

**SHERRY TURKLE**

winner of the 2017  
EVERETT M. ROGERS AWARD

THE  
**ASSAULT ON**  
**EMPATHY**  
The Need for Conversation



An edited transcript of a conversation with Lear Center  
Director Marty Kaplan.

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## THE EVERETT M. ROGERS AWARD

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Watch the entire video of this conversation at: <https://youtu.be/gkynw2OjXbc>

## PARTICIPANTS



**SHERRY TURKLE** is the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the founder and director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self. She received a joint doctorate in sociology and personality psychology from Harvard and is a licensed clinical psychologist. She is a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Humanities Fellowship and the Harvard Centennial Medal, and she is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Science. She was named “Woman of the Year” by *Ms. Magazine* and among the “forty under forty” who are changing the nation by *Esquire Magazine*.



**MARTY KAPLAN** is founding director of the Norman Lear Center and holds the Norman Lear Chair in Entertainment, Media and Society at the USC Annenberg School, where he was Associate Dean for 10 years. A Harvard summa cum laude in molecular biology and president of The Harvard Lampoon, he was a Marshall Scholar at Cambridge University and earned a Ph.D. in modern thought and literature from Stanford. He was vice president Walter F. Mondale's chief speechwriter and deputy campaign manager of Mondale's 1984 presidential campaign; a Walt Disney Studios vice president; a film and television writer and producer; a radio host; and is currently a print columnist and featured *Huffington Post* blogger.

## THE ASSAULT ON EMPATHY



**Marty Kaplan:** Welcome. Whether you're listening to us or watching us, or both, we're glad to have you. I'm Marty Kaplan, and I'm speaking to you from the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California. I'm the director of the Norman Lear Center, and I'm delighted to say that our guest today is Professor Sherry Turkle from MIT. Thanks for coming, Sherry.

**Sherry Turkle:** So happy to be here.

**Marty Kaplan:** One topic that you talk about in some ways throughout your work — and that's certainly a topic for the Lear Center and all of our work — is the idea of attention. And here are two sentences that I'd love to unpack. "What we value most is control over where we put our attention, the fantasy that we can put our attention where we want it to be." You call it a fantasy. Is attention something that we have no control over?

**Sherry Turkle:** I'm arguing that one way to talk about what's going on now, instead of thinking about a crisis of manners — you know, all we need to do is put away our phones and be kind of kinder to each other and that way — is that really we have a profound crisis in attention. One thing that happens is a classic experiment. If we're sitting together at a table, for the people who are listening, if I put a phone face down, turned off on the table between us, two things will happen to this conversation.

This is a much-replicated experiment. First of all, we will talk. Even though you have your questions ready, we will talk about more trivial matters, because the phone reminds us of all the elsewheres we could be. Usually, this experiment is done at lunch. So whether or not you're having lunch with your brother, your student, your mother, your lover, you're reminded of all the other places you could put your attention rather than the other person, so your attention goes to all the other places, and the conversation becomes more trivial.

And the second thing that the phone does is that people feel less of an empathic connection towards each other. So the attentional deficit leads to an empathic deficit.

**Marty Kaplan:** How does the empathic deficit manifest?

**Sherry Turkle:** It manifests by giving people a kind of pencil-and-paper task and then asking people what are their feelings and state of investment in the other person after the conversation. We both talk about less important things, and we don't put in as much in a conversation. Where our attention is somehow elsewhere, we're sort of in attentional disarray. In a classroom where someone has an open laptop, there's an attentional disarray around the person with that open laptop, again, because just the presence of that object reminds us of all those other places we can be.

So a favor we can do to ourselves is to take out of places where we want to focus our attention these reminders of all the other places that we can be and remind ourselves that there are so many times where we really do better if we focus our attention. I think that it really is becoming one of the most important arguments of my work: to reclaim our attention, to reclaim the right to say, here are the situations

“ ..instead of thinking about a crisis of manners... we have a profound crisis of attention.”

where we need to be completely paying attention to each other — when I’m with my child, when I’m having dinner with someone, when I’m in certain kinds of conversations, when I’m focusing on a thought. I want to have it all.

**Marty Kaplan:** I would argue that this is an attention economy in which efforts to hijack and monetize our attention are at the core of the modern experience. And so the use of fear, sex, novelty, storytelling, play and other ways of engaging us involuntarily is the name of the game for communication. So that it’s not just a device that is wired or connected that disrupts us. Everything is designed to disrupt us and get us to pay attention. So that the effort to clear these zones for intimacy are impeded, not just by our devices, but by everything.

**Sherry Turkle:** I would agree. This device becomes this sort of crystallization of where you can get this message. A mom walks around with this device and she’s looking for the message about fashion, about her friends, about sex, about intrigue. And she’s holding the phone as though it is the kind of candy where she’s going to get all of these things that you’re talking about.

When you’re with your child — since I’m interviewing the children who feel they can’t get their mother’s attention — they’re saying, “Mom, for 15 minutes, put away the phone. Don’t go to the playground for two hours and have your child have an experience where they feel as though they can’t get 15 minutes of you. Leave the phone at home. Go for a predictable half-hour with your child, that your child knows you’re there for him.”

**Marty Kaplan:** So candy takes me to the thought of sugar

addiction and nose candy — drugs, generally — and I was interested to see if you don’t think that addiction is the right frame or metaphor to talk about this. Why is that?

**Sherry Turkle:** Because once you’re talking about addiction, you’re into a kind of “I can’t help it, we can’t help it, it’s too late.” Whereas, in fact, in my research, I’ve found that people can do quite a bit to reverse their behavior with a phone. It turns out that in only five days, at a sleepaway camp where they don’t have devices and where, instead --

**Marty Kaplan:** Not rehab in Malibu.

**Sherry Turkle:** -- not rehab in Malibu. You know, bunk chat and fireside chat. Kids who come in really having difficulties talking and with empathy and being able to take the place of other children and telling stories, really do kind of pick up on those skills.

When you begin to work with children and tell them “no phones in classrooms, no phones at dinner, no phones in the kitchen, no phones in the dining room, we’re just going to talk at meals, no phones in the car.” After the bad time, there’s a sort of relief. And people can do that without going through a detox, and conversation does come back. We are built to be empathic creatures. We are built to enjoy each other’s company.

It’s not that I don’t see the analogies to addiction; and the people who are writing about this with words like “irresistible” and pointing out the ways in which the people who are designing this technology are designing it according to the playbook of an addictive gambling casino. I know that research. I understand all of that. But in terms of what to

“*I would argue that this is an attention economy in which efforts to hijack and monetize our attention are at the core of the modern experience.*”



do next, I think it's a metaphor that is holding us back. It frightens people and you really can do simple things in your family and your life before you have to think of digital detox.

My wanting to move away from that metaphor is strategic, it's political, and it's psychological, because as a psychologist, I think most people aren't there yet. They're using this detox thing as an excuse not to just put their phone away at lunch.

**Marty Kaplan:** So what you've just said fits with a sentence and a theme that struck me. Every technology demands that we actually confront our human values. I had an interesting time reading in your work from your earliest stuff, and it strikes me — tell me if this has any relationship to reality — that there's an arc towards an increasingly moral voice, a voice that wants the world to be in a certain way and that you use your work in order to advocate for an empathic world.

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes, but there are two things going on. As you get older, for some people, there's a natural progression to feel more confident about their empirical work. The lack of empathy that I see, and the difficulties in communication when I see children who are growing up in a world where communication is stifled by technology that doesn't encourage them to look at each other — this has emboldened me.

When I began, the technology really wasn't encouraging. I didn't see a technology that took me aback, but I now see two technologies that really take me aback now, and one is new phones — we're all walking around looking down when we should be looking at each other. And the other is social robotics, where you have either robots or computer agents, basically sociable programs that want to say they love you,

they care about you, they want to be your best friend, they want to be your psychotherapist, they want to talk to you, they want to be “as-if” companions.

The reason I am so concerned about that is that my many years of studying people and computers have taught me that we are very cheap dates. We are willing to take “as-if” companionship as “good enough,” and that says nothing about computers. But it says something about us, that people are very vulnerable and when offered a reasonable simulation of something that will chat with you, be with you, talk to you, offer some advice, people will go with it. As I've watched that unfold not just in science fiction but in real life — the experiments have started with the very young, with children and with the elderly — I have been very unhappy about the moral implications of that.

**Marty Kaplan:** But you're an academic. You're a professor at MIT, and traditionally, someone who's done field work waits until the end to --

**Sherry Turkle:** End of what, life?

**Marty Kaplan:** -- of the article, the book, the last chapter to then take it to a prescriptive place. For you, which is one of the things I love about your work, you don't separate that. The description for you is an opportunity to describe the impact and to have human values as --

**Sherry Turkle:** I talked about an elderly woman who I gave a robot to, that she thinks understands her life. She's just lost a son, and this robot seems sad, and she comforts the robot the way we make ourselves feel better by comforting the other person. In comforting the other person, we feel



“We are willing to take ‘as-if’ companionship as ‘good enough,’ and that says nothing about computers.”



better ourselves. This is a very delicate dance that humans do with humans. We feel better by comforting another person who has empathy towards us. There is a lot of human understanding and empathy and caring going on in that very complex dance. And she's doing this with something that knows from nothing.

**Marty Kaplan:** How does that make you feel or respond?

**Sherry Turkle:** I felt ill because I had introduced this object, and I felt that I was depriving her. I should say one of the things that was amazing about this experience is that there were so many people standing around, so many spectators watching this happen, most of whom were thrilled that this woman was talking to a robot, that we had gotten her to talk to a robot. And I'm thinking, but who is talking to her? Who is understanding anything about her life, her loss, what it means to lose a child?

This robot understood nothing. Why are we so happy that we have been able to get her to talk to a robot? What have I accomplished here? Why are all my graduate students so happy? Why are all these roboticists so happy? What is the human project? Why are we doing this? Because this is a very expensive human project. What are we trying to accomplish here? Because this is not a small, little offshoot. It's not just robots. It's in all kinds of programs that will understand you and that you'll talk to, like Alexa. We're going to be talking and having real conversations with so many of the objects in our lives. Why are we doing that?

I feel I have a very deep understanding of how vulnerable we are to those conversations. I think it's very important that we say, "Why do we want to talk to these objects?" I don't mean

in instrumental ways — you know, "play this playlist" or, you "get the lights on."

**Marty Kaplan:** It's having a relationship.

**Sherry Turkle:** It's having a relationship where we feel that, on intimate matters, they have a right to an opinion. The slide between getting me a playlist of all of Leonard Cohen to chatting about your love life turns out to be a very slippery slope. We're not used to talking to things where we have to draw that line. The only other things we've ever talked to in our lives have been people who you can talk to about anything, once you develop a relationship.

We are so vulnerable. We get very clear about what do we want to talk to these objects about, because we're going to be finding ourselves talking to them about very intimate things and being okay with that. Are we okay with that? Then for children, lots of interviews with parents who really think it's better for their children to talk to robots. The reason I'm doing this piece of field work is both to show our vulnerability and also to make the point why are we doing this research.

**Marty Kaplan:** So you say something provocative. A lot of it is provocative. Here's one piece: "We have embarked on a giant experiment in which our children are the human subjects."

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes.

**Marty Kaplan:** Unknowingly.

**Sherry Turkle:** I'm trying to make it knowingly. I see a big part of my job is to say, "People, you give a doll that is recording

your child’s conversations and putting those conversations in the hands of Mattel.” That’s an experiment in privacy. It’s also an experiment in what a child thinks is appropriate to talk to a doll about, what a child thinks a doll understands. If a doll says, “I see that you’re sad. Talk to me,” a child thinks a doll might know something about sadness. That’s a reasonable expectation. That doll knows nothing about sadness. It knows how to simulate knowing about sadness, and it turns out that’s good enough for us in terms of what will get us to keep the conversation going.

My research shows that over and over again, as does many other people’s research. It’s kind of like a Turing test. You know, you don’t have to be really intelligent; you just have to behave as though you’re intelligent, and you pass the test for intelligence. I say we’re at the robotic moment, not because we’ve invented robots that we should be talking to about emotional matters, but because we’re willing to talk to robots about emotional matters, even though they don’t deserve that kind of conversation.

When a child talks to a robot about their emotional lives, sometimes parents are happy because they feel the child can vent and will have no inhibitions about venting, and that will be fantastic for the child. But what they’re not thinking about and what I’m trying to say to people — it’s my favorite line in my work: “Technology makes us forget what we know about life.”

What we know about life is that when a child says something angry to an adult, to a parent and sees that the parent doesn’t fall apart, that is the most important developmental experience of childhood. That’s what allows a child to grow and develop, to see that the parent doesn’t fall apart. If you

say something angry to a robot and the robot falls apart, you cheat the child out of having that moment with the parent that’s going to lay the bedrock — that’s the bedrock for a successful relationship with the parent. Nothing good is happening in that relationship with the robot. The child is venting, but nothing important developmentally is happening to that kid.

I’m saying, let’s think about what really matters in human relationships, and do we want children just venting to robots. Is that applying what we know about our human values? Or do we want some easy way out? There’s an industry that’s trying to sell us robots. It seems cute. It seems like science fiction. I think it’s profoundly misguided.

**Marty Kaplan:** You also say that we’re depriving children of boredom, that boredom might be our imagination calling us.

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes, we’re depriving children of a lot of attention, but also of solitude and of boredom. My mantra is to walk towards boredom and walk towards solitude. When you are bored, your brain is not bored. Neuroscientists teach us that your brain is laying down what’s called the “default mode pathways,” which are the places where your brain establishes a stable sense of your autobiographical self. So the experience of boredom, when your brain goes within, your imagination goes within, your sense of self goes within. You need those moments.

And now a child is bored and they’re given a screen. That is not progress. There are potty trainers that have a slot for an iPhone, and baby bouncers that have a slot for an iPhone.

Solitude is a very important part. A plea for solitude and

“...we’re depriving children of a lot of attention, but also of solitude and of boredom.”



for returning to solitude and reclaiming solitude is a very important part of my work. I feel very passionate about that. Reclaiming solitude is on the pathway towards reclaiming conversation, and maybe this is the part of my work that people understand the least. People are always saying to me, “Okay, I understand Sherry Turkle wants me to put away my phone when I’m with other people. Okay. I don’t like it, but I get it. But why does she care if I have my phone out when I’m alone? I mean, what’s that her business?”

But I do care. I’m not much of a busybody. I do care, because solitude — being able to be alone with yourself — means that when I come to you, I can listen to who you are, I can hear who you are, and I don’t have to impose who I am. I can hear you and not just project who I am to support my fragile sense of self. So reclaiming solitude is on the pathway towards being able to have a mutual relationship with someone.

**Marty Kaplan:** You’re a parent. Was this something you knew instinctively? Or did you come to it later? Was there conflict involved in imposing solitude or boredom?

**Sherry Turkle:** I was very fortunate that my daughter was a great reader. Solitary reading — where you can put down the book and look away, where you can take things at your own pace — is very important. We also have a house at the beach and we took long walks looking for hermit crabs and building sand castles to trap the hermit crabs and give them decent housing. These are the kinds of experiences that were very precious to me and that I wanted her to have.

I still have that house, and I look out and I see parents and kids walking those beaches with phones. I do get upset. I’m not anti-technology. I’m pro-conversation. So I came here from

the East Coast and here visiting the West Coast, and I had my tickets on my phone, I had all kinds of things on my phone. I got here and didn’t have a piece of paper. I just waved my phone at people at various places and got on planes.

**Marty Kaplan:** Did you have dark glasses and a hat so no one could recognize you?

**Sherry Turkle:** No, I’m the kind of person who would lose my ticket on a regular basis wherever I went. And I love all this phone waving. I’m very pro-technology when it works, and it’s fantastic, and I just wanted to sort of say that. I love to write on my computer. I love that I’m not losing all the little scraps of insights and little bits of chapters. So it’s not an anti-technology position. It’s a pro-conversation position.

We just have to ask ourselves, is this technology offering us a place to have the conversations, the necessary conversations, we need to have with the people who matter to us? Politically, is this technology encouraging the conversations that we need to have? I’m so good with this, bring it on, or mold it, shape it so that it does. Technologies are not made in stone.

**Marty Kaplan:** You tell this anecdote that I love, where you demonstrate that you are not a luddite. It’s about a book tour you were going to take and what happened as you were nervous stepping up to the podium.

**Sherry Turkle:** So my daughter texts me just before I was about to give a very big talk. And she says, “Mommy, you will rock this.” And it was a surprise. It was amazing. It was like getting a kiss. It was just the person whose opinion mattered most.

“*I’m not anti-technology. I’m pro-conversation.*”



**Marty Kaplan:** And it was a text.

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes, it was a text on my phone.

And she knew I would have the phone, and she knew I was practicing and memorizing by looking at the phone. So she knew I'd be in the green room with my little phone. It's also so intimate, that's why we have to have such respect for what this text is. It has that feeling of the person just did this, their fingers just touched the keys, and it's to you. It has a tremendous intimacy and warmth.

This is not cold; this is its power. It's immediate, and it has this intimacy because she just did it. It has the feeling of watching her think. Here's the brilliance of the technology. You see those little dot, dot, dots, you're fantasizing them thinking it. That's very, very heady stuff. No, I'm not there to take these wonderful experiences away from me and you and everybody else. I'm there to say, "Can we please not do this while I'm teaching my class?" That's all. "Could we just understand that you're doing this while I'm trying to teach my class?"

My class, which I think is a wonderful class and a wonderful conversation, cannot possibly compete with you texting your friends and catching up on your social media feed. It wasn't designed to. It was designed to be a different kind of conversation, and I want you to have this conversation with me. Actually, if we were both texting now, we couldn't have this conversation.

**Marty Kaplan:** Not even on Skype, I don't think.

**Sherry Turkle:** No. No. That's what I'm trying to get people

to focus on. Certain kinds of conversations require full attention, and that doesn't make them bad or good. It just means that they're part of the human repertoire and we need to respect them because we need to get different kinds of things done. To get back to the things I feel passionate about, if you want to raise a child who knows how to make eye contact, who knows how to empathize with the deep feelings of another person and get in deeply with them about their feelings, you had better raise a child who has had some conversations over the dinner table — full attention — and isn't competing with your Facebook. It just makes sense.

**Marty Kaplan:** You and I both went to college when David Riesman and Erik Erikson were real figures, real presences in our lives as undergraduates. And it seems as though their impact on your work was fairly large and continuing. Tell me a little bit about that.

**Sherry Turkle:** Enormous. Enormous. From Erik Erikson, I got the notion of the importance of identity, which in some ways seems an anachronistic notion now. But for me it's remained very important because in my last few projects I've seen how identity has shifted for adolescents. There is no other word that captures what I call this *new identity state*, and I'm not afraid to call it a *new identity state* — I share, therefore I am. I share, therefore I am, is an identity state where people go from "I have a feeling, I want to make a call" to "I want to have a feeling, I need to send a text."

That shifting, where you don't feel you have an identity until you share an identity, that way of thinking about what it means to have an identity, that is taken from the work of Erikson thinking about identity. But it is also from Riesman, who wrote about a kind of identity that he called *inner-directed*

“...if you want to raise a child who knows ...how to empathize with the deep feelings of another person... you had better raise a child who has had some conversations over the dinner table.”



and *other-directed*, where people go from measuring their identity in terms of a kind inner compass to measuring their identity in terms of what other people think.

There's a way to reinterpret what I've just said. This movement from "I have a feeling, I want to make a call" to "I'd like to have a feeling, I need to send a text" as a new kind of movement from an *inner-directed* to an *outer-directed* identity. I played with that for a while, but my research and my interviews went so beyond what Riesman was calling *other-directed*. When he was talking about *other-directed*, he didn't mean this identity diffusion, this sense that you simply did not have one if you weren't sharing, which is what I'm seeing. What remains of Riesman and Erikson is the desire to focus on this kind of topic.

**Marty Kaplan:** In your title *Alone Together*, I thought I heard the lonely crowd was --

**Sherry Turkle:** That's an homage to Riesman. *Alone Together* is both an homage to Riesman, who I adored, and is also a new idea. When people are connected in this new way, they're physically alone but they're connected to all their friends. They get depressed, and then they say to themselves, "I feel isolated. I feel depressed, but I'm not. I'm connected to everyone. I don't have a right to this feeling."

So they're depressed, but they're guilty about being depressed because they feel they don't have a right to the feelings of depression. Certainly they don't have the right to talk to anybody about their feeling depressed because what are they going to do, talk to ten friends about we're all together, but I'm depressed? So they get into a very bad spiral of getting even more isolated because, after all, aren't they

all together?

And yet they don't go out. In the good old/bad old days, people would have thrown on a party dress, a little something something, put on some makeup, and gone out to a bar. I'm not trying to glorify that. Now she's on Facebook with 20 people. She doesn't leave the house.

So there's a way in which this alone together syndrome I also discovered was unstable, a new kind of identity you have to deal with where it becomes harder to deal with depression. So I got very interested in this new state of self.

**Marty Kaplan:** I want to touch on two other things.

One is an addiction of mine that I noticed other people share — and maybe addiction is the wrong metaphor for it — but that's to the news. We live in a time in which I can't imagine unplugging because I'll miss my squirt of outrage, which gives me the illusion that I'm a better citizen because my anger is up to date. I'm wondering, do you see this in your field work?

**Sherry Turkle:** I see this in myself. Since the election in November, I feel a new connection to my work. Twitter was something that I studied. Twitter was really a part of my life. But feeling connected to Twitter so as not to miss how my favorite people are expressing their anger is new for me. It's not that I want to keep my outrage up to date. It's that I want to hear how my favorite people are expressing their outrage so I can calm down by hearing how my favorite people are expressing the outrage I'm feeling but wouldn't know how to say.

**Marty Kaplan:** Does that make it harder for you to set

technology — or your Twitter feed — aside?

**Sherry Turkle:** No, but it's giving me new insight into what is the power of this medium. I don't want to talk about this in terms of good or bad. I'm not interested in setting it aside. Is this helping us mobilize to make for change, or is this just making me feel good?

**Marty Kaplan:** How are the returns coming in on that?

**Sherry Turkle:** I'm studying this because I'm from a generation that wanted to have protests, but wanted it to be easy. And then we identified with the personal computer and the Internet and everything technological, and the idea that things would be friction-free, like the notion of the app world and politics being friction-free. This was an idea that has charmed several generations. We're facing a crisis now where friction-free politics and things being easy and politics on your app. I don't think that's going to take us where we need to go. There's a lot of much harder work ahead.

I'm less concerned with my habits on Twitter than I am with constantly finding ways to remind myself and remind other people to to keep focused. It's not in this app that the change is going to come.

**Marty Kaplan:** Chomsky talks about the illusion of participation, the manufacture of that.

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes. Yes. Yes. I think that's a good way to put it. There's been a lot of very brilliant writing about the kinds of participation that can meaningfully happen online and the kinds of things that can't happen. But this notion of friction-free — perhaps because at MIT you hear this word so much

— it's just such a capturing --

**Marty Kaplan:** -- with a positive valance.

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes, with a positive valance, that politics can be friction-free. Politically, it's gotten a generation who had great intentions and good values into trouble, because some things could be done that way and then other things really could not be done. We're at a bad place because the things that took harder work were not done.

**Marty Kaplan:** So this is a non sequitur, but I want to cheer myself up. I'm going to ask you to tell another anecdote that I love that you wrote about, talking about walking down the street with Aziz Ansari and people would come up to him.

**Sherry Turkle:** Yes, what's very interesting about our new technology, in the olden days, people would want an autograph. And now people only want a selfie. And he's very gracious, but he tries to talk to them instead and engage them in a conversation. And I remember thinking when he did that of how wise. That was such a wonderful reflection on the technology. What are people trying to say when they take a selfie? They're trying to say, "I really was here," and he seemed to me so brilliant and, ultimately, so kind and generous in saying, "You know what? Instead of that, I really will be here."

**Marty Kaplan:** How did people react to that?

**Sherry Turkle:** Well, it was an unimaginable gesture of kindness.

**Marty Kaplan:** And did they engage?

“*...in the olden days, people would want an autograph. And now people only want a selfie.*”



**Sherry Turkle:** Yes. Yes, but it was like someone giving you a gift. It showed the selfie for what it was, which was meaningless really, something that could only be shared. It was profound on so many levels. Shout out to Aziz. It really shows the selfie for what it is, that it's really a token that's like a chit. It's worth money. I mean, you can share it and share it and share it.

It aggrandizes you. It says, "I'm important." What he was doing was saying, "Yes, you are important, and let's take a moment to share a little bit of our lives. Who are you?" People behaved like they'd never had an experience in which someone had said, "So, who are you? What's your name? You know my name, but what's your name? Who are you? What are you interested in?" And you realize that that kind of encounter is what the selfie should be. It shouldn't be a transaction. One of the themes of my work is that so often what we go from is a relational to a transactional experience in our use of technology.

And that reminds me, I tell another story in my work of my students who don't want to come see me in office hours. They want to send me a perfect question, and they want me to give them a perfect answer, which is moving from a relationship to a transaction. And I say, "No, I don't want a perfect question and a perfect answer. I want to talk to you." And again, it's the same thing — "You want to talk to me?" But the Aziz story is wonderful.

**Marty Kaplan:** We've been talking to Sherry Turkle, who's the Abby Rockefeller Mauze professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT. Thank you so much, Sherry. I really enjoyed it.

**Sherry Turkle:** It's such a pleasure.