community. Some ideas for links include:

- Licensing Info (age requirements, closest DMV office, road test tips)
- Curfew Times
- Penalties for Drunk Driving, Speeding, Drag Racing, etc.
- Bulletin Board Where Teens Can Post Questions and Ask Advice

Display—Car Wreck

Arrange for a salvage operator or police unit to deliver a crashed car to the front lawn of the school for a 30-day public display. For maximum impact, arrange to have the display set up one week before prom season!

Have your students write and distribute flyers to the entire student body about the details of the accident and what happened to the occupants during the crash. This type of display has been done at many U.S. high schools and serves as a powerful daily reminder to students of the dangers of reckless driving.





Field Trip— Hospital Or Rehabilitation Center

Arrange a trip to a local hospital, emergency room, or rehabilitation center where students can observe teens who have been injured in car accidents. If possible, schedule a face-to-face visit with a crash victim who is willing to talk to the students about the accident. Obtain all necessary authorizations from parents, teens, and hospital administrators prior to arrival. Have a post-trip debriefing session where students share insights about the experience.

Field Trip— junior High School

Arrange a field trip to a nearby junior high school where your students can put on a 30 minute presentation for 14 year-olds about the dangers of reckless driving. Have students prepare skits and visual aids that will impact this age group. Instruct your students that exposing middle-school kids to safe driving techniques can decrease their future risk-taking behaviors.

Invite A Speaker

Invite a teen who has been involved in a serious car crash to speak to your students. The presentation should focus on: what type of reckless behavior caused the accident, the physical, financial, and emotional consequences of the crash, and what the teen would do differently if he could relive that day. Open up an informal Q&A session after the speech where students can ask questions.

