

# How I lived without a cell phone FOR FIVE YEARS...

And how I eventually caved

**E**ach weekday at 4am, the alarm on my cell phone goes off. 'Brave' by Sara Bareilles blasts from its teeny-weeny speakers. I wake up and make myself the world's strongest coffee. It's my favorite time of day. All things are possible at this hour. I sip my coffee, savoring its bitterness on my tongue. Then I sit, cross my legs, open my Headspace app, and meditate for 20 minutes. This routine is how I keep my sanity for the next 24 hours.

Five years ago, I could never have imagined a cell phone could be such an integral part of my daily human existence, let alone my sacred morning hours. Between the years of 2010 through 2015, I lived without a smart, flip, or even one of those Nokia phones that looked more like remote controls than phones. My main mode of contact was a landline plugged into the wall as Alexander Graham Bell intended. I mean, seriously, he'd lose his shit if he knew we could watch porn on the subway using our phones. (FYI: You are totally gross if you do, especially during rush hour and/or when small children are present. You know who you are. We can see you.)

How did I live without a cell phone for so many years? The answer is the one I give to people who ask how I live without drinking alcohol or owning a television set. "I live just like you do, minus

## ABOUT CLAUDIA

Claudia Chung is a writer who moonlights as a school teacher. She is currently working on a book of essays and stories on the trials, tribulations, and the funny in being a young widow.



the booze and television." You figure it out. You adjust. You live.

I can honestly say that now — after four years of owning a cell phone — I'm not sure I can ever go back. But I do miss those years of being disconnected.

It made others and myself more accountable. Instead of going back and forth countless times to work out a location and a time to meet, a short phone call was made ahead of time and plans arranged live. There was no going back. All parties had to keep their word. Period.

I rarely got lost. I got into the habit of looking up directions

at home, writing them down on a yellow Post-it, and stuffing it in my pocket.

God forbid I did get lost and couldn't find my way, I'd just ask another person on the street, preferably a good-looking male, to help me.

I was forced into instant human-to-human contact, experience and serendipitous meetings.

But, most

of all, I miss the complete freedom of disconnection. Solitude is a gift I relinquish every day by having a cell phone in my pocket. The idea that anyone can reach me, regardless of the time of day, feels intrusive and a tad slutty. Why am I giving myself away?

Now, let's flip the coin ...

These days, should I leave my cell phone at home, my ego is running amok, screaming:

"Maybe someone is in love with me and needing to tell me!" "Is someone trying to steal my identity?" "How will the world run properly without me being connected?"

Some experts have coined the term nomophobia for phone separation anxiety. It's just like a deathly fear of birds is a real mental disorder called ornithophobia. I acutely suffer from both.

However, I'm not on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Instagram. I don't see myself ever on them, but never say never. I will always, always pay you back in cold, hard cash, never through Venmo. And you'll never see me waiting in line playing Pokémon Go. I'll be the gal holding a book borrowed from the local library.

In the meantime, if you happen to be in love with me, you can reach me via email, text, or call me on my cell phone. I'll get back to you just as soon as I can ... most likely tomorrow.

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