

Skipped on Skype, Forgone on Facebook

By Susan Reimer

A friend posted a message on Facebook asking if anyone knew what Skype was, if anyone had Skype and if anyone wanted to help her Skype.

"Skype," I responded helpfully, "is an online video phone and one more way for my son to ignore me."

Technology, they say, is bringing families closer together, with children cell-phonng, e-mailing and instant messaging their parents to a degree not possible in the days when communication meant a pay phone.

However, my family has managed to put me on an electronic ice floe and boot me out to sea. Technology has provided my husband, son and daughter with new ways to tune me out.

To begin, everybody has a BlackBerry except me. It is a situation I had better remedy if I want to be included on their ongoing text conversations.

"You don't have a BlackBerry" is the excuse they use when I express confusion over a conversation that has apparently been going on for a while.

When I call them on their cell phones, they don't pick up. Because they are texting someone at the time. When I leave a message, they don't listen to it. "Because no one listens to voice mail anymore. Text me!" my daughter said to me. In a text.

If I call more than once -- because I am forbidden from leaving one of those annoying messages -- and my children see me under "missed calls" too often, they will text me and ask, "WHAT do you want?"

My husband doesn't answer my calls because, he says, his BlackBerry is on vibrate and he can't feel it ring.

My son blocked me on IM. My daughter has blocked me on Facebook. She friended me but then threw up the Facebook equivalent of the Great Wall.

When my daughter's friends friended me on Facebook, she warned me, "DON'T POST ANY COMMENTS ON THEIR STATUS UPDATES." In an instant message. In capital letters.

I am certain that my lovely daughter-in-law went out and purchased my birthday card, put it under my son's nose and said, in no uncertain terms, "Just sign

it! OK?" And I am also certain that she says -- not often enough for me, however -- "Just call your mom, OK?"

I feel like the subject of a bit between Sally and Buddy on the old "Dick Van Dyke Show." I'm the mother no one wants to deal with.

My son doesn't Facebook because he thinks it is a chick thing, and my daughter doesn't Twitter because the constant updates on her BlackBerry made her crazy. I do both.

But when my sportswriting husband signed up for Twitter for work purposes, his first two follows were bombshell conservative Ann Coulter and football great Warren Sapp.

He didn't follow me until I followed him. And then he said, simply, "Thanks for the follow."

"Thanks for the follow?" We've been married for 26 years!

When I try to Skype my son, to see the sweet face that I love so much, he doesn't pick up. I know he's there. I can see that he's online. But, like someone with caller ID, he just lets the video phone ring and ring.

It's like I'm annoying or something.

All of this electronic exclusion might break a lesser woman's heart. But I checked, and mine is a lithium-ion battery.

Status update, family: I can keep this up forever.

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