

Social or Anti-social?

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What is social media to you? Just like other high school girls, I usually post some pictures of the day on LINE or twitter to let others know what I have done and felt that day. At the same time, I check my friends' messages and photos, and also confirm important things for the next day with LINE. Not only high school students, but all age groups of people use various social networks on their cell phones. Social media is a good tool for communication, but we need to have good manners to use this technology in public, and have real communication skills so that we are able to care about others.

Around 80% of people over 10 years old own a smart phone. You will often see many people around you having a smart phone in their hand when you go out. A month ago, I went to a restaurant with my friends and saw quite a few people looking at their cell phones and writing messages while eating their meal. Despite the fact these people had company right across the table; they seemed to ignore each other. It felt strange and uncomfortable to see these people sitting and watching their cell phones and showing no interest to the persons in front of them. I was also shocked to see young parents with a small baby using a cell phone for a long time. They didn't seem to care about their baby at all. These people were giving priority more to communication on a screen than to face-to-face communication. At first, I was appalled at their behavior, until I realized how easy it is to begin this kind of behavior. I remembered that just last year, I had some of the same habits.

When I was in the 9th grade on my home island of Miyako, I went to a cram school every day and got home very late. I usually had dinner alone with my phone. I felt a lot of pressure and was depressed. Instead of listening to my parents when they tried to help, I just kept my phone in front of me, to distract me. We sometimes quarreled because, to them, it seemed my phone was more important. I talked to my family less and less, and spent more and more time on my phone. I was becoming just like the people I saw in the restaurant. I was ignoring the people right in front of me.

Now that I live in a dormitory to go to school in Naha, my life has totally changed. What I learn, what I hear, and what I experience is all new to me and I want to share this with my family. I send messages and photos to my parents through social media every day to talk about my day. However, it doesn't feel quite right. It seems that I just make a shallow report every day to my parents. I want my parents to feel my happiness and sadness directly by showing my face and telling with my voice. I have realized since I left my parents in Miyako that by sharing emotions directly, people feel love and caring.

I really regret that I didn't have much communication with my family when I was in 9th grade. Now I talk more with my parents when I go home. I consciously put my phone down when I am around friends and pay more attention to them. While there is a time and a place for using social media, we should all be aware of the limited time we have with each other, and try to build our relationships as much as we can, especially with our families. After all, one smile and one hug from your parents has much more love than thousands of messages and photos from your phone.