

Sacrificing Conversation for Connection

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With technology making it easier to manage our increasingly complex lives, is it actually connecting us, or driving us into a lonely abyss?



A recent video by Shimi Cohen on the “Innovation of Loneliness” forced me to look at technology in a different perspective.

Inspired by Sherry Turkle’s book, *Alone Together*, and Dr. Yair Amichai-Hamburger’s article “The Invention of Being Lonely,” the video begins with a brief overview of how social groups form. But as the groups reach a certain threshold of members, social order crumbles and the original membership splits into smaller groups.

The video then explains how sociological research has found that most humans are incapable of intimately knowing more than 150 people. This is interesting, especially when you look at social sites, and see that some people have more than 500 connections with “friends”.

As the video points out, time is money, and everyone experiences pressure to achieve more in a smaller time frame. Even though technology is becoming simpler to help manage our increasingly complex lives, is it really helping us stay connected to one another, or is it driving us into a lonely abyss?

In-person conversation is becoming an endangered form of communication. It’s rapidly being replaced by email, posting, and texting, giving us all an opportunity to craft information to present the image we want. We have a chance to edit and delete, as we promote our individualities. We fake experiences just to have something to share. It helps us feel alive and a part of something, but at the same time, we’re sacrificing face-to-face conversations for mere connections.

We are all too familiar with the couple sitting at the dinner table paying more attention to their mobile devices than each other; friends at a coffee shop engulfed in conversations concerning the latest angry cat meme; or the individual waiting in a line, texting on their phone to avoid eye-contact with a complete stranger.

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We now expect more from technology and less from each other. We're satisfied with "collecting friends like stamps" and substituting quality with quantity. While I appreciate and praise the creature comforts technology provides us, I still prefer to say, "Nice to meet you" face-to-face rather than in a two sentence email. I like to shake a hand and make eye contact, and have a real conversation instead of responding to something scripted.

Even though technology is intended to make connecting in person easier, it is preventing us from building real relationships and having face-to-face conversations, which are vital components for idea generation and product innovation.

Is technology making us more lonely? What are your thoughts? Comment below or send your comments to meaghan.ziemba@advantagemedia.com [1].

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