

ISSUE 5

Cell Phone Taboos

The growth of cell phone use has led to an erosion of etiquette. Maybe I am sitting somewhere thinking or reading a book; maybe I am watching a good movie. Suddenly, someone's phone rings. Or, without my hearing it ring, I hear somebody talking loudly to someone else. It is a very strange feeling, like listening to a deranged person talking to himself. It also makes me extremely uncomfortable to be forced to overhear the intimate details of some stranger's personal business. In any case, my former mood of enjoyment and contentment has disappeared, replaced by feelings of unease and irritation.

What is the most impolite aspect of cell phone misuse in public places?

- (1) Not putting it on vibrate mode or turning it off entirely
- (2) Speaking loudly
- (3) Talking for a long time
- (4) Not being inhibited about discussing one's personal matters
- (5) Not seeming to care about anyone else's right to privacy



Sample Answers

(A) The cell phone is a wonderful invention. It lets people in an emergency situation get help easily and immediately. If we are delayed, it lets us notify others of the problem so they will not be concerned about us. We don't have to worry about missing an important message while we are away from home. But, it certainly is *abused*! I can't stand listening to somebody *yakking* endlessly about nothing.

(B) I can understand that someone has received a phone call and is responding to it. But I hate it when that person is *oblivious* to others around him and talks as loudly as he can.

Speak Your Mind

1. Is there any difference in cell phone usage between young people and old ones?
2. What is the proper etiquette in using a cell phone in public?
3. Can you think of going a day without a cell phone?
4. The age of children having their own cell phones is constantly going down. Why?
5. What do you think about buying a cell phone for your own young kids?
6. What age do you think is appropriate for a person to have a cell phone of his own?
7. What are the bad side effects of camera phones?
8. How has the *advent* of the cell phone changed people's lives?

- **abuse** : use wrongly or improperly; misuse

- **yak** : gab; chatter

- **oblivious** : unaware

- **advent** : arrival; appearance

8. How has the advent of the cell phone changed people's lives?

F : I just read an old science fiction story about a society in which all its members were in constant contact with one another. The process was not described, but it sure reminded me a lot of our own world and our reliance on cell phones.

M : How old is that story?

F : I don't know exactly, but maybe fifty or sixty years.

M : That's pretty amazing! We weren't even born then!

F : But there were some pretty *disturbing* aspects that I can't stop thinking about.

M : Such as?

F : Well, first there was absolutely no privacy. Everybody was talking or being talked to all the time. No one could do anything without the rest of the world knowing all about it. And if there was some sort of technological problem, or if someone was being punished by being denied *access*, the sense of isolation would drive him insane.

M : That could be a serious problem. Sometimes we need to be alone, just to think about our situation and what to do about it.

F : I know. But it was worse than that. The government always knew where the people were and what they were doing. As a result, they lived in an extremely *oppressive police state*.

M : Yes, I think it would be easy to plant a tracking device in a cell phone. That's a very *scary* thought!

F : And, as part of the process, the government was *perpetually* sending out its own *propaganda* through the phones. No one ever had any way to avoid it. So it was easy to *brainwash* and control the *population*.

M : Yikes! Maybe I should start thinking about leaving my phone at home from now on.

