

# Cell Phone or Electronic Tether?

By Laura Bergells

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Laura Bergells  
laura@maniactive.com

Maniactive <http://www.maniactive.com>

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Author: Laura Bergells  
<http://www.maniactive.com>  
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Cell Phone or Electronic Tether?

A young woman was shopping at the grocery store, screeching fragments of conversation into her cell phone.

I was annoyed that she was speaking so loudly to no one that I could see.

And she was yapping about such trivia!

"Peas, 89 cents. Yes or no?"

Pause.

"Well, yes. Green Giant is 89. The store brand is 85. Store brand or Green Giant? Or no peas at all? Should I go to the frozen pea section or would you be happy with canned peas?"

I tried to avoid her, but she seemed to follow me for 15 minutes, yelping similar questions about

milk, eggs, and meats.

During my short shopping excursion, I became horrified to learn that the woman was using her device to talk to her husband, who would either approve or veto these minute purchasing decisions.

There's an awful lot wrong with this scenario. Let's look at three of the obvious problems:

**Micromanagement Dysfunction.** Was the woman incapable of making mundane decisions, or was her husband a control freak? From what I gathered, their relationship was more like master-slave than husband-wife. Consider the irony: a 21st century American woman using 20th century technology to keep her enslaved as if it were the early 19th century.

**Misuse of Technology.** The cell phone is not an electronic tether. In this grocery store application, the cell phone became a tool for the husband to control his wife from afar. Before the advent of the cell phone, I doubt whether this woman would have been allowed to leave the house.

**Lack of Privacy.** Mine, not theirs! I learned way too much about this woman's wretched home life in a very short time. I didn't want to learn about her weird psychological issues: I was forced to. Due to her insufferable loudness, my privacy was violated.

I could not help but notice the similarities between her conversation and the cell-phone discussions I overhear from earnest looking people in business suits as they gulp coffee at my local bagel shop or walk down sidewalks. Grimly, I note that creatures in uncomfortable business attire loudly bray to their masters (and me) the smallest, most uninteresting details of their business lives.

Twenty years ago, a sure sign that you were important was your unavailability. Your secretary screened your calls and routinely told people that you were not available. Today, however, vulnerable young executives are eager to brandish their silly devices and let everybody within earshot know just how attainable and available they are. They broadcast the undercurrents of their sad little lives with unbearable volume.

My advice to the submissive wives and fragile executives of this world? If you want power, or at least the smallest amount of dignity, chuck your little gadgets.

Become more unavailable to those who seek to control you. Put the petty problems of your bosses and customers into their true perspective. Wander about freely and silently. Notice the beautiful, grander things all around you. Share less about your life's embarrassing minutia. Enjoy an uninterrupted, delicious lunch. Sip, do not gulp your coffee.

Be more attractive by being calm.

And above all, don't buy the canned peas!

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