



# Face-to-face communication vital in forming relationships

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“Successful relationships and successful organizations depend on mutual trust and caring,” Lisa Earle McLeod observed in last Sunday’s paper. “Without it, failure ensues.”

Most of us recognize the manifest wisdom in McLeod’s assertion – regardless of whether we are talking about our personal lives or our interactions with co-workers. Many Americans seem to be losing the empathy that naturally springs from the kind of understanding and connections essential to achieving satisfaction in virtually every arena of life.

The more I thought about McLeod’s simple yet profound insight, the more I saw an association with what George F. Will was articulating in his op-ed piece a few pages earlier. In his typically academic yet innately engaging style, Will was lamenting the stagnation and lack of vision many Americans seem to be exhibiting in growing numbers.

This is the key phrase that caught my attention: “Fifty-two years ago, children’s most common leisure activity was outdoor play; today, the average 9-year-old spends 50 hours a week staring at electronic screens.”

As I re-read these astute commentaries, it occurred to me that both writers were really talking about the same phenomenon. Whereas McLeod was pondering the dysfunction that increasingly characterizes many adult relationships, Will was attempting to explain the origins of the shroud of complacency that seems to have descended over contemporary American culture.

It is very difficult – if not impossible – to develop meaningful relationships with other human beings without face-to-face communication. And although many intellectuals see technological progress as holding immense promise, it is becoming more and more apparent the digital revolution has a dark side that seldom gets much attention.

As a society, I think we need to seriously reflect on the world we are fashioning with our enthusiastic adoption of each new technological convenience. Is this the life we really want?

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