



# iSolation

Lesson code: 118I-D6CD-RVPP

UPPER INTERMEDIATE +

## 1 Key words

Match each word to its correct definition:

- |                  |                                                    |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. a decline     | a. a feeling of worry, nervousness                 |
| 2. a correlation | b. a gradual decrease                              |
| 3. well-being    | c. a link or connection between two or more things |
| 4. profound      | d. deep, meaningful                                |
| 5. anxiety       | e. lasting for a very short time.                  |
| 6. fleeting      | f. the state of feeling happy and healthy          |

## 2 Predict the answers

Choose the correct alternative to each statement and check your answers by reading the article:

- Two Italian academics conducted a study on modern communication. What did they find?
  - Without face-to-face interaction we are happier.
  - Without face-to-face interaction we are less happy.
  - There is no correlation between a decline in face-to-face contact and a decline in our well-being.
- What is "Text Neck"?
  - a medical condition
  - a type of message
  - a social habit
- According to a study, what is the effect of text messaging on children?
  - Text messaging has a negative impact on children's grammar and spelling.
  - Text messaging has no impact on children's grammar and spelling.
  - Text messaging improves children's grammar and spelling.
- Which behaviour is a sign that we need face-to-face communication?
  - sending text messages to people in the same room
  - staring at the ellipsis ("...") that messaging apps display to tell you somebody is writing a message
  - checking your email every 5 minutes
- What does the app "Somebody" allow you to do?
  - send a message which is then delivered by a person who is in the same area as the recipient
  - call a complete stranger
  - remind yourself to have more face-to-face interactions



THE  
INDEPENDENT

# Is a decline in face-to-face contact leading to a decline in our well-being?

**Rhodri Marsden feels that email, text and social media keep him sufficiently connected but still values his chats with the DHL guy.**

- 1 I'm writing this on Wednesday lunchtime. The only face-to-face interaction I've had since Sunday is a 30-minute appointment with a physiotherapist.
- 2 I'm not complaining. In many ways I'm lucky that I can do most of my work from home, and over the years I've chosen to continue doing so. The variety of electronic communication available to me - email, text, social media - keeps me sufficiently connected with others for me to feel vaguely human. But when the workload grows, I certainly feel that absence of real interaction, and I know from experience that it's not enough to make small talk with a DHL delivery guy.
- 3 Two Italian academics disclosed the results of a study this week that found a strong correlation between a decline in face-to-face contact and a decline in our well-being. Engaging with people face-to-face, they say, has a deep and profound effect on us that's related to our status as a social species. Social media, it appears, isn't that social at all.
- 4 When I read this I felt strangely defensive of modern communication. After all, we negotiate its limitations pretty well, don't we? We've found ways of expressing sincerity, honesty and other emotions that would normally be conveyed by tone of voice or facial muscles. Then again, you only need to look at Twitter for 10 minutes to be reminded that many misunderstandings simply wouldn't happen in a face-to-face situation.
- 5 Electronic communication by text has come under criticism this week. A physician voiced his fears over what he calls "Text Neck", a condition where the action of bending your neck to look at our phones results in the first few bones of our cervical spine bending forward in an unusual way. Then there were arguments over a study into whether instant messaging has a negative impact on children's spelling and grammar skills. The study found that this was absolutely not the case, but many people still believe that the use of shortcuts, emoticons and abbreviations causes untold damage to our brains.
- 6 Then, in the New York Times, writer Jessica Bennett explored the anxiety related to the "typing awareness indicator", the ellipsis ("...") that messaging apps display to tell you that a reply is imminent. We can spend endless empty moments staring at that indicator, knowing that someone is thinking about us but not knowing precisely what, and in many ways that behaviour is a sign of our need for real-time interaction.
- 7 And then film director and actress Miranda July had an idea to transform the impersonal into the physical. She's just launched an app called "Somebody", which allows you to send a message which is then delivered in person by a messenger who happens to be in the same area as the recipient. You can volunteer to become a messenger, too. It may fall short of modern standards of efficiency, but she reassures us: "Unpredictable, undocumented, fleeting interactions with strangers can bring great joy and inspiration!"
- 8 She's probably right. Perhaps it's time for me to leave the house and make some of those fleeting interactions happen.

*Adapted from The Independent, 03 September 2014 by Rhodri Marsden*



### 3 Find the words

Find a word or phrase in the text which means...

1. in a small way (*adverb, P2*) \_\_\_\_\_
2. communicating with, interacting with (*verb -ing + preposition, P3*) \_\_\_\_\_
3. communicated, made known (*verb -ed, P4*) \_\_\_\_\_
4. been criticized (*phrase, P5*) \_\_\_\_\_
5. expressed (*verb -ed, P5*) \_\_\_\_\_
6. a great deal of (*adjective, P5*) \_\_\_\_\_
7. happening or coming soon (*adjective, P6*) \_\_\_\_\_
8. is somewhere by chance (*verb + infinitive, P7*) \_\_\_\_\_
9. not quite reach a particular standard (*phrase, P7*) \_\_\_\_\_

### 4 Checking understanding

Put 'T' (True) or 'F' (False) next to each statement below. Explain why the false statements are false.

1. The writer is happy that he can work from home.
2. The writer doesn't need face-to-face interaction when he is busy.
3. The writer believes it isn't possible to convey emotions with electronic communication.
4. Many people believe that using shortcuts, emoticons and abbreviations causes damage to our brains.
5. The idea of Miranda July's app is to make our impersonal lives more physical and joyful.
6. The author disagrees with Miranda July.

### 5 Grammar - Prepositions

Complete the sentences with the prepositions below. You can find examples of these expressions in the article.

between      into      on      over (x3)      into      to

1. Scientists have begun a study into whether global warming is more serious than we think.
2. There is a strong correlation \_\_\_\_\_ living in crowded cities and stress levels.
3. I've worked for a variety of companies \_\_\_\_\_ the years.
4. It seems that the Internet has a negative effect \_\_\_\_\_ our social lives.
5. The workers expressed their fears \_\_\_\_\_ the company's imminent decision to cut jobs.
6. There are many aspects of the modern lifestyle which cause damage \_\_\_\_\_ our health.
7. There are a number of strong arguments \_\_\_\_\_ whether smoking should be banned or not.
8. Look what John has done! He's transformed his bedroom \_\_\_\_\_ a film studio.



## 6 Collocations

Match the words on the left with the words on the right to form typical phrases. One of each possible combination can be found in the article.

- |               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. a strong   | correlation/link/relation     |
| 2. a profound | damage/harm/suffering         |
| 3. untold     | effect/impact/influence       |
| 4. a fleeting | interaction/moment/friendship |

Now complete the sentences with suitable collocations.

1. There is a \_\_\_\_\_ between poverty and crime.
2. Famines have caused \_\_\_\_\_ among the people of Ethiopia.
3. Many scientists believe that human activity has had a \_\_\_\_\_ on the environment.
4. Paul and Carol had a lot in common, but in the end it was just a \_\_\_\_\_. They never saw each other again.

## 7 Talking point

Discuss any of the questions below in pairs or groups.

1. Do you agree with the writer?
2. Do you think we use electronic communication too much?
3. Has the way we communicate changed for better or for worse since you were younger?
4. Do you think the situation will change in the future? How?



**1 Key words**

*Give examples of each word where necessary. Students can work alone and check in pairs.*

1. b      2. c      3. f      4. d      5. a      6. e

**2 Predict the answers**

*Students can work alone and check in pairs. Have students read the article. Go through the answers.*

1. b      2. a      3. b      4. b      5. a

**3 Find the words**

*Students can work alone and check in pairs.*

1. vaguely                      2. engaging with                      3. conveyed                      4. come under criticism  
5. voiced                      6. untold                      7. imminent                      8. happens to be  
9. fall short of

**4 Checking understanding**

*Students can work alone and check in pairs. Go through the answers.*

1. T                                              2. F - He feels an absence of real interaction.  
3. F - He says we've found ways of expressing sincerity, honesty and other emotions that would normally be conveyed by tone of voice or facial muscles.  
4. T  
5. T                                              6. F - He says 'she's probably right.'

**5 Grammar - Prepositions**

*Students can work alone and check in pairs. Go through the answers.*

2. between    3. over      4. on      5. over      6. to      7. over      8. into

**6 Collocations**

*Students can work alone and check in pairs. Go through the answers.*

1. a strong - correlation/link/relation                      2. a profound - effect/impact/influence  
3. untold - damage/harm/suffering                      4. a fleeting - interaction/moment/friendship  
1. strong correlation    2. untold suffering    3. profound impact    4. fleeting friendship

**7 Talking point**

*Monitor the activity. Make a note of typical errors and write up useful language on the board.*

