

## The Umbilical Cell Phone Cord



freedom to call  
privacy.

The wonderful thing about cell phones is all of the freedoms they afford us—from a car, from a plane, from a boat, from a secluded corner when we want

The not-so-wonderful thing about cell phones is that they may make us too available in the car, on a plane, on a boat, or at school.

When Melody started college in September, her parents made sure her cell phone was in working order so she could call home if she needed to talk with her parents. And she did. Several times a day. At first, in the clutch of homesickness, she called about everything. Even the weather. *Hi Mom! , I'm on my way to class and it's a beautiful day, but I'm not sure where my next class is.*

Later it was, *Hi Mom! Yesterday I told you I made a new friend, and today she didn't speak to me!*

Soon it was, *Hi Mom! I just wanted to hear your voice.*

Dad thought all those calls were unnecessary, but Mom countered that Melody was homesick and would make friends soon and the calls would slack off. They did. Down from five times a day to four, to three, but never less than two. In the late spring Melody was still calling twice a day every day to ask for advice or complain about a test or just to chat. Mom had incorporated the calls into her daily activities and could tell you at anytime where her daughter probably was and when she had her next test. Melody's mom, from a sense of love and caring, had drifted into a position of constant consultant and confidant to a young adult who should be practicing how to be self-sufficient and solve her own problems.

Dad continued to be concerned about Melody's continued dependence on her mother for advice, problem solving and decision making. He suggested that he and Mom get some distance from Melody by taking a vacation in Hawaii. Then he realized that the technological umbilical cord could easily reach to Hawaii! He decided to leave the cell phone at home, call Melody once from the hotel to let her know they had arrived safely, and hope.

When he told Melody, she panicked. *That's not fair! That's cruel! What are you doing to me?* Dad's confident voice interrupted her angst. *Helping you grow up, dear daughter. That's a father's job. I know you and I know you will manage. Love you. Bye.*

The phone clicked off. Melody cried, stormed and whined. When she complained to her friends they said, *Finally! We wondered when you would cut the cell phone cord.* Melody was shocked. She had drifted into a very dependent pattern without realizing it.

Adults who had been over-nurtured as children reported in the Overindulgence Research Project that they had been over-loved and as adults they were not happy about it. It had stifled their sense of self-sufficiency and independence.

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