

## Breaking Subway Norms

Kelly is a freshman in college, and she takes the subway across the city during the morning work rush hour to get to her 8 am class. The ride is quiet and peaceful: passengers don't talk to one another, and people are busy reading the newspaper or on their smartphones. Sometimes, Kelly can even squeeze in a much-needed nap. However, once in a while, someone will ruin Kelly's peaceful ride by talking loudly on a cell phone.

There are no official rules about talking on a cell phone, and Kelly understands that sometimes it's important to make a call, for example if a passenger needs to inform his boss he'll be late for work, or to make last-minute date plans. It's another thing, however, to have a long conversation on the subway. Kelly thinks to herself, "I don't want to hear about your fight with your bestie, how your sister should call the CPS on her baby daddy, or your travel plans to Hawaii in the summer." In a quiet subway car, one voice can carry across the entire car, especially when no one else is talking or making any noise. "Don't they notice that no one else is talking on their cell phone on the subway? Or are they just ignoring it?" Kelly wonders. "Why must they have the conversation now? It doesn't seem like the content of the conversation is urgent."

### Study Questions:

- (1) To what extent is it permissible to talk on your cell phone on the subway, bus, or in other public spaces?
- (2) Is it appropriate to be upset over someone talking on their cell phone in public spaces?
- (3) To what extent are we obligated to follow social norms, when there are no laws enforcing those behaviors?

