

CONNECTIVITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Sherry Turkle

1948–

A radio and television media commentator, Sherry Turkle is the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the social studies of science and technology at MIT as well as the founder and director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self. She is the author of five books, including, most recently, Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other (2011), from which the following is excerpted. In this discussion, Turkle takes a critical look at how technology affects our interpersonal relationships.

Online connections were first conceived as a substitute for face-to-face contact, when the latter was for some reason impractical: Don't have time to make a phone call? Shoot off a text message. But very quickly, the text message became the connection of choice. We discovered the network—the world of connectivity—to be uniquely suited to the overworked and overscheduled life it makes possible. And now we look to the network to defend us against loneliness even as we use it to control