

If You Text While Driving, You Need to Read This Now

Texting while driving has been a hot conversation topic in the last few years with accident rates rising. If you drive on any regular basis, you may pass “No Texting While Driving” signs or notice accident statistics associated with texting posted above road signs.

Texting while driving is an important issue, but what about plain distracted driving?

The Department of Transportation reports 660,000 drivers across the United States use their cellphones while driving at any given moment throughout the day.

Distracted driving is any activity that can divert a person’s attention away from driving, whether it be adjusting your radio to fixing your hair in the mirror.

The Distracted Accident

The U.S. Department of Transportation reports 10 percent of all drivers under the age of 20 are involved in fatal crashes reported as “distracted.”

Katie Mathews was close to becoming one of those numbers. She is a survivor who lived to tell her story.

Mathews was a 16-year-old living in Venice, Florida, when an accident she was involved in on May 6, 2001, would forever change her life.

“It was a friend of mine’s birthday party and it was the type of party my mother wouldn’t let me go to. It was late at night with drinking, so I called her and I lied to her,” she told *CBN News*. “My friend and I both thought—driving on the interstate at night—what are the chances of anything

happening?”

As Katie and her friend were driving to the party, they were using their cellphones for directions. Katie’s friend became distracted, then realized she was about to miss her exit. She overcorrected the wheel and lost control—the vehicle flipped over four times.

The roof collapsed on Mathews’ head, breaking her C6 and C7 vertebrae, making her a quadriplegic.

“We were very blessed because off-duty paramedics [who] happened to be driving opposite direction saw the whole thing and got on us right away and saved my life,” Mathews said.

‘How Could This Be My Life?’

After spending five weeks in the neurological ICU unit, Mathews was then flown to Denver, Colorado, where she spent two weeks in a coma.

When she awoke, she couldn’t remember the last three years of her life, family or friends and thought she was 13-years-old.

“I didn’t believe my family was my family, I didn’t believe the doctors were helping me. I actually thought they were making me broken. I literally thought I was in some form of hell. My brain couldn’t comprehend what happened,” Mathews said.

The doctors performed more than 10 major surgeries to save her life, including fusing her spine, placing filter wires throughout her lungs to prevent clogged arteries, and adding VP shunts in her skull to relieve pressure from brain fluid.

“It took a long time for me to realize this is my life. I started going into a depression and saying, ‘How could this be my life? How could God let this happen to me?’ I became very angry to anything contributing to the accident that I was in,” Mathews said.

Life as a Quadripelgic

Facing a new norm, Mathews and her mother Shellie decided to let the past go and start living the new life God had for her.

With that new outlook, Mathews connected with Donna Marini, a quadriplegic who advocates for other spinal cord injury victims to live independently.

Marini then connected Mathews to a man named Jim Strauser at a spinal rehabilitation center called Neuro Restorative.

Through months of training and rehab, Strauser and Neuro Restorative worked to teach Mathews independence by thinking outside the box to perform daily tasks.

Ranging from putting eyeliner on using her mouth to placing large loops on household items to utilize a hanger for picking them up, Mathews is able to 100 percent live freely on her own.

Raising Awareness

Today Mathews speaks to raise awareness on texting and distracted driving in an effort to save others from going through the same accident.

"This is what I'm supposed to be doing. I was in that crash that altered my life forever so I can share with others so they don't make that mistake because I am so lucky to be alive," Katie said.

"Her mentality is that you won't tell me what I can't do and I'll show you I can do it," her brother, Jeff said. "That to me is very rewarding as a brother to see of your older sister."

Mathews' mother also shared encouragement to other parents who may be going through hardship.

"Someone said to me, God never gives you more than you can handle and they said this the second weekend of Katie's accident," she said. "And it was hard to hear, because I didn't want to hear it. This was too much for me to handle."

"Until she started getting through it," she said. "When we came home and she was still alive, I thought of those words again. I thought, 'You're absolutely right. God does not give you more than you can handle.'"