

Title:

Shut Up, Put Up, and Get Some Quiet Back

Word Count:

433

Summary:

Jump off the merry-go-round of 24 hour accessibility to get in touch with yourself and the people you love.

Keywords:

etiquette,manners,cell phone,relationships,quiet,phone calls,telephone,communications,peace

Article Body:

When firestorms raged across Southern California and land lines were down, having a cell phone to call my family was a blessing. When I could sit in my ocean front garden and use both hands while talking to my Mother in Florida, I adored my cell phone. After getting lost in a jumble of streets, a cellular call helped me find my client. It's become my everywhere companion and yet, I am aware that we might just have too much of a good thing.

We've all become incensed at the loud boors who turn public places into phone booths where we're bombarded with information we don't want, don't need, and probably shouldn't know. But now, we're entering a second stage in the cellular age where this amazingly portable device can actually disrupt meaningful face-to-face conversations, the privacy of precious vacation time or the silence of reverie and deep thinking.

This tiny (and getting tinier) device has become the metaphor for our 24/7 culture. It has become almost unthinkable to turn it off or plain not answer. In short, the phone controls us rather than visa versa.

We live in an age of omniaccessibility according to Fordham communications professor Paul Levinson. Like Pavlov's dog, we jump every time the cell phone rings, waving off friends, family or kids just to answer the call. We hang this device on our belts, in our pockets, or around our necks, ready to pounce when it rings. As Levinson states, "the notion of being unreachable is not alien to human life." That's why there are "Do Not Disturb" signs and offices with doors. Freedom, he claims, comes in simple rebellion. To reclaim our private time, according to Levinson, "there must be a general social recognition that

we're entitled to it."

What would happen if we shut our mouths, put the phone away, and then concentrated on whatever was before us: a place, a project, or-even more importantly-a person? Think of the connection that is made when someone has our undivided attention! And, miracle upon miracles, what if that person was actually ourselves? What if we had uninterrupted time with ourselves? Might we discover a chance to slow down and breathe? Might we discover a small voice that's been trying to be heard above competing ring tones?

Try it. Shut up. Put up. I think it will make our next cell phone call more meaningful.

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