



River Valley Current

October 13, 2015 No. 420

"We must learn to honor excellence in every socially accepted human activity, however humble the activity, and to scorn shoddiness, however exalted the activity. An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water." -John W. Gardner

School Calendar

This Week

Tuesday, October 13

5th grade trip to a Hindu Temple

Thursday, October 15

School Tour	9:00 am
Board Meeting	6:30 pm

Looking Ahead

Monday, October 19

Mushroom Talk w/ David Porter	6:30 pm
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Thursday, October 29

Community Meeting	6:30 pm
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Friday, October 30

Fall Festival & Open House at Morning Glory 7 th & 8 th Grade Halloween Dance at Ottsville Traditional Arts	6:30 – 9:30 pm
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Saturday, November 7

Workday – 6th/7th grade

Tuesday, November 10

Lantern Walk – Early Childhood

Wednesday, November 11

Lantern Walk – 1st & 2nd grades

How to Contact Us

info@rivervalleyschool.org
lc@rivervalleyschool.org
bot@rivervalleyschool.org
pc@rivervalleyschool.org

November Lunch Menu

It's time to order lunch for November.
The form is attached to this week's
Current.

Mushroom Talk - Tricks & Treats

October 19th @ 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Mushroom expert, David Porter, will present an entertaining talk and photographic tour on, Monday, October 19, titled "Mushroom Tricks and Treats" as part of the RVWS guest speaker series. Porter is an emeritus professor of Mycology at the University of Georgia and now a year-round resident of Brooklin, Maine and a visiting professor at College of the Atlantic, in Bar Harbor, Maine.

Fascinating and often nasty tricks that mushrooms play on us and other organisms will be described in his photographic tour. These include parasitic attack, lethal toxins, mimicry and bio-luminescence. Treats that we derive from mushrooms will also be presented. The remarkable, and generally overlooked, beauty of mushrooms is perhaps the biggest treat that they offer us. But in the larger picture of things, mushrooms play an essential role as companion organisms to our forest trees, 'treating' them to water and nutrients in the soil. And of course the many treats of foraging for wild edible mushrooms will not be ignored. The evening should prove to be an enlightening and enjoyable tour of many mycological mysteries and marvels. Bring specimens for identification, if you have mushrooms in question!

Parent Council Corner

Parent Council is excited to announce study sessions with TreeAnne McEnery each month. These study sessions are intended to provide parents with a deeper understanding of Waldorf philosophy. All are welcome to join. Our first study is scheduled for Wednesday, October 14th at 2:00 pm, location to be determined. We will be reading and discussing "Confessions of a Waldorf Parent," by Margaret Gorman. Copies are available on the wall opposite the office and attached to this week's Current. Tomorrow's Parent Study will take place in the Garden, weather permitting. Please RSVP at pc@rivervalleyschool.org if you plan on attending.

Parent Council's **next meeting is Wednesday October 21st at 2:00** in the RVWS Garden (weather permitting). If the weather is bad then we will meet at Homestead General Store. Topics to be covered include Back To School Night review, Winter Fair, and the Auction among others. All are welcome!!

SAVE THIS DATE! - Saturday, June 4th, 2016

~ COUNTRY FORMAL AUCTION ~

The Auction Team is already diligently working on this year's exciting event. We want you there with us so be sure to mark your calendars right now. This Auction event will not disappoint! Think delicious BBQ along with additional Nelli Rae's creations - yum! Oh, and throw in some great music, free beer & wine, great auction items and Ron Ferguson burning up the MIC! Hmmmmm, sounds like a party NOT to be missed... So, see you then!

Auction Team: Erica Nichols, Clare Wargaski, Tracy Fly, Ron Ferguson, Kristyn Lederer, Kathy Betz, Rich Kroth, Tracy Euler and Paul Ritchie. We are always looking for dynamic folks to help us out! Come join the fun! **Next meeting:**

Thursday, October 22nd, 6:30 at The Ship Inn in Milford

From Administration

AFTERNOON GARDEN

Afternoon Garden is the extended day program (1:00pm until 3:20pm) for RVWS early childhood students 3 and up. Registration is monthly and is available each day that your child attends the morning program. October & November registration forms are attached may be found at the end of the Current. Drop-in use is possible at \$25 per day, when space is available. Please contact Cindy Schretlen with any questions (extension 201, or cschretlen@rivervalley.school.org).

Come Ski Blue Mountain with your River Valley Friends

RIVER VALLEY SKI CLUB

We will meet on six Friday evenings, from 4 pm to 10 pm starting January 8th through February 12th. Forms and instructions are attached. The deadline for sign up is October 26th. Place forms and payment in the folder on the office door. Feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. Christine Aherne, cmaherne@epix.net 267-614-5021

A Call for Housing

River Valley has been chosen to host the next session of "Teaching Sensible Science," a training for Waldorf Science teachers from all over the country. There will be approximately 25-30 teachers attending the course and they will all need a place to stay.

Below are the dates that we would like to find housing for them. The guests will pay \$30 for a shared room and \$40 for a private room per night to the host. Attendees should have their own transportation so the host would just be responsible for providing a room. Faculty or families of River Valley that are interested can contact Hilary at hmurphy@rivervalley.school.org

The course will be divided into three week-long sessions:
SESSION 1: Friday evening February 12 – Thursday noon February 18, 2016

SESSION 2: Monday evening June 20 – Sunday noon June 26, 2016

SESSION 3: Wednesday evening October 5 – Monday noon October 10, 2016 (Columbus Day weekend in the U.S. and Thanksgiving in Canada)

Van Drivers

Are you interested in driving one of the school vans for field trips or other school events?

If so, please contact Lorraine Sharaf (mother of Eve G-5) lorraine.jenkins@comcast.net for information about taking the required training course.

Administration Work Schedule

Cindy Schretlen – every day

Renee Goodyear – Monday all day, Tuesday and Wednesday until 1:30

Robbie Miller – Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

Hilary Murphy – Wednesday and Thursday until 1:00

Pamela Hobson – every morning until 10:00

Charlene Chapman – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday until 12:00

James Hagan – Tuesday, Thursday

TreeAnne McEnery – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday until 1:00

THANK YOU FOR MAKING HARVEST FEST A SUCCESS

Dear Friends -

Many thanks to everyone who helped to make this year's Harvest Fest and the Capital Campaign Kickoff Event a great success. Thank you Carol Diven, Lisa Sforza and the 5th-8th grade students for the beautiful choral presentation, TreeAnne McEnery, Michelle Bader and Will Carpenter for your lovely words, Tony Stuart for managing the bread oven, David Lovely and JR Nichols for parking, Reeve Kelly and Erica Nichols for introducing the incredible Mosaic Tile Program, Andy and Zachary Wander for production, Laura Weis for the bread and butter delivery, Renell Carpenter for coffee service, John Wesp and Jef Betz for clean up, Ron Ferguson for your orchestrational genius in spearheading this entire event, and most importantly, to all in our community who came out to celebrate this great moment in our school's journey and shared your wonderful food and friendship on what turned out to be a perfect day. THANK YOU!

7TH AND 8TH GRADE FAMILIES, THINKING ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL?

In addition to their local public high schools, many RVWS graduates have or are currently attending (& thriving at) the following independent high schools. If you're not sure what direction is right for your family, or know already that you would like your child to attend an independent high school, the following will be of interest to you as you explore your options!

KIMBERTON WALDORF SCHOOL

Discover the High School

Visit our High School classrooms, meet and interact with faculty, and learn more about the crowning years of a Waldorf Education. The event will begin in the High School Library. Monday, November 9th, 2015 from 7:00 to 9:30 pm

Open House

A comprehensive overview of Waldorf Education and the programs offered at Kimberton Waldorf School. Families should attend an open house as early in their process as possible. Tour the campus; meet faculty, students, parents, and alumni; view samples of student work; participate in panel discussions; and gain an understanding of Waldorf Education through inspiring faculty and student presentations. Complimentary childcare is available for younger children. Sunday, October 25, 2015 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm

GEORGE SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, October 25, 2015, 2:00 p.m.

The program will begin promptly at 2:00 p.m.

Meet teachers and students and take a close look into what George School offers for students who value academic rigor, enjoy collaboration and creativity, relish athletic and artistic pursuits, and appreciate the ideals of service, social justice, and diversity.

Please check in at the George School Meetinghouse a few minutes prior to 2:00 p.m. Parking is available at the Fitness and Athletic Center on Farm Drive, across from the Meetinghouse. If you have any questions, please call us at 215.579.6547.

HIGH MOWING SCHOOL (Waldorf Boarding & Day School)

222 Isaac Frye Hwy, Wilton, NH 03086, (603) 654-2391

Admissions Open House 10-17-2015, 1pm – 4pm

MORAVIAN ACADEMY

Upper School Open House 10-24-2015, 9am - 12noon

4313 Green Pond Rd, Bethlehem, PA 18020

(610) 868-4744

SOLEBURY SCHOOL

Open House, Sunday, October 18, 2015, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Prospective students and families are invited to get acquainted with Solebury School, a college preparatory boarding and day school for students in grades 7-12, located in New Hope, PA. Solebury has an average class size of under 11. You will find that this, combined with the warm and accepting environment that is palpable from the second you walk on campus, makes Solebury a place where students not only excel, but where they thrive. A full slate of Honors and AP courses, as well as extensive electives in every subject gives students the opportunity for both breadth and depth in every subject.

Come see the whole school in action as you tour the campus — see classes debating, teams practicing, artists creating and groups rehearsing. Learn what makes a Solebury education unique. Call 215-862-5261 to register.

From the Faculty

What the Children are Learning:

First Grade – Language Arts

Second Grade – Math

Third Grade – Arithmetic

Fourth Grade – Math/Norse Mythology

Fifth Grade – Ancient India

Sixth Grade – Classical Greece and Rome

Seventh Grade – Late Middle Ages/Early Renaissance

Eighth Grade – European Revolutions

Halloween Dance

The Grade 7/8 Halloween Dance will be held at Ottsville Traditional Arts Center on October 30th 6:30 - 9:30 pm with DJ Jens.

A Request from the Garden

Dear Friends, If anyone is cleaning out their garage, or visiting a garage sale and would like to donate to the garden...We could use hand pruners and rakes! Thank You So much!

Looking for a sitter!!!

The MacDonald children (Oliver and Edierose) need a friend to pick them up on Thursdays at 3:20 and either bring them home or keep them until around 6:30 when Molly gets out of her faculty meeting. Please call Molly at 610-349-3536

Weekly Garden Get-Together

Would you like to know what your children are learning in the garden? Are you interested in Biodynamics, Permaculture or Organic gardening? Melissa Goldstein, the gardening teacher, will be in the garden on Wednesdays, starting September 23rd between the hours of 1-3. She would be delighted to meet you! Be aware that she may hand you a pair of gloves and have you pull a weed or two.

Winter Coat Drive

Watch this space for more information about our 1st Annual Martinmas Winter Coat Drive. October 20-November 20

From the Leadership Council

What we are working on?

Preparing with the faculty for the Community Meeting on October 29th.
Working with EC to start a new mixed age kindergarten class after January.
Working with TDC on teacher mentoring and evaluation.

The LC has open hours every Tuesday from 3:30-4 for anyone who would like to meet with us. If you have a question or a concern, please stop by. All are welcome.

Community Meeting on Thursday, October 29th at 6:30

The LC and the faculty will be sharing intentions about the future of some of our programs and policies, some important communication dates that are going into our calendar, and some more ideas about the journey of the class teacher.

We look forward to sharing these intentions with all of you, and hearing your responses, which will help inform next steps as we work towards implementation and the growth of our school.

From the Board

Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda

October 15, 2015

Pre Meeting Room Set Up at 6PM Meeting Starts Promptly at 6:30

6:30 – Opening: Verse and candle lighting – Will (10 minutes)

6:40 – LC Report –TreeAnne/Euclides (20 minutes)

7:00 – Capital Campaign Update – Louanne/Will (15 minutes)

Proposals, Decisions and Discussions

7:15 – Strategic Plan Review – Will (15 minutes)

Accreditation Review

7:30 – Nominating Committee – Rich (15 minutes)

Whose term is up? Ideas/Suggestions

7:45 – Proposal – Nick (5 minutes)

Faculty Retirement Loans

Standing Committee Reports

7:50 – IAT – Will/Nick (15 minutes)

8:05 – Finance – Nick (10 minutes)

8:15 – Faculty – Christina/Lynn (10 minutes)

8:25 – Parent Council – Clare (5 minutes)

Committee Reports

8:30 – IT Committee – Andy (5 minutes)

8:35 – Items from the Board President – Will (10 minutes)

Closing and Meeting Feedback

Building & Grounds

School Work Days

Below is the calendar of the upcoming workdays. Please note that some changes have been made from the school calendar. Please RSVP to Mary K. Till (mtill@rivervalleysschool.org), to let us know if you will attend. This way we can plan what projects can be undertaken. Mary K. Till and Lynne Allbaugh - Building and Grounds

2015-2016 Work Days

November 7- 6th grade and 7th grade

December 13 - 5th grade

January 23 - 4th grade

February 27 - 3rd grade

March 12 - 2nd grade

April 23 - 1st grade

May 14 - Early Childhood

Class Fundraisers

MASSIVE YARD SALE

Please help the 8th grade class fulfill their fundraising needs for the end-of-the-year class trip. This great multi-family yard sale will take place on 10/24 from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at the Willard's property located at 255 Island Road, Kintnersville, PA. It's right down the street from Trauger's Farm.

But wait there's more ... Besides shopping there's more that you can do to help out. Do you have a cluttered attic, basement or garage? We'll take your clutter! Please donate your unwanted treasures to the 8th grade. You can just drop off the goods on Saturday/Sunday 10/10 - 10/11 9am - 5pm or Saturday/Sunday 10/17 - 10/18 9am – 5pm. If those dates don't work then you can always reach out to Louanne Willard for a time that's more convenient for you. Also, the 8th grade is opening up the sale to anyone who wants to sell their more valuable stuff. All they ask is for you to bring your goods, your own table and to donate 20% of your proceeds to the class. If you want to reserve a spot then please let Louanne know in advance. The sale will be advertised not only in the Current and through email blasts but will be in 4 to 5 local papers as well.

See you then!

Your Fabulous 8th Grade

"Savoring the Seasons" Cookbook / Local Directory in its Final Stages

Last Call for Information. New!! Place an Ad!!

Mrs. Atkinson's class is busy completing our seasonal cookbook & directory. THANK YOU to the many RVWS parents, teachers and administrators for sharing their recipes and recommendations! Please be aware that this is YOUR FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO FORWARD YOUR BUSINESS RECOMMENDATIONS to include in the directory. We wish to include ALL of our favorite things to do, along with ALL of our favorite, talented people whose businesses we'd love to support (artists, small businesses, physicians, contractors, electricians, therapists, acupuncturists, home cleaners, etc.). PLEASE DON'T DELAY! We must receive the following information by Monday, October 19th: name, business name (if applicable), brief description of skills/services offered (1-2 sentences), website (if applicable), phone number, address (if applicable). Should you NOT want to be included in the directory, please let us know as well, otherwise we are doing our best to include everyone that has been recommended to us.

In addition, we are offering Ad Space. Here is an opportunity to enable a recommended business to promote themselves and provide additional information about their services. The promotional space is very reasonably priced and as this resource will be referred to again and again, it is a GREAT value! Prices are as follows: 1/3 page - \$35, 1/2 page - \$50, Full Page \$100. Details in attachment!

Planning your child's birthday party?

Let the energetic, fun-loving eighth graders help — and help them raise the funds they need for their class trip! We'll make your child's party one they won't soon forget! Now booking dates for October, November, and December— please see attached form for more information. Limited dates available so email Renell Carpenter (renell@rcn.com) or Kira Willey (kira@kira.net) to reserve your party now!

From the Community

Offices Available at Brick House

8826 Rte 611. Ottsville/Revere, PA (Above Nelli Rae's Kitchen)

Available immediately, 3 offices and waiting room, art studio, therapy, classes, conferences, business office, ample parking, rent whole space or personal office. CALL 610-570-7408.

Free Piano

Spinet, needs tuning, no bench. 610-346-7108

Moving Through Childhood

A workshop with Jaimen McMillan, Director, Spacial Dynamics Institute

November 13-14, 2015 at Kimberton Waldorf School
Friday, November 13, 7:30-9:00 pm, Saturday,
November 14, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Workshop Fee: \$125 (early bird \$100 before November 1st), Friday lecture only, \$20

Learn how parents and teachers can best support healthy development through movement. "Play rises above other activities. It is the creation of space in which new activities can take place...a world of untold possibilities."

For more information: info@spacialdynamics.com, 518-695-6377, www.spacialdynamics.com

Open House

SuperNatural Salon & Spa

Thursday, October 22nd from 6-9 pm

SuperNatural strives to use only eco-conscious, natural and organic products while providing the utmost quality of services for your natural beauty and your super being. We are here to help bring forth the light that is already within you in the most soothing and sacred ways.

Stop by, enjoy refreshments and take a look around!
121 Delaware Road, Riegelsville, PA 18077, 610-749-2051, www.supernaturalsalon.com

1st Annual Riegelsville Brewfest

Join us along the Delaware River!

Benefits the Riegelsville Public Library

Beer, food, music, raffles

Saturday, October 17th from 4-8 PM at Mueller's General Store and Restaurant, 200 S. Delaware Drive, Easton, PA. Admission includes samples from several PA craft breweries, hors d' oeuvres from Mueller's Kitchen, live music by PA's own The Price is Rice, raffles, quilts and more!

Tickets: \$25.00, in limited quantity. Available at Mueller's, at the Library (615 Easton Road), or by calling (610) 749-2357. Ages 21 and over.

Come out and support the Riegelsville Public Library!

FALL FESTIVAL @ OTAC

Fun Fall Events at the Ottsville Traditional Arts Center. Concerts, dances, lessons and jams Oh My! All family friendly. Stay tuned for special student jam and pot luck evenings as well as some off campus RVWS school community events. Check us out!

Ottsville Traditional Arts Center Events

OCTOBER

Wed. Oct. 14 Song Workshop with Bennett Konesni

6:00 - 8:00 pm • \$10 suggested donation

Bennett is co-founder of Sylvester Manor, a 243-acre educational farm on Shelter Island, NY. His roles there include teaching worksongs to the farm crew and directing the annual fall Plant & Sing, which brings the community to the farm to complete two week's worth of garlic shucking and planting in a single morning, all while singing worksongs.

His passion is making music that transforms labor into something between work and play. He envisions a world in which farmers, cooks, and eaters once again sing in fields, kitchens, and at the table.

This is for anyone who loves to sing!

Please check out worksongs.org to hear a variety of songs from many cultures

Look forward to seeing you.

Sun. Oct. 18 Old World Charm School in Concert

1:00-3:00 pm • \$10 adults \$8 kids under 12

Karen Axelrod - Piano & Accordion, Susan Kevra - Clarinet & Voice, Rachel Bell - Accordion

Old World Charm School ushers you into an ethereal musical space. Sit back and savor creative interpretations of passionate waltzes, mesmerizing French songs, lively American folk tunes, refined English Country dance tunes, and more. A touch of whimsical humor, and a sprinkling of vignettes will round out the experience.

Sat. Oct. 24 Scandi Workshops with Lydia & Andrea

3:00 - 7:00 pm \$25 for both workshops and light dinner

Melody instruments workshop • \$15 Slängpolska dance workshop • \$15

NOVEMBER

Sun. Nov. 22 Family Contradance with Coracree

3:30 pm beginners' workshop & caller **Melissa Taggart**

4:00-7:00 pm dance • \$10 adults \$8 kids free under 6yrs.

Every Wednesday

Open Jam with Richard Finch

6:00-8:00 pm • \$5 suggested donation

More at ottsvilletradarts.weebly.com • 250 Durham Rd. Ottsville Pa.

German Tutoring Available

Peter Ray is offering German tutoring to six year olds through adult at Buckingham Meetinghouse in Lahaska. A German teacher on and off for the past 50 years, he studied at the University of Göttingen, holds a Ph.D. from Penn, and was Head of a special needs school in New Hampshire for 15 years.

His tutoring program centers on speaking and understanding elementary German; singing kids', holiday, and folk songs; playing games in German; and learning about Europe in general and the German speaking world in particular. Kids also can also try on Lederhosen and learn the Schuhplattler dance, an interest that evolved recently into a Facebook page and website (Schuhplattler Kids). The cost is \$15 per student per hour, with a minimum of three students who are at roughly the same level (but not necessarily the same age). For further information, contact peter.ray@comcast.net, or info@schuhplattlerkids.org.

Art in the Library

There are several art classes being taught at the Riegelsville Library in the coming weeks.

Sat., October 17th – Collage in a Box, a fun workshop for kids with Emily Thompson, 10 am-12 noon, ages 7 & older

October 22nd and 29th – Still Life Painting in Pastel with Susan Ketcham – 10 am-1 pm. all levels, age 15-adult

The workshops are held in the Community Room at Riegelsville Borough Hall, 615 Easton Road.

For more information or to sign up for workshops and our mailing list, please contact the Riegelsville Library, 610-749-2357 or Riegelsville.Library@gmail.com

Looking for a good home

Affectionate 10 yr old, black cat. Good mouser, completely trained, loves to be outdoors in nice weather. Owners have moved to a pet-less abode, need to find a loving home for our baby, 'Emiliano.' Great company for all ages.

Contact Laura Birdsall 610-310-5819

Natural Childcare in Springtown, PA

(20 minutes West from River Valley WS)

Tuesday through Friday 9 am to 1 pm

For a small group of 2-5 year olds, seasonal songs and rhythmic games, free play, story telling, nature walks in our big yard, organic bread making and butter churning, which we eat for snack along with organic veggies and fruit, all provided. \$30 per day. Please contact schooner0506@gmail.com or call 610-442-8095

Help Needed

Looking for a reliable painter and/or contractor for some exterior house work and some window glazing or replacement. Need help as soon as someone is available.

Contact Kevin O'Hara via email at kevinoharaphilly@gmail.com or at 215-847-4706.

Speech Therapy at RVWS

Jane Stuart (mother of Eden-3rd, Daphne-1st and Coco-Star Rm.) will be offering speech therapy services at RVWS, weekly during the school day. Children with speech or language needs can be seen individually or in pairs. If interested or if you have questions, contact Jane at (562)208-5048, or jane@mtwservices.com

From NPR

What Does It Mean To Raise A Spiritual Child?

There has been an increasing body of research over the last few years about the connection between mental and physical health. Here & Now has looked at mindfulness and how traits like curiosity and empathy can affect the shapes of our brains. Today we look at another aspect of that connection: spirituality.

Research shows, for example, that children who have positive active relationships to spirituality are 40 percent less likely to use and abuse substances, and have 60 percent less depression than other teenagers. There are also differences in the brain structure.

Lisa Miller, director of Columbia University's Clinical Psychology Program, draws on that research, combining it with her personal observations, in her new book "The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving."

Spirituality, she tells host Robin Young, refers to the child's relationship to a higher power, whether that be nature, God, the universe – even a tree. The key is that the force has a guiding and active place in the child's daily life. She also cautions that religion without spirituality can have an opposite and negative impact.

Link to Lisa Miller's book, "The Spiritual Child."

<http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2015/10/01/spiritual-children-lisa-miller>

From the New York Times

Stop Googling. Let's Talk

By SHERRY TURKLE SEPT. 26, 2015

College students tell me they know how to look someone in the eye and type on their phones at the same time, their split attention undetected. They say it's a skill they mastered in middle school when they wanted to text in class without getting caught. Now they use it when they want to be both with their friends and, as some put it, "elsewhere."

These days, we feel less of a need to hide the fact that we are dividing our attention. In a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, 89 percent of cellphone owners said they had used their phones during the last social gathering they attended. But they weren't happy about it; 82 percent of adults felt that the way they used their phones in social settings hurt the conversation.

I've been studying the psychology of online connectivity for more than 30 years. For the past five, I've had a special focus: What has happened to face-to-face conversation in a world where so many people say they would rather text than talk? I've looked at families, friendships and romance. I've studied schools, universities and workplaces. When college students explain to me how dividing their attention plays out in the dining hall, some refer to a "rule of three." In a conversation among five or six people at dinner, you have to check that three people are paying attention — heads up — before you give yourself permission to look down at your phone. So conversation proceeds, but with different people having their heads up at different times. The effect is what you would expect: Conversation is kept relatively light, on topics where people feel they can drop in and out.

Young people spoke to me enthusiastically about the good things that flow from a life lived by the rule of three, which you can follow not only during meals but all the time. First of all, there is the magic of the always available elsewhere. You can put your attention wherever you want it to be. You can always be heard. You never have to be bored. When you sense that a lull in the conversation is coming, you can shift your attention from the people in the room to the world you can find on your phone. But the students also described a sense of loss.

One 15-year-old I interviewed at a summer camp talked about her reaction when she went out to dinner with her father and he took out his phone to add "facts" to their conversation. "Daddy," she said, "stop Googling. I want to talk to you." A 15-year-old boy told me that someday he wanted to raise a family, not the way his parents are raising him (with phones out during meals and in the park and during his school sports events) but the way his parents think they are raising him — with no phones at meals and plentiful family conversation. One college junior tried to capture what is wrong about life in his generation. "Our texts are fine," he said. "It's what texting does to our conversations when we are together that's the problem."

It's a powerful insight. Studies of conversation both in the laboratory and in natural settings show that when two people are talking, the mere presence of a phone on a table between them or in the periphery of their vision changes both what they talk about and the degree of connection they feel. People keep the conversation on topics where they won't mind being interrupted. They don't feel as invested in each other. Even a silent phone disconnects us.

In 2010, a team at the University of Michigan led by the psychologist Sara Konrath put together the findings of 72 studies that were conducted over a 30-year period. They found a 40 percent decline in empathy among college students, with most of the decline taking place after 2000. Every weekday, get thought-provoking commentary from Op-Ed columnists, The Times editorial board and contributing writers from around the world.

Across generations, technology is implicated in this assault on empathy. We've gotten used to being connected all the time, but we have found ways around conversation — at least from conversation that is open-ended and spontaneous, in which we play with ideas and allow ourselves to be fully present and vulnerable. But it is in this type of conversation — where we learn to make eye contact, to become aware of another person's posture and tone, to comfort one another and respectfully challenge one another — that empathy and intimacy flourish. In these conversations, we learn who we are.

Of course, we can find empathic conversations today, but the trend line is clear. It's not only that we turn away from talking face to face to chat online. It's that we don't allow these conversations to happen in the first place because we keep our phones in the landscape. In our hearts, we know this, and now research is catching up with our intuitions. We face a significant choice. It is not about giving up our phones but about using them with greater intention. Conversation is there for us to reclaim. For the failing connections of our digital world, it is the talking cure.

(Continued on next page.)

The trouble with talk begins young. A few years ago, a private middle school asked me to consult with its faculty: Students were not developing friendships the way they used to. At a retreat, the dean described how a seventh grader had tried to exclude a classmate from a school social event. It's an age-old problem, except that this time when the student was asked about her behavior, the dean reported that the girl didn't have much to say: "She was almost robotic in her response. She said, 'I don't have feelings about this.' She couldn't read the signals that the other student was hurt."

The dean went on: "Twelve-year-olds play on the playground like 8-year-olds. The way they exclude one another is the way 8-year-olds would play. They don't seem able to put themselves in the place of other children."

One teacher observed that the students "sit in the dining hall and look at their phones. When they share things together, what they are sharing is what is on their phones." Is this the new conversation? If so, it is not doing the work of the old conversation. The old conversation taught empathy. These students seem to understand each other less.

But we are resilient. The psychologist Yalda T. Uhls was the lead author on a 2014 study of children at a device-free outdoor camp. After five days without phones or tablets, these campers were able to read facial emotions and correctly identify the emotions of actors in videotaped scenes significantly better than a control group. What fostered these new empathic responses? They talked to one another. In conversation, things go best if you pay close attention and learn how to put yourself in someone else's shoes. This is easier to do without your phone in hand. Conversation is the most human and humanizing thing that we do.

I have seen this resilience during my own research at a device-free summer camp. At a nightly cabin chat, a group of 14-year-old boys spoke about a recent three-day wilderness hike. Not that many years ago, the most exciting aspect of that hike might have been the idea of roughing it or the beauty of unspoiled nature. These days, what made the biggest impression was being phoneless. One boy called it "time where you have nothing to do but think quietly and talk to your friends." The campers also spoke about their new taste for life away from the online feed. Their embrace of the virtue of disconnection suggests a crucial connection: The capacity for empathic conversation goes hand in hand with the capacity for solitude.

In solitude we find ourselves; we prepare ourselves to come to conversation with something to say that is authentic, ours. If we can't gather ourselves, we can't recognize other people for who they are. If we are not content to be alone, we turn others into the people we need them to be. If we don't know how to be alone, we'll only know how to be lonely.

A VIRTUOUS circle links conversation to the capacity for self-reflection. When we are secure in ourselves, we are able to really hear what other people have to say. At the same time, conversation with other people, both in intimate settings and in larger social groups, leads us to become better at inner dialogue.

But we have put this virtuous circle in peril. We turn time alone into a problem that needs to be solved with technology. Timothy D. Wilson, a psychologist at the University of Virginia, led a team that explored our capacity for solitude. People were asked to sit in a chair and think, without a device or a book. They were told that they would have from six to 15 minutes alone and that the only rules were that they had to stay seated and not fall asleep. In one experiment, many student subjects opted to give themselves mild electric shocks rather than sit alone with their thoughts.

People sometimes say to me that they can see how one might be disturbed when people turn to their phones when they are together. But surely there is no harm when people turn to their phones when they are by themselves? If anything, it's our new form of being together.

But this way of dividing things up misses the essential connection between solitude and conversation. In solitude we learn to concentrate and imagine, to listen to ourselves. We need these skills to be fully present in conversation.

Every technology asks us to confront human values. This is a good thing, because it causes us to reaffirm what they are. If we are now ready to make face-to-face conversation a priority, it is easier to see what the next steps should be. We are not looking for simple solutions. We are looking for beginnings. Some of them may seem familiar by now, but they are no less challenging for that. Each addresses only a small piece of what silences us. Taken together, they can make a difference.

One start toward reclaiming conversation is to reclaim solitude. Some of the most crucial conversations you will ever have will be with yourself. Slow down sufficiently to make this possible. And make a practice of doing one thing at a time. Think of unitasking as the next big thing. In every domain of life, it will increase performance and decrease stress.

(Continued on next page.)

But doing one thing at a time is hard, because it means asserting ourselves over what technology makes easy and what feels productive in the short term. Multitasking comes with its own high, but when we chase after this feeling, we pursue an illusion. Conversation is a human way to practice unitasking.

Our phones are not accessories, but psychologically potent devices that change not just what we do but who we are. A second path toward conversation involves recognizing the degree to which we are vulnerable to all that connection offers. We have to commit ourselves to designing our products and our lives to take that vulnerability into account. We can choose not to carry our phones all the time. We can park our phones in a room and go to them every hour or two while we work on other things or talk to other people. We can carve out spaces at home or work that are device-free, sacred spaces for the paired virtues of conversation and solitude. Families can find these spaces in the day to day — no devices at dinner, in the kitchen and in the car. Introduce this idea to children when they are young so it doesn't spring up as punitive but as a baseline of family culture. In the workplace, too, the notion of sacred spaces makes sense: Conversation among employees increases productivity.

We can also redesign technology to leave more room for talking to each other. The “do not disturb” feature on the iPhone offers one model. You are not interrupted by vibrations, lights or rings, but you can set the phone to receive calls from designated people or to signal when someone calls you repeatedly. Engineers are ready with more ideas: What if our phones were not designed to keep us attached, but to do a task and then release us? What if the communications industry began to measure the success of devices not by how much time consumers spend on them but by whether it is time well spent?

It is always wise to approach our relationship with technology in the context that goes beyond it. We live, for example, in a political culture where conversations are blocked by our vulnerability to partisanship as well as by our new distractions. We thought that online posting would make us bolder than we are in person, but a 2014 Pew study demonstrated that people are less likely to post opinions on social media when they fear their followers will disagree with them. Designing for our vulnerabilities means finding ways to talk to people, online and off, whose opinions differ from our own.

Sometimes it simply means hearing people out. A college junior told me that she shied away from conversation because it demanded that one live by the rigors of what she calls the “seven minute rule.” It takes at least seven minutes to see how a conversation is going to unfold. You can't go to your phone before those seven minutes are up. If the conversation goes quiet, you have to let it be. For conversation, like life, has silences — what some young people I interviewed called “the boring bits.” It is often in the moments when we stumble, hesitate and fall silent that we most reveal ourselves to one another.

The young woman who is so clear about the seven minutes that it takes to see where a conversation is going admits that she often doesn't have the patience to wait for anything near that kind of time before going to her phone. In this she is characteristic of what the psychologists Howard Gardner and Katie Davis called the “app generation,” which grew up with phones in hand and apps at the ready. It tends toward impatience, expecting the world to respond like an app, quickly and efficiently. The app way of thinking starts with the idea that actions in the world will work like algorithms: Certain actions will lead to predictable results.

This attitude can show up in friendship as a lack of empathy. Friendships become things to manage; you have a lot of them, and you come to them with tools. So here is a first step: To reclaim conversation for yourself, your friendships and society, push back against viewing the world as one giant app. It works the other way, too: Conversation is the antidote to the algorithmic way of looking at life because it teaches you about fluidity, contingency and personality.

This is our moment to acknowledge the unintended consequences of the technologies to which we are vulnerable, but also to respect the resilience that has always been ours. We have time to make corrections and remember who we are — creatures of history, of deep psychology, of complex relationships, of conversations, artless, risky and face to face.

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