



Life Actually By Kari Kampakis

Would you rather be ‘liked’ online – or loved in person?

It was five months after my first book was released when the exhaustion hit me. I began waking up in the mornings feeling drained, burned out and lonely.

The loneliness is what surprised me most. After all, I have four kids, a great husband and friends who I adore. Why would I feel lonely when there’s no shortage of love in my life?

With a little self-reflection, I recognized the problem. For 18 months, I’d worked non-stop. I’d written a book, marketed it and traveled for speaking events. When things finally slowed down, I crashed. I was running on empty and very much in need of downtime, prayer and regrouping.

The hardest truth to admit was that I’d neglected my closest relationships. I’d fallen into the black hole of my computer and my phone. The lifestyle changes I’d made to get everything done — like working through family dinners and turning down invitations to meet friends for lunch — had finally caught up with me. As fun as it was to connect with new readers and build online relationships, I missed the people closest to me.

In my efforts to grow an online community, I’d forgotten the value of personal contact. I

knew the only solution to my loneliness was to stop going wider into new relationships and start diving deeper into the relationships I already had.

And so I took a break. I started writing less, calling people instead of texting, exercising regularly and inviting over old friends. When my husband came home from work, I stayed in the kitchen to laugh with my family instead of retreating to my computer to squeeze in writing time.

I went on field trips with my daughters, left white space in my calendar and helped with my daughter’s sixth-grade play — one of my favorite parenting experiences yet.

I also prayed more during this break. I asked God to make his will for me clear, saying that if he wanted me to quit writing, I would because I desperately needed direction.

Slowly the changes I made refreshed my soul. I felt deeper peace and fulfillment than I could ever find through the internet. What I learned was that spending too much time on technology is a breeding ground for loneliness. The feelings we try to escape by getting online only magnify if we’re not also making time for real-life interactions.

Technology is a gift, but it can also be a crutch. It can make us lazy in our relationships and instill a false sense of security of having more real friends than we do. Just because someone takes two seconds to “like” our latest post, however, doesn’t mean they’d take off an entire afternoon to help us in a crisis. Just because we have 1,000 Twitter followers doesn’t mean we have a 1,000 trustworthy friends.

God created us to live in community, and while digital communities can certainly enrich our lives, they can’t replace the joy of face-to-face encounters. The best connections happen in person. They involve making eye contact, hearing voices, sharing laughter and tears, hugging, and experiencing the comfort, love and affection that only a live human being can offer.

In Hebrews 10:24-25, God reminds us to intentionally gather together:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

In an age where we’re more connected than

ever through technology, many people feel lonely. They’re making the same mistakes I made, tending to the friends who “like” them online before the people who love them in real life, and then wondering why they feel empty.

The good news is there’s hope. There is a God who wants us to love each other well and will guide us when we ask for help. Through Him, we can take small steps in the right direction.

We can limit screen time, commit to spending more time in personal dialogue than online dialogue, and alter any habits that keep us from discovering the deep peace and joy of being loved and known in person by the people we love and know the most.

Kari Kubiszyn Kampakis is a Mountain Brook mom of four girls, columnist and blogger for The Huffington Post. Her two books for teen and tween girls — “Liked: Whose Approval Are You Living For?” and “10 Ultimate Truths Girls Should Know” — are available on Amazon and everywhere books are sold. Join her Facebook community at “Kari Kampakis, Writer,” visit her blog at karikampakis.com or contact her at kari@karikampakis.com.

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