One of America’s fastest growing debates is the one over social media. Everyone has an opinion and everyone believes theirs is the “correct” one. A particularly fascinating discussion that has been steadily increasing is based around Facebook and friendships. Are your friendships on social media as valuable as the ones created through human interaction? To me, it comes down to whether or not you have an already established relationship with that person. Do you know him or her and do they know you?

Most of society considers social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as a way to connect with old friends and make new ones. The world in which we live is marked by declining human interaction which brings to question: should these cyber relationships be considered as real relationships? Webster’s Dictionary defines a relationship as the way in which two or more people are connected, but that still leaves us with a dilemma. Can two people really be connected over a screen?

Society tends to push this question to the back of their minds for fear of it being true. As more and more generations become accustomed to social media as a normal (or in some cases the only) form of human interaction, it is not too much of a leap to see society becoming conditioned to this form of communication.

Personally I believe in human face-to-face interaction, it is one of our most basic freedoms and it is being taken for granted more and more with each new trendy form of social media. Too much technology can cause people to often neglect the beauty of a simple face-to-face conversation. With a conversation you are truly with a person because you have their full, undivided attention. Emotions and body language are tools to help you learn about someone and even measure their level of concern or dedication to the friendship. These are things that texting simply cannot do with emojis. A yellow, pixilated face with smoke coming out of its ears cannot show the fullness of raw human emotion or the level of friendship that may exist between two people.

However, I do believe that social media has the power to help families and loved ones stay connected over large distances. Social media can allow a military hero speak to his newborn or a long-lost relatives reconnect across the country. It truly is an amazing thing, but it should not nor cannot replace human interaction and the depth of bonding that those interactions create

If Skype and Facebook are the only ways for you to connect with your loved ones, then by all means, use them to their fullest potential. I, like everyone else, cannot prove that friendships formed on social media are indeed real beyond a reasonable doubt, so I choose to let my mind rest easy with my opinion. A true relationship is a rare thing is this world; something that important and fragile cannot be entrusted to a set of ones and zeros.