

It is Friday evening, and I am just sitting down to write an essay for our website for the week. I most often write my weekly chronicle on Sunday, send it to our webmaster, and it appears on the web site, usually on Monday. But, we were without our computer for about two weeks, so I did not have anything for him this past weekend. I had anticipated one week without our laptop, so I had written an “extra” for insertion last week. That worked fine, but our computer tech guy (the Emergency Geek) had to order a part, and it took a little longer.

So, from that complicated narrative comes the theme of this shorter than usual essay. Being without internet access—we don’t have a smartphone, either—for two weeks was not a traumatic situation. I’m not sure this would be the case for many people I know. I hardly realized we were without the connection except for lack of contact with a couple of friends with whom I keep in touch via the internet. One, in particular, lives a long way from us, and we visit via e-mail several times a week. I missed that. And, I also was sorry to be without the availability of the printer. I regularly use the computer to write letters in large fonts to a friend who has limited vision. Otherwise, the lack of a computer or internet connection never crossed my mind.

Although this might smack of “old fogeyism,” I think it might be healthier for a lot of people to see their internet connection—whether via computer, i-pad, or phone—as a tool rather than as an extension of their hands. Every “ping” on the phone, indicating a new text message, for example, causes the phone owner to immediately glance down to the device. It seems that rudeness to others is now the norm. I have had someone ask me a question, and as I was responding, a signal on her phone took her attention from what I was saying—even though it was she who had wanted the information. The Phone is the master.

I could go on and on about this, but I won’t. It is not yet clear what kind of influence excessive “connectedness” might have on humans, but it is evident that addiction to devices is a real issue. And, it seems like personal connections should be more important than those many of us maintain with people we hardly know. Social media might more accurately be called “isolation media,” since it keeps many people from personal interactions with their fellow human beings.