

Faculty Development

Career Tools

Getting Organized

An e-newsletter of organizing tips for faculty members. March, 2008.

In this issue:

[Mobile communication devices](#) :: [Saving a Little Green](#) :: [Cool Product](#) :: [Got Clutter?](#)

"Avoiding the phrase 'I don't have time...' will soon help you to realize that you do have the time needed for just about anything you choose to accomplish in life."

— Bo Bennett, author of Year to Success

→ Some pages will open in a new browser window. M. D. Anderson does not endorse external sites.

It happens nearly every day. You're behind a car that is either driving very slowly or careening from side to side. When you pass them, you see the distracted driver chatting on a cell phone. You're giving a presentation at a meeting, and you see audience members pick up their Blackberries to check e-mail while you're talking. Is it you or them? Guess what! It's them!

Mobile communication devices, such as cell phones and PDA's, have become an integral part of human life and there has been benefit of having instant communication. As more people are plugging in, there have been some questions about the efficiency and quality of life issues surrounding these mobile devices. In the March 12 issue of JAMA, Jamie Spiegelman, MD and Allan S. Detsky, MD, PhD, both of the University of Toronto, discuss the importance of these issues as related to health care.

On the good side, instant communication allows doctors to check lab results, read images from any computer or even at home, and increase collaboration on articles. On the flip side, driving while using cell phones has increased car accidents and has led to an increase of what the authors call "antisocial behavior." "The use of cellular phones has led to the observation that individuals have become invasive, impolite, and disruptive," the authors wrote. Talking on a cell phone during dinner at a restaurant or using a PDA during a meeting can create negative feelings during what is supposed to be face-to-face contact. This issue has affected relationships. Spouses, who may have resented past absences for family activities, contend with someone who is present but constantly checking and responding to messages.

The use of instant communication devices has become a serious habit, and I have several clients who have a difficult time turning the Blackberry off, even while on vacation. "Some individuals have become conditioned to feeling the need to constantly stay in the loop," the authors write. "Rather than viewing the electronic leashes as someone monitoring them, they become to believe that these technologies help them monitor others. These individuals feel insecure when they are separated from their communication devices for any reason."

Being constantly available does impact emotional well-being. The authors ask a big question: If someone is conditioned to respond to a new message no matter else they're doing, are they unhealthy? They ask, "Is the compulsion to stay in touch at all times and always reply immediately a definable disorder?" My fellow professional organizers and I have seen the addiction in our clients time and time again. Dr. Edward Hallowell, author of *CrazyBusy: Overbooked, Overstretched and Ready to Snap*, is a therapist and has seen it in his patients too. He advocates setting e-mail hours so people can turn off the distractions e-mail brings and focus on the productive work they should be doing. Many times, I believe the root of the issue is fear. We're afraid of missing something. We get anxious when starting new projects. We're afraid of trusting those around us. We're afraid that we're not important enough and will be replaced.

The authors of the JAMA article encourage the health care profession to take the lead. They would like to see an instrument to measure the way individuals use technology and if they respond at appropriate times. They also feel that etiquette guidelines are needed for the use of mobile devices. One example they give is barring the use of cell phones while eating dinner in a restaurant unless it's urgent and not driving while talking on the phone. Basically, we need to learn how to turn off our technology and have face-to-face contact. "Just as the importance of exercise and rest in daily lives has been well established, perhaps health professionals and others need to establish the need for being unplugged," the authors write.

[Back to Top](#)

Saving a Little Green

Between the subprime loan crisis, rising gas prices, and "are we or are we not in a recession" talk, the economy has been a hot topic of late. Because of the uncertainty, people are cutting back and paying off bills as quickly as they can. Small cutbacks can

add to big bucks at the end of a year. Here are a few tips to help:

Some other advice from Walsh:

- Read [this article from USA Today](#) about cutting back on small luxuries, such as coffee, bottled water, and lunches out.
- Use what you have first. Take an inventory of what you have in your house, especially the pantry, the freezer, bathroom cabinets, and other supplies. If you already have four bottles of shampoo open, do you really need to buy more? If you already have oodles of make-up and moisturizers, do you really need to buy more?
- When you go shopping, use a list and stick to it. There is no shame in using coupons for items you normally purchase.
- Maintain your car to keep it from guzzling more gas than necessary. Have regular oil changes and make sure your tires are properly inflated.
- When running errands, combine as many as you can in one day.
- Avoid drive-thru's to save gas. Park and walk in.
- If you never watch premium movie channels on your cable, have them removed to save the money.
- For the latte addicts, [Starbucks](#) is helping out by adding some complimentary services.
- The banking market has become quite competitive. If you're not happy with your bank and their fees, it may be time to shop around for a new one.

[Back to Top](#)

Cool Product

Carla Binswanger, an organizing colleague, has designed "My IEP ToolKit" for parents of children with special needs. As a mother of an autistic child, Carla knows firsthand about the piles of paperwork that comes with having a child in special education. For \$29.99, you can order the binder to help you manage the paperwork for your child. Check out the website: www.organized4kids.com. The website has links to other helpful websites for parents.

[Back to Top](#)

Got Clutter?

I have developed 15 minute, 30 minute and 45 minute presentations on organizing, time management, and productivity. Moving to a new building? I also have a 30-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department. I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution to your organizing problems. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call (713) 792-8061 or e-mail [Janice Simon](mailto:jsimon@mdanderson.org) (jsimon@mdanderson.org).

To subscribe to this newsletter, e-mail [Janice Simon](mailto:jsimon@mdanderson.org) (jsimon@mdanderson.org).

Happy Organizing!

-- Janice

[Back to Top](#)

[Back to Previous Issues](#)

[Back to Career Tools](#)

