

# Alone Together Summary

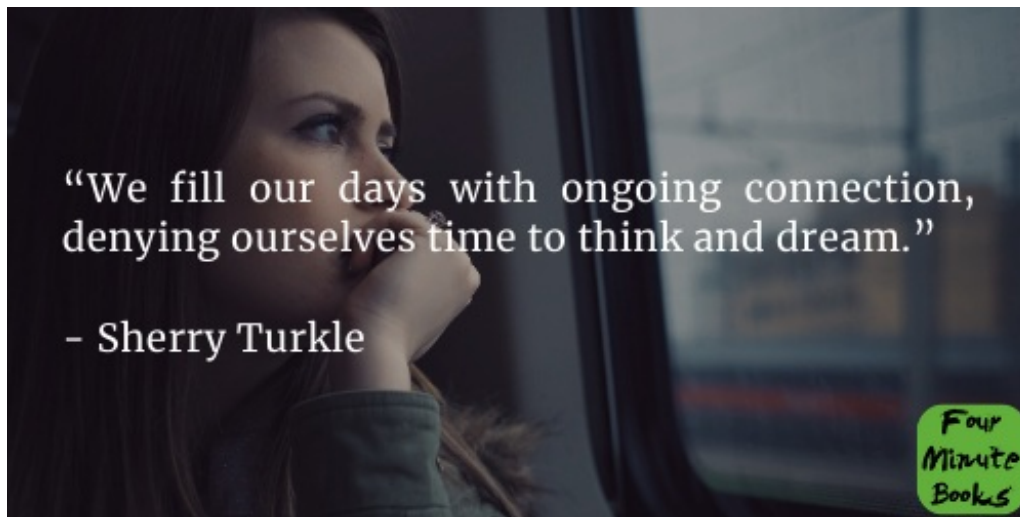
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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Alone Together* is a book that will make you want to have a better relationship with technology by revealing just how much we rely on it and the ways our connection to it is growing worse and having negative effects on us all.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



It's probably happened to you this week. Maybe it's even the situation you're in right now. You find yourself in a room full of people, friends and family, and not a word is spoken. You're all on your smartphones.

Does this sound familiar? We all experience it too often. We may not always be the best at staying off our phones around others, but we all want to become better.

Technology has taken the world by storm, making our lives both easier and more difficult at the same time. This is just one of the many lessons you'll discover in Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*.

Here are the 3 most curious lessons this book taught me about technology:

1. Robots can do a lot to help the elderly and lonely, but some people use them so much that their human relationships suffer.
2. The constant availability that smartphones afford us can be useful but also brings more stress.
3. It's easy to get overwhelmed by all of the new technology out there automating our lives, but we can find relief by connecting with one another again.

Wondering what it might be like to have your own robot partner? Let's dive right in and find out!

## Lesson 1: Our society has a lot to benefit from using robots, but it's easy for people to sacrifice personal relationships for these artificial ones.

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Do you remember Tamagotchi? It was a small device that displayed a little pet that you had to care for. The idea of having a real-life robot pet seems crazy, but it's now become a reality.

Some elderly people have robots that help them not feel so alone. One little girl has a robotic dog called AIBO that she loves because she can turn it off whenever she wants. These uses are just the tip of the iceberg with this technology. But is it always a good thing?

**Just like with smartphones, some people who use robots for company or fun often neglect their personal relationships.**

One 82-year-old woman has a My Real Baby robot, for example, which she sometimes neglects her granddaughter Gail to care for. When the robot isn't present, Gail gets all of her grandmother's attention. But anytime the "baby" is around, Edna's attention drifts to it, sometimes ignoring Gail's need for attention.

We're even getting to the point that some people would rather have a robotic relationship than real ones. One example is a man by the name of Wesley. At 64-years-old, he's been through divorce three times now. He feels that he always hurts people because of his selfishness.

Bring a robot into the picture and this problem is gone. It can give him the social interactions that he needs without the risk that he'll hurt someone. This is dangerous, though, because it just reinforces Wesley's selfish behavior, never giving him the chance to fix it.

## Lesson 2: It's convenient for people to always be able to reach us, but it can be stressful to have this constant connection.

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Have you ever left your phone at home on purpose? I've seen my dad do this often. Knowing how busy he is, it's probably relaxing to disconnect. It's easy to feel anxious without your smartphone though.

We almost see it as a requirement to have one and keep it on you all the time. Teenagers are a perfect example. I don't know many who can be without their phone for just a few minutes. But it does afford their parents the benefit of knowing where their children are,

which is why we've got these devices in the first place.

A girl named Julia's experience on 9/11 is the perfect example. When airliners hit the World Trade Center towers, her school in New York City had everyone stay in the basement to be safe. **Julia was afraid and thinking back now realizes how comforting it would have been to have a cell phone to talk with her mom.**

These are some of the benefits of these devices, but there are drawbacks. We can always get emails from work or calls and texts from friends. Sometimes we just need to disconnect.

For example, one woman that goes hiking often always takes her phone with her. This lets her husband check in on her every 30 minutes until she loses service. But once reception is gone she feels relief at not having to be constantly connected anymore.

## Lesson 3: Reconnect with people in person to relieve yourself of all the overwhelm that technology causes.

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One thing I've done and have seen friends do to disconnect is what's known as a "media fast." It's like fasting, which is not eating food, but instead, you're taking a break from consuming media.

I've done it myself and it's a huge relief to detach. I don't even have Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or any other social media apps installed on my phone and that helps a ton!

If you want a good way to get some healthy alone time, try just leaving your phone off and in another room. Sometimes the best way isn't just to disconnect but to get together with people in person and leave your devices at home.

A man named Brad has this habit when the online world gets him overwhelmed. He'll call friends and set up lunch meetings, for example.

**He thinks of this as "sacrificing three hollow conversations [online] in favor of one really nice social interaction with one person."** This is a good way to bring meaning back into our digital lives.

It's also nice to not get bad news right away. Hillary, for example, is a woman who was glad to not hear about her father's seizure immediately.

She was alone when it happened and the news could have really scared her. Because she didn't have her phone, she heard about it after getting home. Her family's presence brought comfort and understanding of the situation.

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## **Alone Together Review**

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This is an interesting book that I enjoyed reading. I was expecting *Alone Together* to be more about why we should stop using our devices so much. But the discussion about the good that these new technologies can do for us, with an eye for using them in moderation, is a helpful new viewpoint.

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## **Who would I recommend the Alone Together summary to?**

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The 45-year-old who wonders how they're going to take care of their aging parents, the 22-year-old that is studying sociology and wants to learn more about technology's affects on society, and anyone that's curious about the future.