

Maintaining Boundaries: Technology

In 2007, approximately 11 percent of vehicles in the typical daylight moment have a driver who is using some type of phone, either hand-held or hands-free, according to the National Highway Safety Administration.

Mobile phones, Wireless Internet, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), Bluetooth...Over the years, technology has evolved into an integral tool in many people's lives. It has changed how we communicate, how we do business, how we form relationships, and so on. In addition, with the advent of wireless technology, there are few limits to our technology use. However, learning how to manage it can help you balance its impact in your daily life.

Reach out. Don't always rely on electronic communication—make an effort to pick up the phone to talk, or arrange to meet in-person rather than relying on email, texting or chatting. Whether it is a business associate or a family member, connecting to each other through human contact is vital. Too much electronic communication can have a destructive effect on our relationships since it can make us feel over stimulated and ultimately longing to be left alone, which doesn't benefit anyone.

Slow down. We are increasingly living in a society that expects instant gratification due to the speed at which technology has transformed daily events, which can help us get more done but doesn't necessarily improve quality of life. The expectation of instant gratification can also impact our personal relationships. You might consider setting aside leisure time each day or each week

in which only physical human communication is allowed. If you absolutely must make a call such as checking on a babysitter, excuse yourself for a few minutes so that you can give your full attention to both parties without making them compete for your attention.

Manners. Technology has prompted new etiquette or manners, some of which are also important safety measures, such as not driving while talking on a mobile phone. While many people have adopted "hands free" technology, such as Bluetooth or head sets, it is always recommended to leave the phone off while driving. Other manners to keep in mind include:

- Be aware of your surroundings. At times, people forget they are in a public place while talking on a mobile phone by talking loudly and indiscreetly. Rule of thumb: Try to speak 10 to 20 feet or more from the closest person.
- When emailing, write out actual words since many people are not aware of text abbreviations.
- Finish conversations and turn off your PDA or phone (and remove earpieces) before engaging someone in conversation, stepping up to a service counter, entering a quiet place (i.e. theater), etc.

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