

Modern day ignorance

BY BRIAN LOCKHART

Isn't technology great?

The digital world has ushered in a whole new world of convenience.

A world of information is at your finger tips ? and so is inconsiderate behaviour and bad manners which now seems to be the norm and people don't even seem to realize it is happening.

There are still schools of etiquette around the country, believe it or not, that teach people, mostly younger people sent by their parents, how to behave in public.

These schools teach young people how to behave in a business situation or at a wedding and how to use dinnerware properly so you can at least avoid looking like a rube if in fact you were raised in an environment where finger foods were the norm.

They teach you to look someone in the eye when you meet them, smile, and present yourself like you are interested in the other person ? basic stuff.

Most people won't be invited to a royal wedding any time soon, but fundamentals like not showing up at the dinner table wearing a hat or without a shirt just because you happened to be playing beach volleyball before dinner should be standard.

Have you ever been at a fine restaurant and saw a guy enter the foyer wearing shorts and flippy-floppy shoes? I have and it didn't work out well. If you are going to take your girlfriend out for dinner at a nice restaurant, at least put on your big-boy pants so you will look presentable and spare the rest of the diners the anguish of seeing your feet.

What has seemed to have happened with all this new technology is the trend of avoiding personal interaction or invading someone else's space.

There is nothing more annoying than standing in line at the supermarket or bank, and having the person behind you carrying on a conversation on their cell phone, and then to watch them make a bank transaction or pay for groceries while still talking. It's rude to the other people in line and worse for the teller or cashier who has to ask 12 times if they have Air Miles.

It's times like this I think it would be fair to take out my marine air horn and let off a five-blast danger signal just to let them know what it's like to be annoyed in public.

The attachment to the iPhone is seemingly eliminating the art of personal conversation.

I went to a local chicken wing eatery the other night ? and no I didn't have to be concerned about the placement of the silverware, but I did observe some pretty anti-social behaviour.

One woman sat at the bar and talked on her phone the entire time I was there. Was she suicidal and seeking help or just lonely?

At a table near me sat two women - a younger woman of around 30, and a much older lady, who as it turns out, was treating and paying the tab. The younger woman spent most of her time texting, and occasionally nodding, at the other person as the older woman tried to make conversation.

How rude do you have to be to not personally engage the person you are having dinner with and actually look them in the eye when you speak to them?

The worst, however, was the table beside me. A family of four came into the restaurant ? parents and two boys. All four had cell phones. The mother and younger son placed theirs on the table. The older boy occasionally played with his.

The father however, never put his phone down. He was looking at it when they sat down, all through dinner, and was still looking at it when they paid their tab and left. How he polished off a full plate of barbecue covered wings left handed is beyond me.

The only time he spoke was to ask the kids what kind of sauce they wanted on their wings or to point out something he was looking at on his screen.

How can you take the family out for dinner and not be bothered to say one single word to your spouse because tiny pictures on a screen are more interesting than the person you married?

Here's a thought ? try going a day without your cell phone. Unless your wife is close to giving birth or you are expecting a call about the donor kidney you are waiting for, it won't do you any harm to not check your phone every ten seconds and you might learn more about the people you meet on a single day.