

Family Life and Cell Phones

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November 9, 2018



Are cellphones dangerous to use while driving? Of course, absolutely. Cell phones are also dangerous to use while dining! When you text and drive, the harm is imminent. When you text and dine, the harm is cumulative as it gradually erodes relationships.

Today's life is busy. For many families, dinner time is the only time of the day when everyone is together. These moments are precious and should be cherished. Yet, instead of connecting with the closest people, right there with us at the dinner table, we often choose to connect with people and events around the world.

When I use a phone at the dinner table, I send those next to me a message, "You are not important. I have more important people to connect with right now. I am not interested in your life. I have nothing to talk to you about." Most importantly, our children learn from the examples we set. We model conversation skills. Our table manners become theirs.

Technology is a great tool to create connection. However, used at the wrong time and for the wrong purpose, it does the exact opposite--it disconnects us. Used at the dinner table, technology disrupts the flow of family time, becomes a distraction and source of conflict, causing ripples within the loving context of the family. Balancing technology use with our everyday lives is an ongoing struggle for many families, mine included.

If we don't put a conscious effort into disconnecting from our phones during family meals, the disconnect in our families will grow to the point of no return. We will all become strangers to each other. Here are some solutions that I have tried. What others can you and your family think of to keep the family connected to each other?

Solutions:

Make dinner a cell phone free zone. Have a basket where all cell phones go during dinner.

Create sentence starters to stimulate dinner conversation. Get input from your children. Check out what one mother did to get her family talking link:

beautyandbedlam.com/conversation-starter-questions/

For more conversation starters, click here:

www.familiesalive.org/dinnertable/

Model what to do by saying, "I am putting my cellphone on silent so I can give you 100% of my attention."

Have a family charging station for all cell phones and devices to help manage their use at meal times, bed times, etc.