

## Put down the phone

by BRIAN LOCKHART

?Beam me up Scotty.?

For fans of the Star Trek series, that little futuristic communication device they used on the original television show was something they dreamed they could own.

Imagine being able to call someone using a little device you could carry in your pocket.

Add to that the possibility of being able to see the person you are speaking to on a TV-type screen, and you really had something from the future.

The home picture telephone never really took off. The technology has been around for a while, but the thought of having a camera on you whenever you answered the phone just didn't seem like a good idea.

Designers realized that most people, when answering an important call, didn't really want to be exposed if the telephone rang early and got you out of bed, or some other time when you didn't look your best.

Do you really want to speak to a possible employer, or possible future romantic partner while wearing pyjamas and having a bed-head hairdo?

The whole beam me up Scotty thing really did happen. Current iPhones can actually do a lot more than the Star Trek version did.

You can call up information on the internet, call your friends, gamble, check the news, check the weather, watch sports, and visit any neighbourhood on the planet via Google Earth.

Sounds like a good device to have. It has also become a serious social interaction killer device.

I went to McDonalds the other day for a Quarter Pounder with cheese. I stood at the designated waiting area, waiting for my number to be called.

While my burger was being grilled to perfection, I took a look around the restaurant. I didn't see a single person who wasn't on a phone or device of some sort ? not one.

One table in particular was very disturbing. It appeared to be a family. A mother, father, and older teenage daughter.

With one hand they ate their food, with the other, they used their device. All three had their heads down, and eyes glued to a screen.

There was no interaction while having a meal ? none at all.

I was at another restaurant a while ago, when another family was seated beside my table. There were the parents and three younger children.

The father entered the restaurant while looking at his phone. Then for the next hour, he never put it down. When the server asked for their order, he didn't even look at her. He yelled out an order while still looking at the phone. He ate his chicken wings with one hand and never took his eye off of the screen. The whole time, his wife was attending to the kids.

I kept waiting for her to yell for him to put down his phone and interact with his family. She must have been very tolerant.

At a convenience store I frequent, the one person who works there is always on the phone. You have to wait at the counter until she tells her friend to 'hold on' because she is being interrupted by a paying customer. How about not spending personal time on phone calls while on the job?

You shouldn't have to be told not to talk on your phone at inappropriate times. How often have you been at a meeting, or gathering like a wedding or funeral, and the officiant has to ask you to turn off your phone prior to the service?

Unless you're on the kidney transplant list and could be called at any time to come to the hospital and prepare for surgery, you don't have any real emergencies in your life.

Guys who have a partner who could go into labour at any time, could probably be excused for keeping their phone on ? at least at work.

I read an interesting report from a teacher who tried an experiment in her classroom. These were younger kids, in grade two or three.

She assigned them to small groups and told them it was 'conversation day.' The teacher was surprised to see the kids had great difficulty with this. They didn't seem to know how to converse with each other without having a device to rely on.

Modern phones are great technology and can do a lot. However, when your device becomes more important than the people that you are with, you are missing out on a whole lot of things in life.

Try putting down your phone and using it only when necessary, and spend time in an actual conversation with someone.

Your phone can do a lot, but it still won't get you beamed up to the mother ship.