

National Cell Phone Courtesy Month: Cellphone Etiquette

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These days most of us are attached to our cellphones practically 24/7, but few actually realize that July is National Cell Phone Courtesy Month. The smartphone is easily one of the greatest inventions of our time, but it is definitely one of the greatest distractions as well. Thus, author and etiquette expert Jacqueline Whitmore founded National Cell Phone Courtesy Month back in 2002 with the intent of making cell phone users more aware and respectful of their surroundings. To avoid offending others or any other kind of awkward moment, follow these tips by Whitmore to honor National Cell Phone Courtesy Month this July.

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- When with others, especially colleagues and/or superiors, make sure to be completely present. Take a break from your cellphone to avoid any disruptions. Let calls go to voicemail and leave any text messages or e-mails unread, whether you're in a meeting, performance, courtroom or other busy area. In some instances, turning your phone off entirely may be the best solution, says Whitmore.
 - If you absolutely cannot turn off your cellphone, take advantage of its silent or vibration settings. Specifically when in public places, such as business meetings, religious services, schools, restaurants, theaters or sporting events, your phone's silent and vibration options will save you from disrupting your surroundings.
 - In the situation where you are expecting a call that absolutely can't be postponed, notify your companions ahead of time and then excuse yourself when the call does come in. Nonetheless, the people you are currently with should always take precedence over calls you want to make or receive.
 - When speaking on your cellphone, avoid what Whitmore has coined as "cell yell." It is important to remember to use your regular conversational tone when speaking on your wireless phone, says Whitmore. People tend to subconsciously speak more loudly than normal on their cellphones and often don't realize how distracting they are being to others.
 - It's best not to display anger during a public call as well. Conversations that are likely to be emotional should be held where they will not embarrass or intrude on others, says Whitman.
 - Also, make sure to keep it private. Always be aware of your surroundings and avoid discussing confidential information or anything too private in public. You never truly know who may be in hearing range of what you are saying while on your cellphone.
 - Most importantly, follow any and all rules when in public places. Many places, such as hospitals or airplanes, prohibit or, in the least, restrict the use of mobile phones. Adhere to posted signs and instructions you may see in places such as these.
 - Last but not least, focus on your driving. Always practice wireless responsibility while driving (i.e. absolutely no texting and driving!). Avoid making or answering calls while in heavy traffic or other hazardous driving conditions. Only place calls when your vehicle is not moving, and try to use a hands-free device to help focus your attention on safety as well as the road. Always make safety your most important priority. Although Arizona has no statewide restrictions on texting or cell phone use (except for school bus drivers), Phoenix, Flagstaff and Tucson drivers are prohibited from text messaging while driving.

To read more about Jacqueline Whitmore's National Cell Phone Courtesy Month, or learn other etiquette tips from the expert, visit etiquetteexpert.com or jacquelinewhitmore.com.