

## LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

Boardman, Samantha. "What is the greatest challenge of modern relationships?", *Positive Prescription*, (October, 2014).

# POSITIVE

## PRESCRIPTION

BY Dr. Samantha Boardman

### MIND TONIC

## WHAT IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF MODERN RELATIONSHIPS?

It's not unusual to see a group of people sitting at a table engaged in conversation. What's remarkable is the fact that none of them are talking to each other. Instead, they are *completely engaged in some form of online communication*, clutching their mobile devices and not once looking up from the mesmerizing screen, not even when they take a *bite of food*.

In the best selling book, *Alone Together*, Alice Turkle explores the downside of replacing face-to-face interaction with digital ones. She persuasively argues that this relentless 24/7 connection paradoxically results in a new form of solitude, a world where we exist "alone together."

One of the saddest manifestations of this is watching parents with their young children. Instead of engaging with them in their strollers or playing with them in the park, they are captivated by their devices, texting, Tweeting, thumbing through Instagram. The parents are there but they are not present. The heartbreaking article *How to Miss a Childhood* captures the sad truth of this reality and offers excellent advice on how to meaningfully spend quality time together.

Although cell phones are supposed to connect people there is evidence to suggest that they do the opposite. As one *study* found, cellphone use was linked with a reduction in a desire to connect with others. In fact, even after a short period of cellphone use, subjects were less likely to volunteer for a community service activity when asked, compared to the control group counterparts. They were also less likely to persist in solving word problems even when they knew their answers would translate to a *monetary donation to charity*.

A recent study out of Baylor University entitled "*The Invisible Addiction: Cellphone Activities and Addiction among Male and Female College Students*," further highlights the issue of our obsession with technology. The researchers found that college women spend an average of ten hours a day on their cellphones while college men spend closer to eight. Approximately 60% admitted to being addicted to their devices and acknowledged becoming agitated when it is not in sight. The lead scientist described the results as "astounding" and warned:

As cellphone functions increase, addictions to this seemingly indispensable piece of technology become an increasingly realistic possibility.

Artist Rachel Hovnanian's eye-opening, provocative new show, *Plastic Perfect*, captures the effect of technology on our daily lives. With humor and insight, she explores how devices are redefining us. In one installation, couples lounge together in bed in a seemingly intimate moment and yet, they are oblivious to each other's physical presence. She

highlights an entirely new form of seduction—the love affair between us and our screens. The scene calls to mind Alain de Botton's insightful comment:

The constant challenge of modern relationships:  
how to prove more interesting than the other's  
smartphone.

The show offers a scary glimpse into a world of genetically perfect babies, plastic perfection and living in a state of continuous partial attention. For me, it is a reminder to literally look up from our individual devices and to *rethink priorities*.

Instead of expecting more from technology and less from each other, Hovnanian's show is a reminder to *do the opposite*.

I wish you all the best,

*Dr. Samantha Boardman*

—

*to view Plastic Perfect by Rachel Lee Hovnanian  
visit:*

*Leila Heller Gallery, New York, NY  
September 4-October 18*