

Tech

Do you dig your device?

I've been fighting for years against adding a cellphone to my life. I have one in my purse, but never turn it on. It's a security blanket my husband finally got me to carry so he could rest easy.

For my birthday last year, he replaced my flip-down model with a touch-screen phone, programmed numbers in, and taught me how to use it — on six occasions. It didn't take pictures, make videos, get on the Internet, provide directions or instructions on how to bake a cake, play tunes or let me text someone in another time zone. It existed simply for a phone call.

It's not that I'm electronically challenged. I can work on million-dollar budgets with formulas as long as Rip Van Winkle's beard, make bullet points line up when no one else can, program a microwave to defrost, use three remotes to switch the TV to a DVD, and have recently learned how to "friend" someone on Facebook.

But when it comes to using a cellphone, my brain goes dead. The proverbial straw that broke this camel's back was when my husband was rushed to

the hospital and I needed to call my son. I remembered how to turn it on, but that was about all I could muster in my frantic state. I asked the ER nurse for help, she



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shrugged, and I ran into the hall holding up the phone, screaming, "Does anyone know how to use this (bleep) phone?" The ER crew took cover in all directions.

My husband recovered and, true to our marriage vows, he tried again with an "old-timers' phone" advertised on TV. It doesn't do anything but call a number, a wonderful flip-down model with huge letters and numbers, and a joy in the world of bifocals.

One afternoon, forgetting the shopping list at home, I walked down every aisle in Food Lion twice trying desperately to remember all the items. A 15-minute grocery trip turned into 45. Was it peanuts or pasta my husband wanted?

I whipped out the phone.

Where was that darn "on" button? I tried them all and finally clicked on my home number. Nothing happened. The phone was dead and ice cream was melting in the shopping cart.

I grabbed a bag of peanuts and was greeted at the door by my husband holding a jar of Ragu.

"Where are you going?" he asked as I tossed the phone on the table, handed him the bag of peanuts and dangled the car keys.

"Please charge this (bleep) phone."

Why is everyone enthralled using what Alexander Graham Bell figured was a necessity? Was it to alleviate boredom? Perhaps. Waiting 30 minutes for an eye exam, with no People magazine in sight, I had no choice but to read about the wonders of Botox while the general public played happily with their phones.

Or is multitasking taking over our lives? During a visit with my daughter in Maryland, we went out for lunch at a busy restaurant. I scanned the menu and then the noisy diners around me. Most were either on the phone or tak-

ing "selfies." Peering over the menu at my daughter checking her phone while I debated a tuna melt versus a chicken salad, this then became our mother/daughter lunch. I'd start a conversation with her, but in the middle, there was an annoying "ding," her eyes would glance down, and I knew I had lost her.

My therapist seems to think my aversion to the cellphone is my desire to be completely alone and unreachable, if only for a few precious moments, in an otherwise multitasking environment. Sounds good.

Yet, not totally down on cellphones because this little object has contributed to the kinship of family and friends, I vow to take out the cellphone once a week and call someone, even if it's just myself.

However, I overheard a conversation the other day that made me sit up and take notice. There's this new gadget — an Apple watch — that supposedly is going to make the cellphone obsolete.

My only hope is that somehow it will tell me the time.

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