

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### Getting Smarter Behind The Wheel

from the American Counseling Association

Automobiles today are safer and easier to drive than ever before. From seat belts to air bags to frames that help protect us in crashes, the family car is a much safer experience.

And yet, all that isn't helping much according to the latest statistics. The National Safety Council reports nearly 19,000 people died in motor vehicle accidents the first half of this year, an increase of 14% over last year and the highest total since 2007.

The experts say there are a number of reasons for this. Lower gas prices, for example, have people driving more, and a growing population means more drivers.

But studies say these are only partial answers and that the real causes are contributing factors we can control.

You probably already know what those factors are: speeding...distracted driving...driving while impaired...getting mad behind the wheel.

When a driver is affected by one or more of those issues, accidents are more likely to occur.

Imagine someone leaving a bar at night, driving quickly so his or her spouse won't get angrier, trying to call on the cell phone to explain that he or she is coming, and then getting mad because of some other driver's actions.

You, of course, would never do all those things together, but the reality is that even just one of these contributing factors will greatly increase your risk behind the wheel.

The sad reality is that too many of us are sometimes not completely in control of our lives. We promise ourselves not to text or phone while driving, but this one time it was "really important." We assure ourselves that the glass (or 2 or 3) of wine with dinner won't affect our reflexes on the drive home. We try not to get mad about all those idiots on the road or how late that traffic jam is going to make us, but we find ourselves boiling over anyway.

And while any of us can slip up at times, when such actions are happening on a regular basis it's time to look seriously at whether you really can control those factors in your life, or whether you need help.

Every day people seek out professional counselors, not because they're "crazy" but simply because they need the help that a trained professional can provide on even the small aspects of life. Seek help before you become part of a growing statistic.

*"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)*

###

words: 399