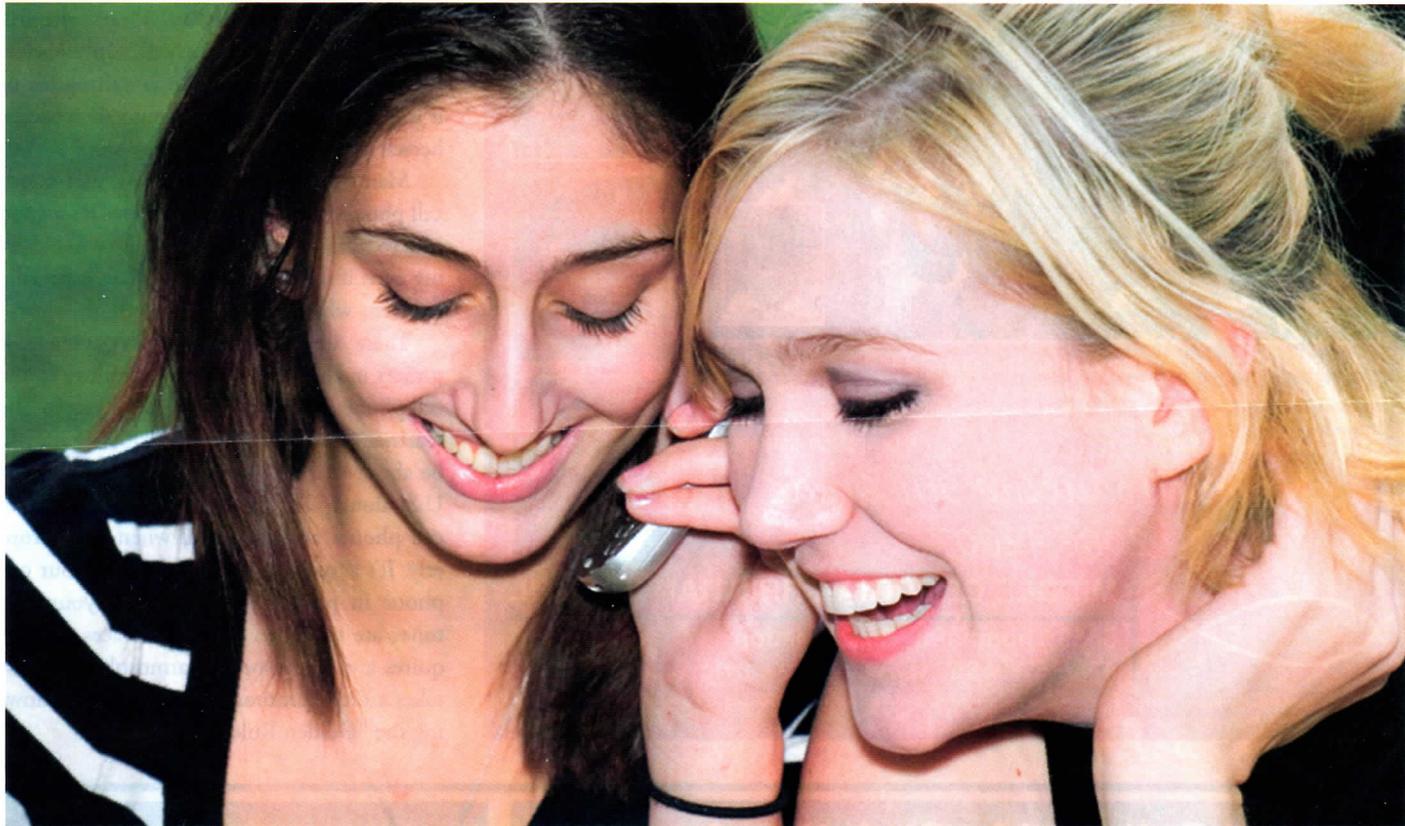


Cell Phone Etiquette

By Christine Chen



Dear Ms. Chen:

Since the time my daughter was nine years old, she has been begging for a cell phone. I really didn't think she needed one because she was always with me or another adult. It was pretty clear to me that she wanted a cell phone for two reasons. One, it was a cool new gadget and two; some of her friends had one. Peer pressure is pretty powerful! I always told her she could get a cell phone when she started high school. Boy, does high school ever come quickly; and she did not forget our deal. A week before her 9th grade year began, we purchased a new, silver cell phone that she quickly decorated with all kinds of "bling."

I have to admit, it has been nice being able, to contact her when she has after-school practices to determine a pick-up time. However, I have noticed some pretty rude behavior with cell phones when I am around my daughter and her friends. I must say, it's not just kids who are rude—we adults could use a few tips as well. I have always encouraged my children to use good manners and want

to make sure that it continues as each one begins using a cell phone. Please share some do's and don'ts of proper cell phone use.

—Mary T.

Dear Mary:

I am so glad you asked this question. Did you know that over 75% of middle school kids have cell phones? And, of course, once they reach high school, the percentage even grows higher. A recent survey conducted by Synovate (a national poll by market research group) found that seven out of ten Americans say they observe rude cell phone use at least once a day. I agree with you, adults need help with their phone manners, too. After all, kids learn from what they see.

If a child has a cell phone, they should be taught how to use it properly. I believe one of the rudest behaviors is answering the phone in front of others. Teach your daughter that if she must absolutely pick up the call, let those she is speaking with know this and then move to a private location. It amazes me to see a

crowd of kids walking together while talking on cell phones. Teach your daughter to put those she is with first.

Remind your daughter to speak softly when on the phone. In another survey conducted by Synovate, it was found that over 72% of Americans say that holding loud conversations in public while on the phone is the biggest problem. We have all been there—sitting on the plane, waiting to take off, and the person sitting next to you whips out the cell. Then, the next five minutes you get to suffer through hearing a one sided conversation that consists of laughing loudly and the boring details of getting the biggest deal ever. I love how Mary Mitchell, one of my favorite authors, puts it in her book, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Etiquette*. She says, "It seems to me that the most insecure and/or boastful people are the ones who are most loud and ostentatious about using their cell phone." I guess that sums it up pretty well.

Now, of course, we do need to take a moment to talk about those ring tones—loud