



By *Elena Brouwer*

LAST MONTH, I ATTENDED AN EVENT with my friend George S., an ambitious lawyer rapidly climbing the ladder of success. After I introduced him to a few VIPs, he engaged in conversation with them, until the moment we all heard the “ping!” of his Blackberry. Without hesitation, he whipped out the instrument and proceeded to read his text message. It got worse. He then sent a text message while talking with us. What could be so important to George that he would interrupt a conversation with people he had just met?

While checking on a friend who had just come out of surgery, the patient next to her, also in the recovery room, was yelling to have her cell phone brought to her immediately. I was aghast.

By the year 2009, it is projected that there will be one billion cell phones worldwide. Today, wherever we travel, we can find cell towers to help us stay connected. Unfortunately, in our world of ubiquitous connectability, we have failed to develop any regard for how we come across to our fellow individuals.

According to Synovate Research Group, 68 percent of people polled observe poor cell phone etiquette at least once a day. **SA**

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR CELL PHONE MANNERS.

- If you are trying to enjoy a meal in a restaurant while the person at the next table is having a loud conversation on his cell phone, you should simply tell the maitre d' and have him speak to the diner. Let the restaurant deal with it. Moving to another table may be another option.
- “No Cell/No PDA” zones are necessary to enjoy a conversation, meals or quiet time. Disconnect occasionally. It will be good for you.
- If you are in a meeting and receive a text message from one of your out-of-town clients, you should continue to participate in the meeting and reply later. The person conducting the meeting will be aware of your breach of business etiquette if you make calls or send text messages during the meeting. If your response is critical, ask to be excused as soon as the opportunity allows.

Technology and manners can be compatible if we define new rules for acceptable behavior. After all, good manners are all about making others feel comfortable around us.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO AVOID HAVING POOR CELL PHONE MANNERS.

- Do not make calls or text messages while driving. Trying to do anything else while driving, especially using your cell phone or PDA, creates a safety hazard.
- Do not shout while on your cell phone. The phone is sensitive enough to hear your voice and everything else around you.
- Do not subject others to your ranting and raving at your husband, children, or employees.
- Put your cell phone away when dining with others. If you expect an important call, put your phone on vibrate and step away to talk when you receive it. Make the conversation short.
- Do not use your phone while in the bathroom.
- If you want to be taken seriously, do not set your ring tone to anything but a normal-sounding ring.

And, if you are curious, the important text message that my friend George just had to answer was from his daughter wanting to know when he would be home!

Elena Brouwer is director and founder of the International Etiquette Centre. For more information please visit www.etiquettecentre.com.