

# *The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter*

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## **Crackberry**

A recent work-life study from Sheraton Hotels & Resorts indicates that professionals' ever increasing reliance on personal digital assistants (PDAs) is having a significant impact upon work-life balance. The study gives us the following startling findings: 1.) 87% of professionals surveyed bring their PDA into the bedroom, 2.) 84% indicated that they check their PDA just prior to going to bed and just after waking up, 3.) 85% say that they check their PDA in the middle of the night, and 4.) 35% say that if forced to choose they would pick their PDA over their spouse. To borrow a phrase from current pop culture...OH SNAP! Are you kidding me??

Many PDA users seem to display addictive (I am using this term very loosely) tendencies toward their PDA's. Hence, the term "Crackberry" has become quite popular when describing a Blackberry PDA. Some people think PDA's are as addictive as crack cocaine! That might be a stretch, but it illustrates a greater point—you can easily have too much of a good thing. Some would argue, and the Sheraton study confirms this, that PDA's allow folks to work outside of the office, get away from the desk and be productive while spending time with their families. Ok, I get that, but how "quality" is that "quality time" if you are constantly responding to emails and voicemails. A lot of counseling professionals read this newsletter. How many of you have had clients responding to text messages and emails during their sessions? This has certainly happened to me and it always presents a golden opportunity to discuss work-life balance. People need to give themselves a break, even if it is just for an hour. One of the most relaxing parts of my day is the hour or so that I get to spend with my daughter when I get home from work. I always try to turn the phone ringer off and immerse myself in the world of pretend play, bath, lotion and pajamas. It is wonderful. The last thing I want to hear is that phone ringing. One of my former supervisors (and you know who you are) used to be an on-call counselor for a community mental health program in Oklahoma. She had to carry a pager with her 24 hours a day. She eventually developed what she described as a "visceral" reaction to the pager going off. That is to say her body would instinctually react and tense up when she heard the pager. Yikes! She, like many of us, needed a break.

Can the reliance, dependence or addiction to instantaneous electronic communication impact your marriage? You bet it can. If you have not done so already, establish some boundaries between your work life and home life. This could involve turning the phone off for an hour while eating dinner with your spouse or having certain days of the week that you don't respond to phone calls or emails. Unfortunately, work sometimes serves as a distraction from relationship problems, and constant involvement in work related issues affords people the opportunity to avoid conflict in their marriages. Please put the PDA down and talk to your spouse without any external distractions. Is an email sent on Friday at 6 PM really worth responding to? Can it wait until Monday? I would hope so. The Sheraton study found that 35% of those surveyed would pick their PDA over their spouse if forced to choose. If you don't create some boundaries between yourself and the PDA, your spouse may make this decision for you.

Reference: Sheraton Hotels and Resorts. Press Release.  
White Plains, New York, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

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