

Look who's talking: mobile phone etiquette

By Louise Ralph

You've experienced it – the grating tune of a mobile phone cuts through your moment in the cinema, a restaurant or a meeting.

We have become increasingly bound to our mobile phones – and in the process lost all sense of place, manners and priorities. Like Pavlov's dog we respond instantly to the ringing bell.

Recently, a friend's husband was killed while watering young trees on his nature strip. Why? Because someone driving past leaned down to pick a ringing mobile phone up off the car floor. The car swerved, mounted the curb and ran him down, killing him instantly.

We need to start a revolution – and we need to start it NOW. **It's very simple – it begins with the "off" button.**

Ask yourself:

- Is "the call that may come" as important as what I am doing right now?
- Should this call take priority over the person or people I am with now?
- What's the worst thing that could happen if I'm not available to take a call?
- Will the people around me or with me be disturbed/offended if my phone rings or I take a call?
- Do I need to *make* this call right now? Is it a convenient time for this person to take my call?

Mobile phones have made us less considerate of other people. It's a sad indictment of our collective manners when every performance, meeting or movie has to be prefaced with a request to turn off mobile phones. It's even worse when one rings five minutes later...and it's yours.

Mobile phones should be tools - not constant, demanding companions.

There was a time when you left work, went home and if someone wanted to contact you they waited until the morning. Increasingly, we are under pressure to be on call 24:7.

We need to remind ourselves that most of the time people – and jobs - *can* wait. People can and do leave messages...and you are allowed to have a life.

So spread the word (do it by txt msgN, if U mst) – manage your mobile phone, don't let it manage you.