



# Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age

By Sherry Turkle

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**Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age** By Sherry Turkle

**Renowned media scholar Sherry Turkle investigates how a flight from conversation undermines our relationships, creativity, and productivity—and why reclaiming face-to-face conversation can help us regain lost ground.**

We live in a technological universe in which we are always communicating. And yet we have sacrificed conversation for mere connection.

Preeminent author and researcher Sherry Turkle has been studying digital culture for over thirty years. Long an enthusiast for its possibilities, here she investigates a troubling consequence: at work, at home, in politics, and in love, we find ways around conversation, tempted by the possibilities of a text or an email in which we don't have to look, listen, or reveal ourselves.

We develop a taste for what mere connection offers. The dinner table falls silent as children compete with phones for their parents' attention. Friends learn strategies to keep conversations going when only a few people are looking up from their phones. At work, we retreat to our screens although it is conversation at the water cooler that increases not only productivity but commitment to work. Online, we only want to share opinions that our followers will agree with – a politics that shies away from the real conflicts and solutions of the public square.

The case for conversation begins with the necessary conversations of solitude and self-reflection. They are endangered: these days, always connected, we see loneliness as a problem that technology should solve. Afraid of being alone, we rely on other people to give us a sense of ourselves, and our capacity for empathy and relationship suffers. We see the costs of the flight from conversation everywhere: conversation is the cornerstone for democracy and in business it is good for the bottom line. In the private sphere, it builds empathy, friendship, love, learning, and productivity.

But there is good news: we are resilient. Conversation cures.

Based on five years of research and interviews in homes, schools, and the workplace, Turkle argues that we have come to a better understanding of where our technology can and cannot take us and that the time is right to reclaim conversation. The most human—and humanizing—thing that we do.

The virtues of person-to-person conversation are timeless, and our most basic technology, talk, responds to our modern challenges. We have everything we need to start, we have each other.

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By *Sherry Turkle*

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Turkle is by no means antitechnology. But after a career examining relations between people and computers, she blends her description with advocacy. She presents a powerful case that a new communication revolution is degrading the quality of human relationships.” — Jacob Weisberg, *The New York Review of Books*

“Turkle deftly explores and explains the good and bad of this ‘flight from conversation’ while encouraging parents, teachers and bosses to champion conversation, use technology more intentionally and serve as role models.” — *Success, A Best Book of 2015*

“*Reclaiming Conversation* reminds readers what’s at stake when devices win over face-to-face conversation, and that it’s not too late to conquer those bad habits.” — *Seattle Times*

“Turkle’s witty, well-written book offers much to ponder.... This is the season of polls and sound bites, of Facebook updates extolling the perceived virtues or revealing the assumed villainy of opinions. Talk is cheap, but conversation is priceless.” — *Boston Globe*

“Drawing from hundreds of interviews, [Turkle] makes a convincing case that our unfettered ability to make digital connections is leading to a decline in actual conversation—between friends and between lovers, in classrooms and in places of work, even in the public sphere. In having fewer meaningful conversations each day, Turkle argues, we’re losing the skills that made them possible to begin with—the ability to focus deeply, think things through, read emotions, and empathize with others.” — *The American Scholar*

“This is a persuasive and intimate book, one that explores the minutiae of human relationships. Turkle uses our experiences to shame us, showing how, phones in hand, we turn away from our children, friends and co-workers, even from ourselves.” — *Washington Post*

“*Reclaiming Conversation* is best appreciated as a sophisticated self-help book. It makes a compelling case that children develop better, students learn better, and employees perform better when their monitors set good examples and carve out spaces for face-to-face interactions.”

- Jonathan Franzen, *The New York Times Book Review*

“Nobody has thought longer or more profoundly than Sherry Turkle about how our brave new world of social media affects the way we confront each other and ourselves. Hers is a voice--erudite and empathic, practical and impassioned--that needs to be heeded.”-Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, Author of *Plato at the Googleplex: Why Philosophy Won't Go Away*.

“This book makes a winning case for conversation, at the family dinner table or in the office, as the ‘talking cure’ for societal and emotional ills.”

- *Publishers Weekly*

"A timely wake-up call urging us to cherish the intimacy of direct, unscripted communication."  
- *Kirkus*

"Only connect!" wrote E. M. Forster in 1910. In this wise and incisive book, Sherry Turkle offers a timely revision: 'Only converse!'"  
- *Nicholas Carr, author of The Shallows and The Glass Cage*

"Smartphones are the new sugar and fat: They are so potent they can undo us if we don't limit them. Sherry Turkle introduces a lifesaving principle for the twenty-first century: face-to-face conversation first. This heuristic really works; your life, your family life, your work life will all be better. Turkle offers a thousand beautifully written arguments for why you should lift your eyes up from the screen."

- Kevin Kelly, senior maverick for *Wired*; author of *What Technology Wants*

"Digital media were supposed to turn us from passive viewers to interactive participants, but Turkle reveals how genuine human interaction may be the real casualty of supposedly social technologies. Without conversation, there is no syntax, no literacy, no genuine collaboration, no empathy, no civilization. With courage and compassion, Turkle shows how the true promise of social media would be to reacquaint us with the lost art of making meaning together."

- *Douglas Rushkoff, author of Present Shock*

"To reclaim conversation is to reclaim our humanity. We all know it at some level, and yet how satisfying to find our hunch proved right: Turkle shows us that to love well, learn well, work well, and be well, we must protect a vital piece of ourselves, and can. What an important conversation about conversation this is."

- *Gish Jen, author of Typical American and Mona in the Promised Land*

"Like the air we breathe, or the water we drink, most of us take face-to-face conversations for granted. In this brilliant and incisive book, Sherry Turkle explains the power of conversation, its fragility at present, the consequences of its loss, and how it can be preserved and reinvigorated."

- *Howard Gardner, John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education*

"Sherry Turkle's unrivalled expertise in how people interact with devices, coupled with her deep empathy for people struggling to find their identity, shine through on every absorbing and illuminating page of *Reclaiming Conversation*. We can start remembering how to talk to one another by talking about this timely book."

- *Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard Business School professor and author of MOVE and Confidence*

"It is a rare event when a single book presents both a compelling indictment of one of the more insidious effects of technology on our culture and an immediate, elegantly simple antidote---all the while providing a stirring apologia for what is most important about language's power to move us, to expand our thoughts, and to deepen our relationship to each other. Once again, Sherry Turkle seeks to preserve human qualities that are eroding while we are always "elsewhere": empathy, generativity, and mentoring our young."

*-Maryanne Wolf, John DiBiaggio Professor of Citizenship and Public Service, Director of the Center for Reading and Language Research, and Professor in the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development at Tufts University*

"In a time in which the ways we communicate and connect are constantly changing, and not always for the better, Sherry Turkle provides a much needed voice of caution and reason to help explain what the f\*\*\* is going on."

*- Aziz Ansari, author of Modern Romance*

#### **Praise for *Alone Together*:**

"Savvy and insightful."

*- New York Times*

"What Turkle brings to the topic that is new is more than a decade of interviews with teens and college students in which she plumbs the psychological effect of our brave new devices on the generation that seems most comfortable with them."

*- Wall Street Journal*

"Nobody has ever articulated so passionately and intelligently what we're doing to ourselves by substituting technologically mediated social interaction.... Equipped with penetrating intelligence and a sense of humor, Turkle surveys the front lines of the social-digital transformation...."

*- Lev Grossman, Time Magazine*

"Important.... Admirably personal....Turkle's book will spark useful debate...."

*- The Boston Globe*

"Turkle summarizes her new view of things with typical eloquence...fascinating, readable."

*- New York Times Book Review*

#### **About the Author**

SHERRY TURKLE has spent the last 30 years studying the psychology of people's relationships with technology. She is the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT. A licensed clinical psychologist, she is the founder and director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self. Turkle is the author five books and three edited collections, including a trilogy of three landmark studies on our relationship with digital culture: *The Second Self*, *Life on the Screen* and most recently, *Alone Together*. A recipient of a Guggenheim and Rockefeller Humanities Fellowship, she is a featured media commentator. She is a recipient of a Harvard Centennial Medal and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

#### **Users Review**

##### **From reader reviews:**

**John Bennett:**

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. To be sure that book is very important for people. The book *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* seemed to be making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The book *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to become your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship while using book *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. You never feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

**Karen McCarthy:**

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**Lidia Flynn:**

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**Irene Wang:**

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