

U knew the msgs would end, but how about communication?

by *Lori_Borgman*

A nice lady called to query one of the daughters about six potential baby-sitting dates. When I told her the daughter was not home, she asked if I would like to write the dates down. I probably seemed rude when I said no.

Itâ€™s not that I wouldnâ€™t take a message. Itâ€™s that I couldnâ€™t take a message.

I have forgotten how.

I used to take phone messages all the time. Why I could write them with one eye shut, both eyes shut, with my right hand, my left hand, my right hand behind my back, or even with a chunk of charcoal wedged between my toes.

The kids would be gone for an evening, an hour, or even five minutes, and when they returned the kitchen counter would be plastered with hundreds of bright yellow Post-its bearing late-breaking news bulletins:

â€œCall Sharon B.â€•

â€œCan u babysit Wunder kids on 19th, 6-midnight? Pls. call.â€•

â€œRyan: tackle box.â€•

â€œMrs. Winston says cancl Mon, come Tues? Chngd hair appt.â€•

â€œCan u take Brown kids to tennis lssns when you sit on Thurs.?â€•

â€œYoo-jin - Starbucks on W. side.â€•

â€œCall Mrs. Whackton if you u know where Kaleâ€™s swm suit is.â€•

Taking phones messages was the foundation of a rich and meaningful, albeit phonetically spelled, parent-teen

communication system. It was all that, and the tree of knowledge besides. I knew what kids were calling, what they wanted, where they planned to meet, and when our girls would be babysitting.

It has been many moons and multiple mergers of giant telecoms since Iâ€™ve taken a phone message. Now all I do is give out cell numbers. Itâ€™s easy, efficient and I am completely in the dark.

The technology that was supposed to unite families has come full circle and is driving us apart.

Only a generation ago, parents knew who their kids were talking to on the phone and how long they were talking because the kids were tethered to a 4-foot coil connected to a black box hanging on the kitchen wall.

Then came the extension phone. If a mother need info, she could get still it, although at considerable risk.

â€œIs someone on? I know someone is on. Mom, I can hear you breathing.â€•

I remember saying my kids would never have extension phones in their bedrooms. Absolutely not. They werenâ€™t necessary. Of course they werenâ€™t necessary. What kid needed an extension when there were

portables?

“Why do you have to take the portable into the other room to talk? Wouldn’t you like to take that call right here by me? Hmm? Wouldn’t that be fun?”

Apparently not.

If the portable made parents feel they might be somewhat in the dark, the cell phone papered over the windows and sealed the doors.

We no longer know who calls, how many times they call or what they want when they call. All we know is what we read on the monthly statement: 26 minutes of roaming and 57 text messages.

Today young parents attempt to thwart the invasion of technology by making bold proclamations of their own: “My child is not having a cell phone. Absolutely not.”

You hold your ground, young parents, and I know you will.

No cells. Absolutely not. Not until they go to kindergarten.

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