

# Reduce <sup>THE STAR</sup> <sub>2/12/17</sub> screen time for human interaction

"IT'S the 21st century. Social media is the real deal," whines a child to his mother. With information technology (IT) developing rapidly, parents are becoming more concerned about the future of their children whose very lives currently seem to depend on mobile electronic gadgets (smartphones, tablets and handheld game consoles).

When I walk into a restaurant these days, it feels like I've accidentally stepped into a cybercafé. At every table, there would be people, adults and children alike, fiddling with their electronic gadgets, perhaps looking at the latest posts from their Facebook friends or moving to the next level in their video game.

These gadgets have also become handy tools for parents to use with their children. I was a little shocked at seeing a toddler in a restaurant being given an iPad to play with just so the parents could eat in peace.

At home, family time together is also being disrupted by IT, of which social media is a major feature. Most homes, especially in urban areas, would be connected through Wi-Fi and there would be the attendant personal computer, laptop, game consoles and, of course, smartphones and tablets. And chances are everyone in the family would at one point or another, and in some instances all at the same time, be engaged with



the electronic device of their choice. In this scenario, children with problems might not be heard out because their parents are too busy on social media and grandparents would not be any help too if they are immersed in their online news sources.

My mother usually found it difficult to call us all down to dinner but recently, she hit on a very effective way to do this. She just switched off the Wi-Fi which is downstairs! Within seconds, we would all rush down, not to the dining table but to the Wi-Fi to switch it back on. Nevertheless, it was an accomplishment for my mother because she would get us all down without having to shout herself hoarse in the process.

Recently, I read an article discussing the reasons why graduates are finding it hard to get jobs even when they have prestigious degrees. Could social media be partially blamed for this? Teenagers who are fond of communicating online, wrongly using short forms of words, are stunned when they go out into the real world. They

cannot make proper sentences and don't even know basic manners during crucial job interviews.

Don't get me wrong; I am also an avid user of IT but what I tend to question is its significance to people in today's world. It cannot be denied that everywhere you go, it plays a big role. Businesses depend on it for advertising. Colleges and universities bank on it for modern education. There is no way we can go on without IT in this era where everyone is competing for success.

Although parents often complain about their children's addiction to their electronic gadgets, they fail to realise that they themselves may be to blame for this. It is said that "Monkeys see, monkeys do." They might excuse themselves by saying it is work but children these days know better and will no longer just accept what they are told.

So, let's all take time on a regular basis to sit back, let go of those gadgets and just enjoy the company of those we love.

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