EBU5606 Product Development & Management

Topic 10 - In-Class Exercise

Autopilot mode and lose awareness of the child in the back seat

Tyler Cestia, 37, with his wife, Pam Cestia, 38, in New Iberia, La., in the bedroom of their son Thomas, who died in a hot vehicle in 2021.Edmund D. Fountain for The New York Times

Mr. Cestia was preparing for a stressful audit at work when he forgot to drop off Thomas at the babysitter on the way to his office in New Iberia, La. At lunchtime, he drove to a restaurant with the auditor and then back to his office. That afternoon, it occurred to him that he didn't remember seeing the babysitter that morning. He ran to his truck where he found Thomas in his car seat behind the driver's seat. Thomas, who was 2 and a half years old, was pronounced dead at the scene. A child dies in a hot car every 10 days in the United States. The deaths are more frequent in summer but happen in every month of the year. About 40 children a year die from heatstroke, either because they were left or became trapped in a car.

The majority of hot car deaths — 53% — happen because someone forgets a child in a car.

- About 46% of the time when a child was forgotten, the caregiver meant to drop the child off at a daycare or preschool.
- Thursdays and Fridays — the end of the workweek — have had the highest deaths.
- More than half of the deaths (54%) are children under 2 years old.

Dr. Diamond said that many of the deaths happen when parents drive to work and go into **"autopilot mode and lose awareness of the child in the back seat."** During the drive, the part of the brain that handles habitual behaviors like commuting "outcompetes and suppresses" the conscious memory system, which is responsible for reminding a parent to stop and drop off the child at day care, Dr. Diamond said. Stressed and sleep-deprived parents are particularly susceptible to this problem, he said.

Step 1) Work in a group of 2 members

Step 2) Participate in a brief discussion to answer the following questions:

1) What is the issue or problem identified?
2) What could be a technology-based solution to the above problem?
3) What would be your prototyping approach for your proposed technology-based solution?