

# THE FACELESS GENERATION

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Can you imagine life without a cell phone or computer? There has to be something to be said for those good old days! People had to actually talk to one another. Imagine that! I am concerned about the lack of face-to-face conversation these days. Simple but important aspects of communications such as gestures, facial expressions, physical touch and companionship are being missed as we accept the convenience of indirect communication.

Where is it all heading? Could it be that we are moving towards whole relationships being conducted through technology? When chat rooms started up on the Internet, people 'got to love one another' as they chatted back and forth. Many of those liaisons bit the dust once they really got to know each other in real life. Why didn't those people detect their differences before they actually met? Probably because they couldn't see how the other person lived, responded in particular situations and so on. Indeed, one could be presenting a totally farcical and fantasy-based existence by being out of sight.

Andrew got chatting on the Internet to a girl who said she had the same birth date, similar interests and even went on a Missions trip to Africa. She said she was abducted and told him all about her ordeal. This created a strong bond because of his concern over her safety. They were to meet when she got back to the States and he arranged the time and place. It turned out that this acquaintance (or he would refer to her as girlfriend) was some person in Oklahoma just having fun with Andrew's emotions. He was devastated and it took quite some time to get over it.

Kids these days are choosing to text, twitter, Facebook, phone and email their friends because of the convenience of constant contact. But is this really achieving the depth of friendship that kids need in life? Spending time with another person is the stuff that real relationships are made of. We have just been to Illinois for a couple of days to be with friends. We could have just phoned one another, but it just wasn't the same thing at all! Memories are made of these occasions. The sights, the sounds, the smells, the warmth of the situation are all part of developing and sustaining relationships with others. I am sure that if we were stuck on a desert island with nothing but a cell phone or computer we would become very lonely over time. We need real people.

As parents we should be aware of how much time our kids spend texting, twittering, Facebooking, phoning or emailing their friends. For one thing it can become very expensive, but more importantly, they are exchanging physical exercise and contact for sedentary activity. They need to run, play and have adventures together. Consider your childhood memories. I guarantee that you remember all the fun things you did. What will your kids remember? I am sure that texting and talking on the phone won't come to mind.

I am amazed at how little supervision there is over cell phone use. You can and should regulate the amount of time your kids spend using their phones. We used to have a rule at home with our children about the use of the house phone. If their friends were at the same school, they could not call them in the evenings. They had friends apart from school so they were allowed three ten-minute calls, and there was a limit of three calls per evening. It was easy to monitor this. Now that kids have cell phones on them they feel the need to constantly be in touch with others. How can you control it? Set rules such as - their phone can only be used for emergencies, or can only be used for so many minutes or they pay for it themselves. School rules in many districts do not allow the use of cell phones, but kids will often try to text one another at school. If their phone gets confiscated at school it 's a good idea to confiscate it at home.

Encourage your kids to have friends and to bring them home. Be a positive role model. Invite your own friends home and arrange family occasions so your kids see how friendships operate. Explain to your children how to make and keep friends. It is a two-way relationship and requires positive input from both sides. Create memories together. Memories are created through shared activities. Help your kids to understand that healthy relationships are built on all types of communication and not just through the use of technology.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.