

Opinion: The tyranny of constant contact

By Henry Alford, *New York Times*

Everything I know about the Internet, I learned from my 87-year-old mother.

Like, the harder you hit "Send," the faster the email travels. If you want wholly to colonize your reader's subconscious, just end your email or text right in the middle of the. If you're still not sure your reader is fully invested, simply LEAN ON YOUR CAPS LOCK TO IMBUE YOUR MISSIVE WITH A THROBBING IMMEDIACY.

But Mom's larger message is that the Internet and cellphones have created a kind of tyranny of connectedness: Even those of us who don't have small children or jobs with the State Department, it seems, now need to be accessible at all hours of the day. It's as if we're doctors on call.

Like Madonna confessing that during her marriage to Guy Ritchie each kept a BlackBerry tucked under their pillows at night, we have to keep up standards. If you go to the theater and discover your phone has died, you better borrow a seat mate's phone and pre-emptively call the last five people you spoke to; if there's a glitch in Gmail, you better start checking all your other portals with an assiduousness that verges on the robotic.

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