



WHY DO GOOD PARENTS LEAVE THEIR CHILDREN IN CARS TO DIE?



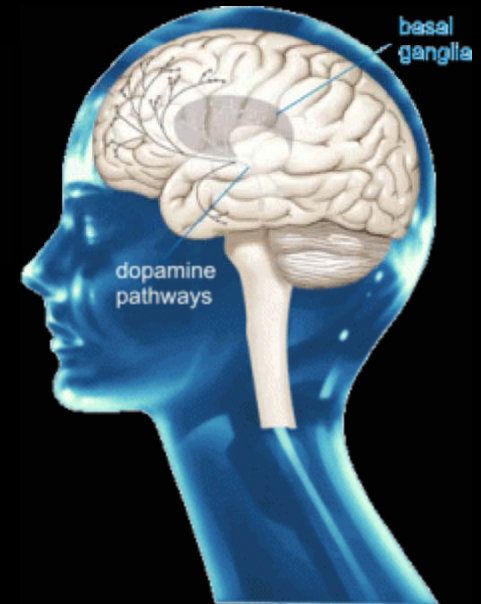
Fatal Distraction: intersection between emotion, stress, and memory

- Lack of sleep
- Stress
- Change in routine

Fatal Distraction:

basal ganglia

- Reinforcement Learning
 - Red means stop
 - Green means go
- Memory for movement
- Reliable routines / skill mastery
- Resistance to change



Fatal Distraction: basal ganglia take-over

The basal ganglia allows us to go through the motions of driving to work without consciously considering each turn or action, thereby delegating the responsibilities of conscious thought and decision making to the more evolved prefrontal cortex.



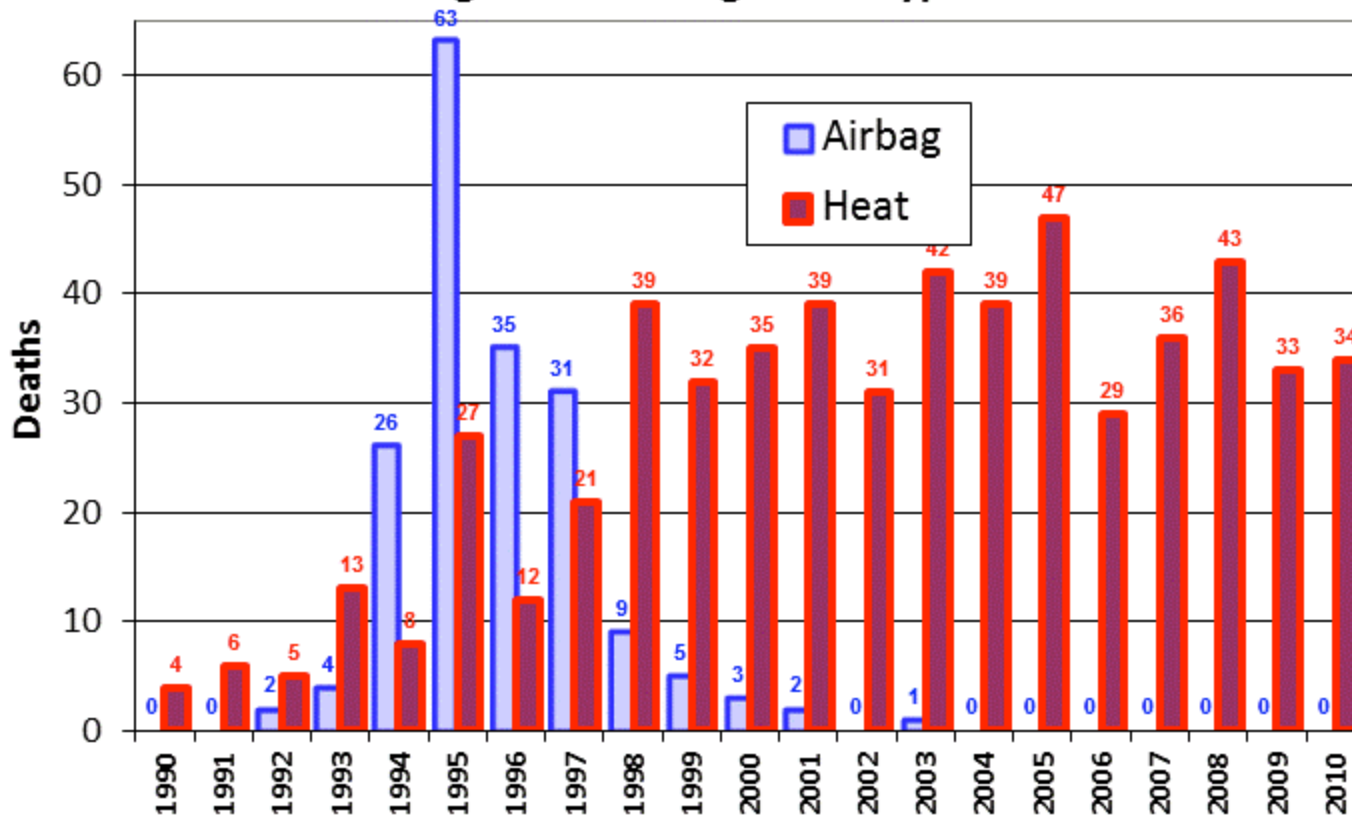
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Conscious thought is disrupted and the basal ganglia takes over like an autopilot.

Vehicular Child Fatalities

Passenger Side Airbags¹ and Hyperthermia



¹NCSA, NHTSA ; "Counts of Frontal Air Bag Related Fatalities and Seriously Injured Persons", July 2007

Fatal Distraction: intersection between emotion, stress, and memory

- Put something important in the back seat
- Put a large stuffed animal in the car seat when empty and move it into the front passenger seat when the child is in the car seat
- Arrange for day care to call any time the child does not arrive when he or she is expected.
- Lobby Congress for legislated weight sensors under seats

Fatal Distraction: What can we learn from these parents?


- Sleep deprivation/ Stress/ Change in routines
- Changes to promote safety may have unintended consequences
- Alarms are important





Fatal Distraction: intersection between emotion, stress, and memory

Challenge for innovative minds:

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- What conditions and situations are ripe for fatal distraction?
 - Have we created situations prone to distraction or autopilot functioning with safety innovations?
 - What alarms can we set to interrupt basal ganglia takeover?