



Moving from Text to Talk

Mary Jane Copps, The Phone Lady

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Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning.

— *Maya Angelou*

If Maya Angelou wrote these words today, I think she may have written them differently, adding a phrase to the first sentence: *“Words mean more than what is set down on paper ... or the screen.”*

In these unexpected and unusual times, with all of our scrambling to get comfortable with social distancing and isolation, it is vital that we embrace the power of the human voice. Of course, video calls are an excellent way to communicate but they aren't an option for everyone. It's time to consider the old-fashioned but extremely reliable ... phone call.

Whether it's family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours or members of your community, know that the sound of your voice will shatter the ever-present niggings of anxiety, fear and loneliness. It's **a gift you can give simply by dialing a number** instead of texting to it.



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Of course, we've all become [#PhoneLazy](#), as my colleague and friend [Linda Daley](#) says. So making this **transition back to speaking on the phone** may not be easy. But the times we are living in are not easy. Here I've included a few tips to help you use your voice instead of your fingers.

Phone Calls with Texters

If there's someone you want to talk to but you know they prefer texting, or maybe they've even told you they "hate" talking on the phone, send them a text requesting a quick call.

The word "quick" will help alleviate some of the anxiety they may have about talking on the phone. Also, allow them to choose a time for the conversation. If they aren't used to talking on the phone, giving them as much control as possible will help them make the adjustment.

Here are some samples of how you can word your request:

- *"Let's have a quick phone conversation today. I'd love to hear the sound of your voice. You choose the time and I'll call you."*
- *"The sound of your voice is what I need today. Let's organize a quick conversation. Tell me a good time and I'll call you."*
- *"I know you don't enjoy phone conversations but it would be helpful to me to hear your voice. We can make it quick. I'll gladly call you at a time of your choice. Let me know what works best for you."*

Maintaining Family and Community Connections

If you are comfortable talking on the phone but other members of your family or community are not, help them out. **Create a team approach to making a few calls.** This will not only teach vital communication skills but also create some very vibrant and interesting conversations.

Here are some samples of what you might say to initiate this activity:

- *“Hey everyone, we really need to connect with your grandmother and older sister today, so we’re going to make two phone calls together. Remember, they are on their own and I know they’ll really appreciate hearing how we’re doing.”*
- *“Let’s do something a bit different today to help others. We’ll make a few phone calls and have some quick conversations to check up on our neighbours. They’ll appreciate hearing from us and we can let them know we are here to help if they need anything.”*
- *“Let’s organize a teleconference call today instead of a video chat. We can quickly check in with everyone and hear how they’re doing. We can all share what our plans are for the next few days.”*

Busting Through Phone Anxiety

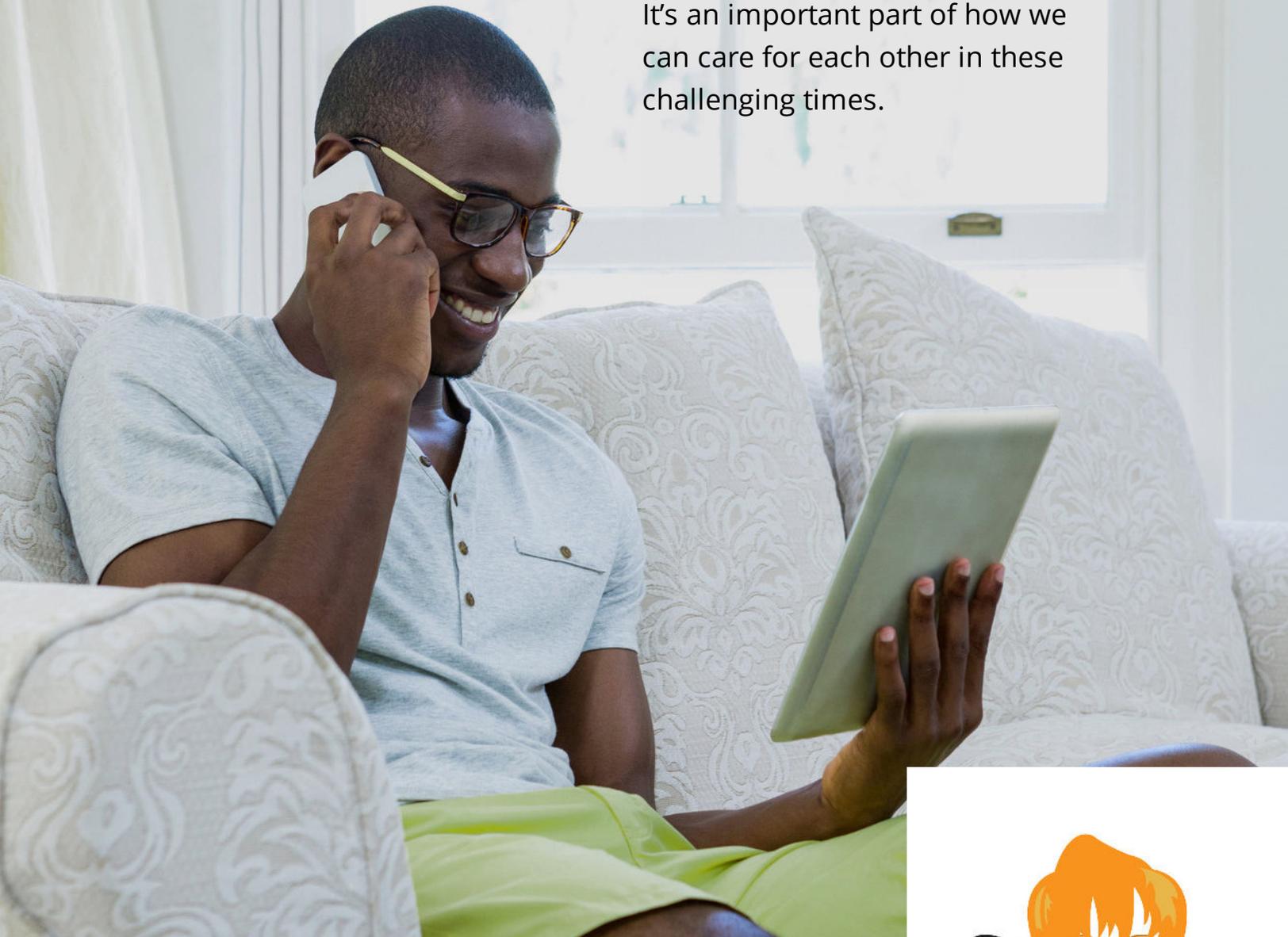
If you want to connect with family and friends but phone calls make you anxious, know that one great phone conversation is the start of eliminating that anxiety forever.

How do you create a great phone conversation? Here are some steps to take:

1. Follow #1 above if the person you want to connect with is also someone you text. If you set a specific time for the phone call, you can eliminate the anxiety of the unexpected.
2. Think about what you might want to say. In fact, there's no harm in writing down your opening sentences or any questions you want to ask. The beginning of a call is the scariest part for those who don't make them often. Know that you can prepare and that this will give you confidence.
3. Do you have a photograph of this person? Can you have it in front of you when you make the call? This will also give you confidence.
4. If you don't have a photograph, track down some pictures of a smiling man and a smiling woman from magazines and look at them while you make your calls. While this does sound silly, it is a trick that has helped many of my coaching students transition from phone anxiety to phone confidence.
5. Starting the conversation is as simple as saying, *"Hi, it's (your name). Thinking about you. How are you doing?"* That's it! The rest will flow from here. So take a deep breath and dial the number. Once you say these first words, you'll be able to relax and use your voice to share your concern, love, humour and joy. It will have a tremendously positive impact on the people you call.

Since we can't extend our hands to others, let's extend our voices.

It's an important part of how we
can care for each other in these
challenging times.



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Pick it up. Make things happen!