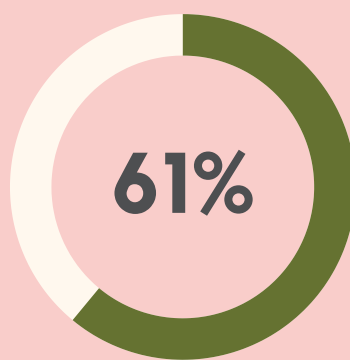


# What's Really Driving Distraction: YOU



Have you ever put your car in park and then realized you can't remember how you got there? If you have, you aren't alone. And it might be a bigger problem than it seems. Although it may just seem like muscle memory or being an experienced driver, you are most likely "zoning out" - going through a very mild form of dissociation. This is also referred to as daydreaming. Although this can happen during mundane activities without much danger (folding laundry, recognizing you haven't absorbed a single word after getting to the bottom of a page of a book) it can be hazardous while driving. Going into "autopilot" can hinder drivers from being able to react in the moment to sudden traffic, light changes, and cars.



According to a survey by Erie Insurance, the number one distraction in fatal accidents is daydreaming, which makes up 61% of all fatal accidents caused by distracted driving (Your Erie).

## Zoning out can be caused by many everyday activities, and doesn't always show warning signs.

Factors that make you more prone to daydreaming are sleep deprivation, information overload, and being overwhelmed, stressed, or having gone through trauma (Healthline). Although you may feel fine before you get in the driver's seat, consider what emotions and circumstances you have been dealing with. Ask yourself if these situations could cause you to lose focus while you are driving, or get lost in inner thought. If the answer is yes, it's best to keep your hands off the wheel and ask someone else for a ride.

## Ways to combat daydreaming BEFORE it happens

### SLEEP DEPRIVATION

If you didn't sleep well the night before or have been battling a day of "feeling off":

- Eat healthy during the day and fuel yourself right. Your tired body will want easily digestible sugars and carbs, but make sure to fuel your body with greens, protein, and water to have enough energy for a safe drive home
- Take a power nap before you drive. Even if it's just for 20 minutes in your car, more sleep is the most effective way to prevent losing focus



### INFORMATION OVERLOAD

If you just received a lot of new information or have a brain full of ideas bouncing around:

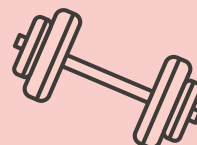
- See if there is a coffee shop, park, or another relaxing area within walking distance where you could decompress before you get in the car
- Talk to a friend or family member or make a list of the information. This will help you organize the thoughts in your head and give you time to refocus before you have to drive



### GENERAL LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

If you are going through stressful circumstances in your life:

- Try to reduce your caffeine intake. This will help you to increase your focus and keep your mind stable while you are driving
- Practice safe, effective coping techniques that will give you time to think about your situation while you aren't driving. This could be exercise, journaling, gardening, or something completely different. Make sure to give yourself time to process that isn't in the car



### If you find yourself zoning out while driving:

Put something on that you can focus on help you stay centered until you can pull over safely or get to the place you need to be. A podcast on a topic that you are interested in or music you know well might help you keep you engaged. You can also take a different route than usual which will help keep your brain stimulated.