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Guest Column:

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Good graduation advice for seniors

BY PAMELA DELOATCH

It's high school graduation season, and throughout the country, teenagers are hearing nuggets of wisdom to carry them through the next stage of their lives. Find your passion. Chart your own path. Make a difference in the world.

While all of these are instrumental to success, I have my own salient advice: beware the five minutes of stupid.

Five minutes is all it takes to make a stupid, terrible, horrific mistake that can end your life and destroy the lives of those who love you.

Most teens will think that is an overblown statement. Most teens think they are invincible. And hopefully, that's true. But sometimes, just sometimes, it's not.

Many people may think that those teens that make stupid mistakes are in fact, stupid. But that's not true either. They are often bright, funny, articulate, academic and athletic. They may be loved well by their classmates, teachers and family.

But in five minutes, they do something that - had they waited a few more minutes - they themselves would have thought: what a stupid idea! Tragically, they didn't get those few more minutes because that stupid idea turned out to be deadly.

Graduation at my son's high school was a joyous time, yet overshadowed with worry. A classmate - by all accounts an extremely bright, perceptive, kind, friendly young man - had his five minutes of stupid, as he reportedly attempted to scale the side of the school building. He fell and hit his head and was in a coma. He later died.

The same weekend, a sophomore in Fayetteville snuck out of the house with his sister's car keys and went on a drive with a friend. He lost control of his car and it flipped over. He was killed.

Also the same weekend, three teens died and one was injured in Rolesville when the teenage driver lost control of the car and crashed into a tree. According to the news report, excessive speed was a factor.

All of these kids had plans for the next day. So

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it's not about intent. It is about not thinking things through.

It also comes with the physical development of the teenage brain, as all of the nerves in the frontal lobe have not yet connected.

So what is a teenager to do?

Maybe a start is to get past those five minutes of being stupid. Give yourself a little time for reason to catch up with impulse.

Ask yourself: do I have to sneak and do this? If so, it's probably stupid. If I feel I have to do this right now, or my window of opportunity will close forever - it may be stupid.

Would my beloved teacher or mentor think this is stupid? It may well be.

Teenagers may not like the idea of backing down. But really, isn't it better to be alive, and teased unmercifully by your friends for being a wuss than to be stupid, dead and forever mourned?

Pamela DeLoatch lives in Cary. Read her blog at www.TriangleMom2Mom.com.



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