



## The „new media“ and their influence on our interpersonal relationships

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Recently, there has been a growing awareness that the "new" media can also have a negative impact on our social interaction with each other. Partners complain about each other because of the constant presence on social media and the absence during e.g. meals, parents complain about their children and vice versa. The article "Cyber Babies and the Threat to the Development of Secure Attachment Relationships", by, Janet A. Courtney, PhD, discusses how dangerous it might be for our future social development if we don't even take care of our youngest fellow humans with direct eye contact. Of course, there are always the arguments that in the past not everything was perfect, which is surely true. However, the new media does not only have a positive influence on us.

The new technology has become so important that it is now an integral part of our everyday life. It is not a question of demonizing the new media in general. However, it is naïve to assume that mishandling the situation will not affect our social interactions. Our need for information is so high and our concern to miss important information is often very present. A small ping on our mobile phone alone can cause us to leave everything else standing, even endanger us and our fellow men on the road. The worries of not receiving and reading an "important" message at once are driving our actions even on the road which sometimes leads us down dangerous paths and in turn lead to more accidents. Hardly anyone, with whom we are physically surrounded, can provoke such a fast response in us. That alone should give us food for thought.

By pretending to be present everywhere and always live at the push of a button, we get the feeling of interacting with other people and it may even replace social interpersonal interactions. Our reward system in the brain seems to be so easily satisfied. The real-world interactions with other people can sometimes be very complicated and can present us with real challenges.

In a conversation, where we have eye contact, we are able to take in much more information from our counterpart than just the written or spoken words. Gesture, facial expressions and tone of voice give us additional information about our relationship with our conversational partner. A world without this interpersonal interaction is a poorer world. Poorer already in information.

If we have the possibility to interact with all our senses correctly, we have much more chances to clarify misunderstandings and wrong communication. In socially difficult



situations where you feel overwhelmed, it can be an attractive and easy way to escape from the situation through distanced communication via e-mail, WhatsApp, SMS. The new media offer many a welcome escape from the situation.

Additionally, it is also tempting to find comfort on the internet.

A striking development in recent years is the increasing dependence on internet pornography. There are an increasing number of cases, in psychotherapeutic practices, where clients complain more and more about potency problems. In this case, too, the media plays a role and fuels expectations that have little to do with the reality of a fulfilled sex life in a partnership. Therefore, a pressure to perform can develop, which can have a negative effect on the erotic interaction in the partnership.

The romantic partners complain about a lack of erotic closeness. This can lead to jealousy towards pornography. These accusations are often dismissed, with - that's not so bad, I'm not having an affair.- However, such an intimate connection with the screen, very well has all the characteristics of an affair. The user of pornography may be more likely to turn to the screen than his or her partner.

Through the constant use of the media, we can get more and more into emotionally isolated, which destroys us mentally. There are more and more people suffering from depressions and anxiety or loneliness.

According to Sue Johnson (Therapist/Research Professor/Presenter in the field of couple relationships), we are very concerned about the destruction of our ecological environment, but equally as frightening is, that we are moving further and further away from our key stakeholders and are becoming more and more emotionally isolated. This emotional isolation makes us sick. We can no longer deal with people around us because we have forgotten how to do it, or have never really learned it. And with a lack of active communication, we will not be able to pass it on to our children properly. We should not only worry about destroying our ecological environment, since we will probably destroy each other emotionally first. We should put a greater focus on cultivating good working relationships. We humans need each other, we are social creatures. Only the cooperation with each other has helped us in our development. Positive interaction and interpersonal recognition is important in order for all of us to survive.

It is sad that we ignore the fact that we are social beings for whom social coexistence is vital for survival.

We are so vulnerable in our interpersonal relationships. However, these relationships are also the greatest source of our personal development and opportunity to grow beyond ourselves. That is why it is so important that we pay more attention to each other.



As a couple therapist, I work mainly with international and multicultural couples. One might think that with different mother tongues, different cultures and religions, it is hardly possible to communicate in a proper way. However, I experience again and again how beautiful it is when these couples have found a way to really respond to each other, to listen to each other, to really understand each other and to accept each other in his or her otherness. This is the love that we all so desperately long for and it even crosses borders

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