

## Learn from my mistake; take away the keys

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Posted by Marblehead Reporter

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One of the many challenges we face as our parents get older is what to do about their voice of freedom in terms of driving their cars. As their driving skills become questionable, when do they reach that “tipping point”? How do we convince them it is time to hand over their car keys?

Driving a car has always been enjoyed as a form of independence. To no longer have the option to drive oneself to the store or visit a friend is not something anyone wants to face.

Unfortunately, my father refused to face the facts that he was no longer capable of driving safely. Countless times the topic came up, but it was always contested with powerful resistance. The “right thing to do” would have been to have had the courage to take away his keys, sell his car and come up with alternate plan as to how he would get around. Trouble is, his living situation did not have easy access to other forms of transportation. This was my excuse.

My suggestion to people who have parents at this stage in their lives: Face the tough decision, take away their keys. We worry about the safety of our children and insist on them wearing bike helmets. There are laws that mandate this behavior. Seat belts are required to be worn while driving. Yet, there is really nothing in place that requires people to prove they have the skills to continue driving as they get older.

Because I failed to take serious action and decided it was easier to not deal with it, my father died in a tragic car accident. His poor response time and decision making put his life in danger and another driver's. Thank goodness the other driver was not hurt, but she now has to live with the memory of this accident and know that my father died. What a horrible thought to carry around inside for the rest of your life.

This accident was totally preventable. My Dad could still be living a normal, healthy life. He made everyday decisions to lead a healthy life through eating well and plenty of exercise, but when a important decision like this had to be made... he was just too selfish to make the right one. I also failed to take the necessary action. -- **Robert M. Brown, Rockaway Avenue**

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