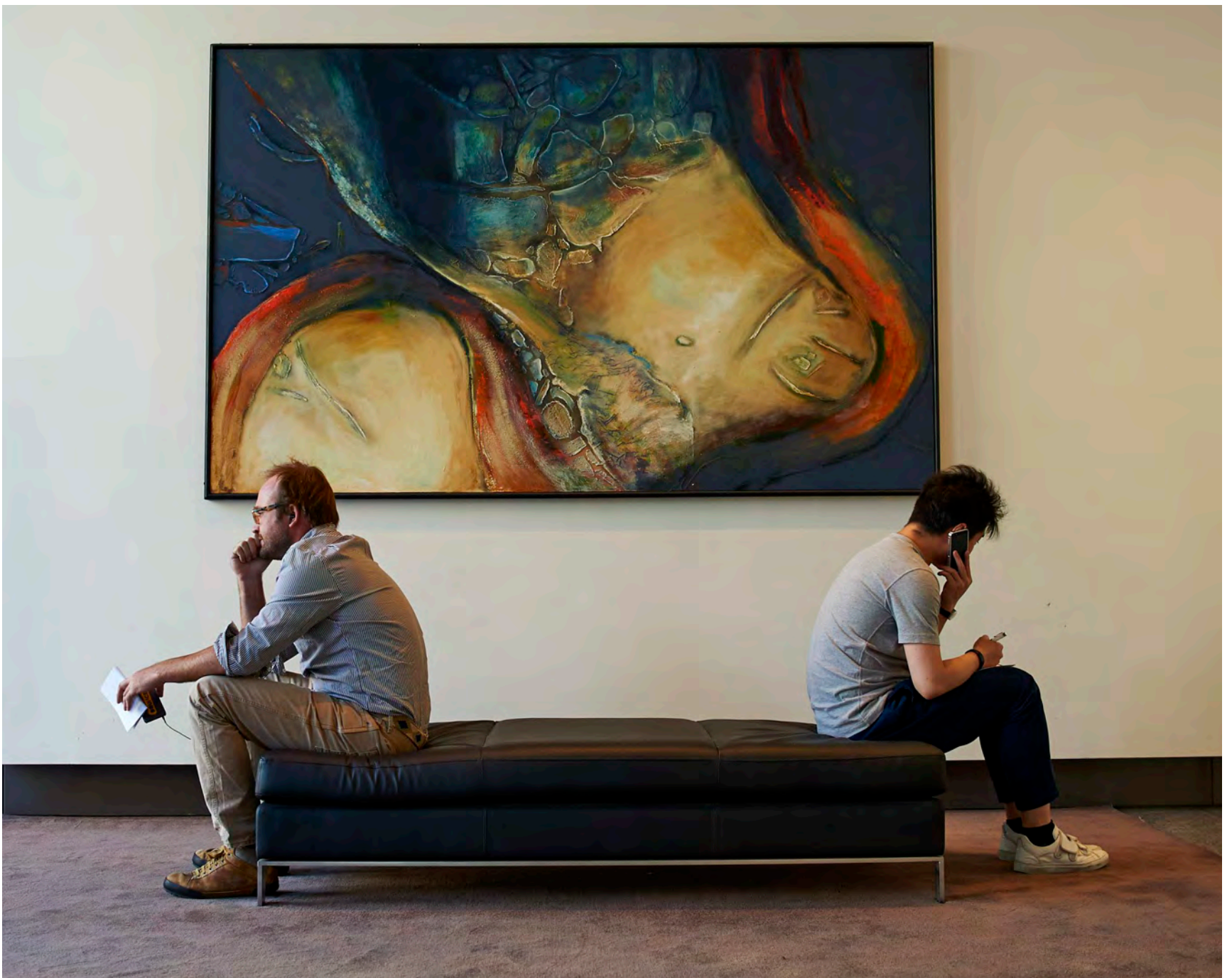


Global Etiquette Cell Phone Usage

By Maralyn D. Hill





In today's world, cell phones have become more and more prevalent. They provide many benefits but also include some challenges and aggravations. I think most of us are taken in by the convenience and do not think about the difficulties they cause unless they affect us.

July was National Cell Phone Courtesy Month, an event founded by author and etiquette expert Jacqueline Whitmore in 2002 with the intent of making cell phone users more respectful of their surroundings.

To avoid offending others, Whitmore offered the following advice in honor of National Cell Phone Courtesy Month:

Be all there

When you're in a meeting, performance, courtroom or other busy area, let calls go to voicemail to avoid a disruption. In some instances, turning your phone off

may be the best solution.

Keep it private

Be aware of your surroundings and avoid discussing private or confidential information in public. You never know who may be in hearing range.

Keep your cool

Don't display anger during a public call. Conversations that are likely to be emotional should be held where they will not embarrass or intrude on others.

Learn to vibrate

Always use your wireless phone's silent or vibration settings in public places such as business meetings, religious services, schools, restaurants, theaters or sporting events so that you do not disrupt your surroundings.

Avoid "cell yell." Remember to use your regular conversational tone when speaking on your wireless

phone. People tend to speak more loudly than normal and often don't recognize how distracting they can be to others.

Follow the rules

Some places, such as hospitals or airplanes, restrict or prohibit the use of mobile phones, so adhere to posted signs and instructions. Some jurisdictions may also restrict mobile phone use in public places.

Excuse yourself

If you are expecting a call that can't be postponed, alert your companions ahead of time and excuse yourself when the call comes in; the people you are with should take precedence over calls you want to make or receive.

Focus on driving

Always practice wireless responsibility while driving. Don't make or answer calls while in heavy traffic or in hazardous driving conditions. Place calls when your

vehicle is not moving, and use a hands-free device to help focus attention on safety. Always make safety your most important call. And always check the laws of your particular state.

It seems to be a frequent occurrence for someone's phone to ring at a function. I have attempted to develop the habit to set my phone to vibrate when I'm in a meeting or dinner. If I'm expecting an important call, I do say so, and watch for it, but do not take other calls. When it comes, I excuse myself to leave the room.

I would guess that many of us have witnessed or been guilty of many of the comments that Whitmore makes. Besides being rude, they are not good business. If you think of how many conversations you've overheard that you should not have, or meetings where you've missed a good portion due to a call, you'll get the point.