

Keying in on kids may prevent them from being left in hot vehicles

June 2nd, 2013 | by [Amelia Hadley](#) – The Desert Sun | amelia.hadley@gmail.com



When my youngest son— now 6— was about 9 months old, I tucked him into his car seat and the two of us headed to the drug store. It took less than 10 minutes to get there.

I went in to the store, searched up and down the aisles looking for what I needed, made my purchase and went back to the car....where my son sat in his car seat, happily chewing on his foot. I dropped my bag and yelped.

I'd totally forgotten he was with me.

So caught up in the errand and, probably, all the other things I had to do that day, that less than 10 minutes after I clicked him into his seat and kissed his forehead, I completely forgot he was there.

It wasn't in the summer, but we still live in the desert. I wasn't in the store for long, but he was still a baby and he was alone in the car.

I screwed up.

Prior to that, I'd heard stories of people leaving their children in cars for hours at a time because they'd forgotten about them— babies who passed away from the heat. "How in the world can someone forget their kid is in the car?" I'd want to know.

Now I understand. For me— and I'd be willing to bet many other parents can say the same— my mind was preoccupied, I was frazzled with a long to-do list. I was in the car with my son, but my mind was in a million different places.

For me, it was a wake-up call that I needed to slow down and "turn off" the mental distractions that so preoccupied my life.

In an [article](#) for USA Today, Jayne O'Donnell writes that the number of children who died in May after being left in hot vehicles was close to double the average for the month. O'Donnell goes on to write that seven children died in hot cars in four states and "all but one were left by a family member."

The Coachella Valley has gone from dipping its toes into the heat of summer to plunging in. The temperatures in June will hover above 100 degrees on any given day, and it's only going to get hotter.

The interior of a car sitting outside in those temperatures can easily reach 125 degrees.

Extreme temperatures and frazzled parents may have disastrous results when it comes to kids and cars.

In O'Donnell's article, Janette Fennell, founder of Kids and Cars says, "This can and does happen to the most loving, responsible and attentive parents." She suggests leaving something in the backseat so you have to open the back doors before leaving your vehicle.

I would also suggest turning the radio off, setting the blue tooth aside and interacting with your child, even if he or she is too young to talk back. Had I done that on that afternoon six years ago, I would have remembered my son was in the back seat.

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