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Wireless Codependency

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Constantly talking on your cellphone is doing more than annoying the people around you. Calling someone whenever you are in a bad mood, or have a question, may be making you less independent and less able to experience your life as fully as you should.

That is the conclusion of Hans Geser of the University of Zurich, reported in *Psychology Today*. Mr. Geser reviewed “more than 100 papers on the psychology, sociology and history of cellphone use.”

The problem may actually be worse than that. “The superconnected may develop a dual-dependency,” Robert Bornstein, a psychologist at Adelphi University, told the author of the article, Carlin Flora. “They’re not only counting on other people too much, they’re also hooked on the devices themselves, sometimes to the point where they feel utterly disconnected, isolated and detached without them.”

Exactly how bad is the problem? Extreme, writes *Cosmopolitan*: “Hand-held e-mailing devices are so addictive, some work experts warn, that soon compulsive users will need to be weaned off them using treatment programs similar to the ones drug addicts attend.”

WIRELESS WOUNDS It was inevitable. Our increasing use of wireless devices is causing all kinds of physical ailments, Kathryn Matthews writes in *O, The Oprah Magazine*. Among the maladies identified:

- * BlackBerry thumb: a pain or numbness in your thumbs caused by constant e-mailing, messaging or Internet surfing on hand-held devices.
- * Cellphone elbow: “No kidding. Cubital tunnel syndrome can result from constantly holding a cellphone to the ear. In severe cases, it can cause permanent nerve damage.”
- * P.D.A. hunch: neck pain caused by looking straight down at your minimonitor.

OUT OF TIME? “Now that people look at their cellphones, iPods or BlackBerrys to tell time, watches may be going the way of cassette tapes and pagers,” Peter Robison writes in *Bloomberg Markets*. Spending on watches has fallen 17 percent over the last five years; the only market segment reporting that they bought watches more frequently “than they did in 2001 were those older than 50,” according to a survey conducted by Experian Simmons.

One 24-year-old quoted in the article said, “Watches look weird on your wrist.”

All this may augur that the tradition of giving someone a gold watch upon retirement won’t last much longer.

THE SKINNY Obesity can be, at least in part, a problem of personal responsibility. But corporations that leave the issue there are being remarkably shortsighted, two business professors argue. Writing in *Sloan Management Review*, Kathleen Seiders of Boston College and Leonard L. Berry of Texas A&M list four reasons business needs to be doing something about the rising rate of obesity.

The first two have to do with corporate self-preservation. While class-action suits against restaurants and food companies over their menus have not gained traction, they certainly might. And concerns about things like supersize portions and trans fats could cause consumers to boycott the companies that offer them.

Third, “companies will not be able to function efficiently if a significant proportion of their current and future employees suffer from obesity,” they write. “The likelihood of more absenteeism and ‘presenteeism’ (when workers are on the job but unable to perform optimally), as well as rising health care costs associated with obesity, make it imperative for business leaders to get involved.”

Fourth, opportunities exist for companies to develop new products that address the need to slim down the population, allowing those that create them to “fatten the corporate bottom line.”

FINAL TAKE “Excess weight could be sapping your brainpower,” Heather Lee writes in *Prevention*, reporting on a study by French researchers who found that healthy slimmer people had better memories than equally healthy people who were heavier. And “when they were retested five years later, the heavier group had lost more memory than the slimmer group.” That argues for going on a diet — if you can remember to do so.