

# Tech Talks: Tech for Seniors

## Reclaiming Conversation & Alone Together

by Sherry Turkle

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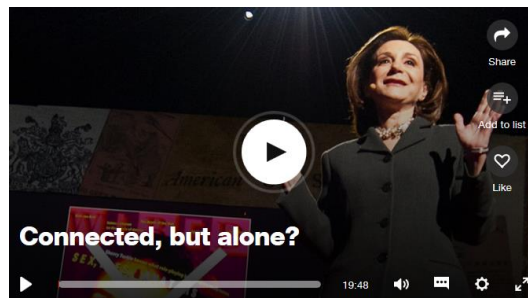
# Introduction

- [Sherry Turkle](#) (born June 18, 1948) is the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She obtained a BA in Social Studies and later a Ph.D. in Sociology and Personality Psychology at Harvard University.
  - [\*The Second Self: Computers and The Human Spirit\*](#) '84
  - [\*Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet\*](#) '97
  - [\*Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other\*](#) '12
  - [\*Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age\*](#) '15

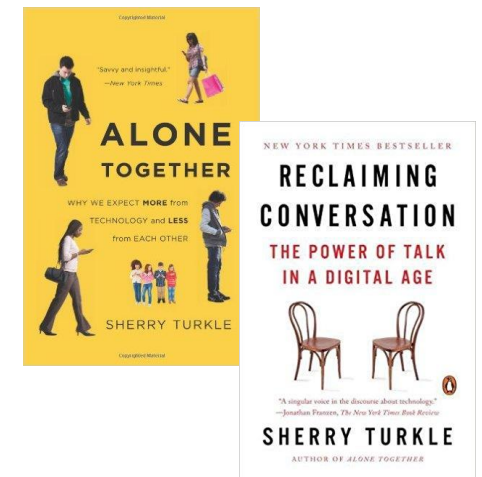


## [TED Talk 2012](#)

(19:48)



As we expect more from technology, do we expect less from each other? Sherry Turkle studies how our devices and online personas are redefining human connection and communication -- and asks us to think deeply about the new kinds of connection we want to have.



# Introduction

- Alone Together
  - Technology has become the architect of our intimacies.
  - Online, we fall prey to the illusion of companionship – Facebook, Twitter...
  - This relentless connection leads to a new solitude.
  - As technology ramps up, our emotional lives ramp down
- Alone Together explores our lives on the digital terrain.
  - It describes new, unsettling relationships between friends, lovers, parents, and children, and new instabilities in how we understand privacy and community, intimacy and solitude.

# Summary

- Alone Together
  - We have reached an inflection point, where we can see the costs and start taking action.
  - Some will seem like just reclaiming good manners:
    - ‘talk’ to colleagues, no cell phones at the table, in the car, or in company...
  - Then there’s the more complicated stuff:
    - like reclaiming our privacy, reclaim our concentration...
  - It’s time to look again toward the virtues of solitude, deliberateness, and living fully in the moment.
  - We have ‘agreed’ to (a series of) experiments in which we are the human subjects. We deserve better. When we remind ourselves that it is we who decide how to keep technology busy, we shall have better.

# Overview

- **Sherry Turkle - [Alone Together](#)**
- The Robotic Moment
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# The Robotic Moment

- ‘Singularity’ – the moment. In this context, it’s when machine intelligence crosses a tipping point. Past this point, everything becomes technically possible. Technological rapture!
- [Tamagotchi](#), [ELIZA](#), [Furby](#), [My Real Baby](#), [NEXI](#), [AIDO](#), and [more...](#)
- It’s not about technological advances, as much as it is about our strong response to the relatively little that ‘sociable robots’ offer.
- With each new robot, there’s a ramp-up in our expectations.
- We are vulnerable – a vulnerability that’s not without risk...

# Always On

- [Cyborgs](#) – MIT Media Lab 1996 – always connected to the internet.
- Smartphones – living full-time on the Net. We are all cyborgs now.
- Technology knows no respect for traditional, helpful lines in the sand.
- Multitaskers don't perform well on ANY task they are attempting.
- With sociable robots, we imagine objects as people. Online, we invent ways of being with people that turn them into something like objects.
- We promote robots when we see them as 'alive enough'.
- We demote ourselves when we feel 'alive enough' to be 'maximizing machines' for e-mails and messages.

# Growing Up Tethered

- Today's adolescents have no less need than those of previous generations to learn empathic skills, to think about their values and identity, and to manage and express their feelings. They need time to discover themselves and think.
- Technology, always on, has changed the rules of engagement. When is downtime, when is stillness?
- Presentation anxiety in social media: What are the 'truth claims' in a Facebook profile? How much can I lie? And what's at stake if I do?
- Everything (in Facebook) is a token, a marker for who you are... p184



# Simulation

- The sweet spot of simulation: the exhilaration of creativity without its pressures, the excitement of exploration without its risks.
- What's wrong with computer games? Nothing, if used for amusement. But looking to them for life? Like robots, we are alone and imagine ourselves together. On networks, we are together but so lessen our expectations of other people that we feel utterly alone.
- In games, we feel humane because we are good friends to bots and we confide in online strangers. Just as simulation makes it possible to do things you can't accomplish in real, on-line confession gives you permission not to do things you should do in real life, like apologize and make amends.

# Community

- Community – literal definition, “to give among each other”
- Online Communities – revised definition, “the great good place”
- Communities are constituted by physical proximity, shared concerns, real consequences, and common responsibilities. Its members help each other in practical ways. Question: What real-life responsibilities do we have for those we meet in games? Am I my avatar’s keeper?

# In Conclusion

- Online, we easily find company but are exhausted by the pressure of performance.
- We enjoy connection but rarely have each other's attention.
- We like that the Web knows us, but also know we sacrifice privacy.
- Overwhelmed by technology's pace, we want new tech to dig us out.
- But new technology encourages ever-greater volume and velocity.
- We have many Facebook friends, but in fact we have fewer friends than before.

“We deserve better. When we remind ourselves that it is we who decide how to keep technology busy, we shall have better.”