**Post 1:**

As a child, I cannot say that I grew up with or even around much in the way of robots. I believe that the closest thing I can say I had as a kid to the kinds of robots that I have read about so far was a sound activated little dog that would sit up, bark and wag its tail at me. I am familiar with Tamagotchis and with Fury’s as they came out a little bit after I had joined the Army in 1995 so I kind of missed this train.

That is not to say that I haven’t anthropomorphized with some of Tamagotchi’s newer cousins. When cell phones and specifically cell phone apps took off, I can say that I spent hours training, petting, and feeding and watering virtual dogs, cats and fish. The main one I can remember the most about is Nintendogs on the Nintendo DS. It was basically your run of the mill pet simulator except this one you could “touch” the dog by using the stylus you could pet and groom your dog and he would respond with tail wagging or heart emojis and so on. You could also physically play with the dog such as using the stylus to throw a ball which he would fetch and bring back. I found myself sometimes forgetting that it wasn’t real. I would feel bad when I had to work late and couldn’t feed him on time or “take him outside.”

The reference to the robot in the form of a little baby harp seal in the introduction and again in chapter 6 reminded me of something that I interacted with when I returned from my second deployment in 2008. I was having let us say anxiety issues for which I was seeking help with through counseling. It was the second time that I had seen this counselor and at the beginning of the session he handed me something that looked basically like a furry football with a tail. She told me to put it in my lap while we were talking and warned me that it would vibrate. As we were talking, I must have started petting it. It felt like a long-haired cat and when it started “vibrating” it felt and sounded like a cat purring. I don’t remember what it was called but we video recorded some of our sessions and it visibly relaxed me. To be honest, at the end of my treatment I think I missed the “cat” more than talking to the counselor.

**Response to Matthew:**

Hey Matthew

That is interesting I did not realize that Tamagotchis had the ability to play mini games against a friend. That is always a pretty fun feature. I can completely relate to getting a bit upset about losing a special tool that you had gotten in a video game; the same thing happens to me especially if I have put some special effort or time into acquiring it.

When I read that you saw a lot of “Can you \_\_\_\_” requests in your ChatGPT history I just had to look at mine and there are a lot of those types of requests and a lot of my requests ending in please. Like you I think I do it out of a normal pattern of speech but where I came from in the Army our information technology guys, me included, were a bit superstitious about “angering the technology” and made it habit to give computers and networks human characteristics because if it was going to go out it was going to be at the worst possible time. It was probably more of a way for us to stand out from the pack than anything we really believed but it never hurts to be courteous just in case we are wrong.

**Response to Brittany:**

Hey Brittany

I love that you looked at Turkle’s example of her daughter’s reaction to the Galapagos turtles, it was very well stated. I believe that it is very much a matter of perspective between the child and the adult. As you stated for the children it is all about the entertainment value of the venue and often real animals are not always entertaining to children. When I was a child, my parents took me to the zoo a few times. I was always a fan of big jungle cats like leopards and the wolves, but I almost never saw either of them when I looked for them in their enclosures, so it wasn’t all that entertaining to me. Now that I go to the zoo as an adult, I still love big cats and the wolves, but the emphasis has changed I now see a value in just seeing the animals and the entertainment is just finding them.

While I can understand Turkle’s concerns in this book and some of them could be warranted but I tend to agree with you that her theory seems to not take in all the factors. Like in the post I shared about a robot “cat” that was used in my therapy sessions after deployment. There were factors of both military regulations and concerns for safety that led to the robot being used.

**Post 2:**

From Turkle’s book Alone together and the RadioLab podcast talking to machines one of the main criticisms/predictions that I kept seeing was the idea that the introduction of digital technology will very likely result in less meaningful human relationships.

While I can understand the concept and I do not believe that something like social media interaction or texting can fully replace face to face interaction as a development tool, I cannot say that I agree that digital technologies cannot provide meaningful relationships. I have found an “artifact” to support that digital technologies can and do support meaningful human relationships.

My “artifact” is a paper called Positive Effects hosted at the national library of medicine.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9658971/>

In table 1 in the Social-Emotional category you will find that “Online peer communication via social media enhances friendship quality, perception of social support, connectedness.” (Haddock et al., 2022) It seems like the fundamental concept from Turkle was that there is no meaningful human relationship if there is no face-to-face human interaction. On deployment the only things that I had to maintain my marriage, and my friendships were digital technology and not only does this article say that it works but I have experienced it working.

The article goes on to say in that same table under the Mental health and wellbeing category that “Video game promote a sense of connectedness and address felling of isolation.” (Haddock et al., 2022) During the Covid lockdown video games were my primary way of keeping in touch with friends and family. I would get online with some friends, or my sister and we would talk about our lives and other things and when we got bored, we would go and do some quests and “bond.” I have friends that I have met in online games that I have gotten to know well, and we have been friends for 15 or more years. Digital technology is a tool, and we can make meaningful human relationships through it if we put the effort in.

Haddock, A., Ward, N., Yu, R., & O’Dea, N. (2022). Positive Effects of Digital Technology Use by Adolescents: A Scoping Review of the Literature. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(21), 14009. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192114009>

**Response to Charlie:**

I can understand how you would feel that you had more connection and purpose while sharing your experiences online. Like I said I understand it on an intellectual basis but I have a little bit of a hard time actually connecting to what you are saying, mostly because when the social media “age” kicked off I was in the military and I got the “be very weary of what you post” or the “it is best if you do not post anything” conversations so I never actually got to use those outlets.

I would say that the impact of what Turkle calls online confessionals is very complex. Some people may find temporary relief and support, but others may experience all the negative consequences such as lower self esteem and increased paranoia as you had stated. It is always true that online confessionals can in some cases provide the support and sense of connection that may not be readily available to some people in their own lives. We as human beings just need to realize and understand that it very important that we find a balance between our online and real-life interactions and relationships because it is impossible to replace in person relationship and support from friends and family that you trust.

**Response to Tony:**

This post was fun to read, and I also enjoyed the Tom Gruber TED talk. AI Chat bots have always kind of interested me for quite a while now. I find myself sometimes talking with ChatGPT or another AI language model and forgetting that it is not a person on the other end of the conversation.

I agree with what you have stated in your post in that using tools like chatbots can lead to degradation of the skills that we use to communicate with other human beings. I for one sometimes catch myself getting annoyed when I ask a person a question and someone decides that I need to know the entire history of the subject before they can answer my simple question which is probably a side effect of how much I use a chat bot to bounce simple questions off.

I believe that our use of Chat bots has good and bad effects. On one side I have a tool that I can use to find out more about the world around me or specific subjects, or if I need to it can be a sounding board for simple problems. On the other hand, if I use a chat bot for something it is not designed for such as full on psychological counseling that is probably going to end badly.