

Read a sweet story on whatsapp about a young man who accompanied his uncle to a bank for a fund transfer and asked him why he didn't just use internet banking instead of waiting and wasting an hour of his day. In fact he could even teach his uncle to shop online and pay bills in the comfort of his home. The uncle asked him if that meant he would never really need to step out of his home again. The nephew nodded excitedly told him how even the groceries could be delivered home, how amazing amazon products were etc etc. And then the uncle said, "Since I entered this bank I have met four of my friends. Even the staff are known to me and I chit-chat with them often. My children do visit me now and then, but for the majority of the time I am lonely and this is the kind of company I need. I like to get ready and come to the bank. I have enough time, it's this kind of physical connect that I need. Two years back when I got sick the butcher from whom I buy meat came and sat by my bedside and cheered me up. There is a man who comes by and pays my bills for me at a nominal charge. It's his only source of income and keeps him busy in his retired life. My local grocer saw my wife fall while on a walk and rushed her back to our home as he knew her and where we live. Would I have that human touch if I did everything online? Why would I force myself to negate these wonderful bonds and only interact with a computer?"

I know many people over the age of 30 that would relate to this story and value the emotions attached to it. That's because they connect to it. It's been a reality they are familiar with. When we look pitifully at a new seemingly disconnected and technology dependent generation we forget it's all about adapting to new realities and being open to change.

The fact is that the most wives no longer sit at home, cook and wait for their husbands to return. She's in the workplace earning her money and her stripes. She would rather spend her free time with her husband, kids, friends or partying rather than at a supermarket or bank. It may seem that technology such as SMS, WhatsApp, Skype and face-time make life and relationships very impersonal and lacks in human touch and connect, but for relationships that involve a lot of travel or time apart from each other it's only technology that keeps the relationship and connect alive. It's often said that out of sight is out of mind, and technology empowers you to be together even when you're apart. Working parents don't use CCTV camera's at home only to check if the maid is treating their child right. The live feed enables them to loving gaze at their kids while they play, eat and sleep which is something they'd never be able to do daily without technology. Life styles have changed. There is time pressure and performance pressure from the moment kids enter secondary school. They don't really have "time" anymore to "hang out endlessly" like we did. My 17 year daughter Aalia does not want to meet or chat for hours with her loved one daily. She feels after spending many hours in school together a Whatsapp relationship is just fine. She has a lot on her plate that she is focussed on so she likes to keep her relationship connected, yet simple and "non-need". We may feel that this generation is "missing out" on the incredible warmth and joy of face to face human interaction ... but once again we are judging it by our days when lifestyles and relationships were different. For them face to face or Facetime is the same thing. It feels the same. Nothing is better or worse. I understand the wariness of moving into an era which is unfamiliar to us. But we have to start viewing it as what works best in today's times and makes people their happiest. The generation of today wants it all... work, fun, success, hobbies, socializing, a safe and secure family life, travel, sport and love, though not necessarily in that order. Technology enables all of it to seamlessly integrate. I personally think technology enhances and even betters what human connection does. Take matrimonial and dating sites for example. Would you rather settle for spending your life with one out of 20 choices your parents or friends found for you because they "knew the family" or with someone far more compatible whom you narrowed down from thousands on the internet? People also tend to blame technology for making relationships robotic and people insular. But conversely, there are so many individuals who have difficulty expressing themselves face

to face, and are better able to convey emotions and thoughts through electronic mediums. Sometimes emoticons work, where words fail.

Indians are so proficient at holding onto notions of culture and values and every generation feels something is “slipping away” and that the new generation is losing touch with what “really matters”. They bemoaned that about inter caste, inter religious and love marriages. But these are life choices that work for our generation today. I’m sure arranged marriages had a wonderful charm with the focus being the union of two families, but today love marriages and a nuclear family makes most couples happiest.

Today we point at computers, technology and online romance and say this is unfamiliar, hence lacks the “specialness”. Fact is we are human beings and spending physical time together, being cuddled, sex, romance, holding hands and laughter is obviously never going to go out of fashion or out of our lives. You can use a detective to spy on a partner you suspect of cheating, the police to find a missing child, go office to office job hunting or simply use technology to do it faster and better. We can groan about incompetence governance and wait 5 years for an election, whereas an entire ineffective govt. in Egypt was overthrown in a few months by a movement created on Facebook technology.

All of technology has two important commands, ‘enable’ and ‘disable’. Let the former command work for you and may you have the common sense to draw the line when it’s disabling you.