

## **Erin Auerbach: Texting also hazardous to social health**

By Erin Auerbach LA Daily News

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I don't have to tell you about the dangers of texting while driving. Oprah is working hard to make sure nobody does it. Numerous public service messages relay the horrors of distraction and how the time it takes to send a one-word reply can lead to a person's untimely and unnecessary death.

Then there's the shorthand that all teenagers know, acronyms with letters and numbers designed to do everything from setting up secret rendezvous to alerting their fellow texter to the fact that they can't speak freely because parents are hovering over their shoulders.

But texting isn't just dangerous on the road or in the hands of hormonal youth. These short messages can lead to misunderstandings, embarrassment and even family feuds.

The biggest sign of my advancing age is my terrible texting skills. I hate the shorthand. My contemporaries have all grasped the basic OPL (old people lingo) that AMCD (any moron can do), but I find it emotionally difficult to write things such as "Can't w8 2 c u!" I cringe at the butchery of my beloved English language. That and the fact that it takes me about five minutes to decode what my friends are trying to say when they send me a note.

I am also too used to typing on a proper keyboard and cannot stand cramming my fingers on the tiny Smartphone. Combined with the rapid-fire nature of texting, this can lead to humiliating typos. It's mortifying to see that you sent a text to a potential first date that you would "prefer to meet in a pubic place." (I'm sure he would, too.)

Recently I got into a big argument with one of my best friends. She hung up on me and preceded to text her grievances. Not only was she (mostly) right about my crappy attitude, but she had the fast fingers to air out her gripes in about 10 texts. I tried to respond with a diligent defense, but thoughtful, coherent texting is futile for me. So I wrote, "Okay. I'm sorry."

When we properly reconciled using the antiquated telephone, I told her that right or wrong, warring via text is not a fair fight. (A side note: It's also much easier to retract name calling verbally rather than having the B-word memorialized in a text.) My friend and I are the same age, but by her own admission she's really immature, a quality that gives her the edge in handling this juvenile technology.

Sometimes the message is all too clear. I recently celebrated my 37th birthday. I had a lovely day, capped off by a scrumptious dinner at Vitello's, my favorite Studio City haunt. I felt my phone vibrate and anticipated another Facebook post or e-mail wishing me warmest regards and a healthy year. When I pressed my little text icon, I was not surprised to see another birthday greeting.

But the words horrified me: "Happy 40th Birthday, Erin!"

I didn't recognize the number, but I immediately knew the culprit: my cousin Jerry. A middle-aged attorney and wannabe comic 10 years my senior who knew I would freak out. And I did. I wanted to fling my phone against the wall, but I refrained. After all, I was in a pubic, er, public place.

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