

## *The New American Pacifier*

We really do have a “New American Pacifier,” and it is called your cellphone. We are occupied an average of 5.4 hours daily on these devices, quite often regarding personal versus professional issues. We check our cellphones an average of ninety-six times a day, which is essentially once every ten minutes. The average cost is \$114.00 per month, or approximately \$1,368.00 per year.

How did we ever survive before the cellphone was invented? Yes, we were able to successfully complete a full day’s work. Likely, the fixation with the “New American Pacifier” causes distraction when performing your job. It may well annoy your manager and coworkers.

Contrary to popular opinion, cellphone etiquette does exist. You can apply it to your daily routine, no matter the location. Particularly as many are heading back to the office post pandemic, consider the following guidelines, as tough as they may be:

- Put your cellphone on vibrate and put it away, out of sight.
- Answer important calls only. Otherwise, you will only be further distracted. Let the unimportant calls go to voicemail and respond later.
- Find a private place to conduct essential calls. However, try not to make the restroom that place.
- Importantly, do not look at your cellphone during meetings. It is disrespectful. According to research, even having it on the table in front of you is a significant distraction.
- Place personal calls only between the hours of 10 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.
- Place business calls between 8 a.m. and one hour after leaving the office.

Significant health issues are associated with the usage of the “New American Pacifier.” You may be experiencing headaches, decreased attention, shortness of temper and even sleep disorders. Depression, eyestrain, “tech neck,” weight gain, auto accidents and anxiety can also be attributed to cellphone usage.

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, consider how much time you spend on your cellphone. Forget about the “do not leave home without it” hogwash, except for circumstances in which safety is an issue and emergency usage may be required. Leaving home without it may allow you to stop and smell the roses. Take a walk and see the beauty around you. Read a book. Allow your creative thinking and imagination to go someplace comforting and productive. Enjoy a meal or cup of coffee without interruption. When was the last time you gave someone your undivided attention? When was the last time you had a face-to-face conversation without distraction?

The “New American Pacifier” is here to stay. But, what have we omitted from our lives? Yes, it is a great invention, if used in a positive and productive manner. When you spend less time on your cellphone, you will have more time to take care of yourself and those around you. As a result, you may feel physically and emotionally healthier. When you lessen the addiction to the “New American Pacifier,” you and everyone around you will thrive. Hopefully, you will be happier. You really *can* leave home without it, or at least follow the basic etiquette to manage how you use it.

***My wish for you is to lead a happier and healthier life without unnecessary distraction,  
to be present and deepen your connection with those around you.***

***George E. Gercken***

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