Why I Hate Cell Phones

by Sara Reihani

In this wild, unpredictable world that modern society has thrust upon us, only one gadget anchors us amid the whirl of Wiis, Wikis and Wi-fi: the cellular phone. From its origins as the pineapple-sized "car phone" exclusive to power-suited 80's business executives to its current incarnation as camera/computer/life coach, the cell phone has gone from convenient utility to graven idol of instant gratification. Scores of modern social phenomena are directly attributable to cell phones including textual flirtation, Bluetooth use disguised as schizophrenia and the ringtone as a profound expression of personal identity.

While constantly reachable has undeniable advantages, cell phones deceive us into thinking that this accessibility is an inalienable right rather than a flawed privilege. By giving people my cell phone number, I give them permission to contact me whenever they want, no matter where I am or what I am doing. I am thus shackled to their whim, subjecting me to their contact when it may not be desired. I could, of course, simply turn off my phone, but this is no longer an acceptable excuse. After all, what is the use of owning a cell phone if you are going to leave it off all the time?

Those who live lives more unpredictable than mine may have good reason to consider their cell phones crucial lifelines, but for most of us, they are more of a luxury than a necessity. Cell phones are currently dirt cheap to manufacture, but their true cost is insidious and pervasive. Besides the perils of hidden fees and the lubracious allure of text-messaging, one must consider the emotional enslavement that comes with allowing the outside world to contact you almost anywhere. Owning a cell phone guarantees that you can and will be interrupted in movie theaters, libraries or scenes of pastoral tranquility, usually for trivial reasons. In a world full of landlines, pay phones, email, instant messages and Facebook messages, few of us need the accessibility to go that extra mile.

The most alluring thing about cell phones for the younger generation (i.e., us) is their efficacy as instruments of spontaneity. They ensure that no matter where you are or what you are doing, you can be notified of other entertainment opportunities; namely, where the new party is at. In this way, we are freed from the responsibility of making plans in advance. We can also cancel plans at the last minute without condemning ourselves to evenings of loneliness—instead, we can just use the opportunity to insinuate ourselves upon everyone else in our electronic phone books. This protean convenience breeds selfishness by liberating us from any solid idea of obligation. The primal human fear of isolation also comes into play here; cell phones feed on this anxiety like blood-hungry mosquitoes, promising a solution for the many who live in vague terror of spending time alone with their thoughts.
In a way, cell phones actually decrease effective communication. They allow us to make calls from almost anywhere, meaning that we do not have to interrupt our other activities to sit down and call someone in particular. We can do anything while talking on the phone: distractedly check Facebook, drive irresponsibly. If I can call someone at any time to obtain or verify information, it lessens my incentive to actually listen to them the first time they tell me something, which is inadvertently disrespectful and powerfully habit-forming. The worst side effect of modern conveniences like cell phones is how easy it is to be dependent on them in the most casual situations.

They give you brain cancer, too.

After Reading
6. What tone did the writer reveal through her diction?

Check Your Understanding
Writing Prompt: Craft a letter of your own to the editor in response to the previous editorial. Use the steps outlined in “How to Write a Letter to the Editor” to guide your writing. Be sure to:
• Identify a specific point of view.
• Make use of a variety of rhetorical techniques.
• Follow the letter specifications of your local newspaper.