



Sherry Turkle

MIT Professor; Founder and Director, MIT Initiative on Technology and the Self

TOPIC: The Future

SUBTOPICS: Technology/Media; Innovation; Life Science; Organization and People

BIG IDEAS:

Evocative Objects

We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with. Studies of scientists, humanists, artists, and designers teach us the power of everyday things. Objects are emotional and intellectual companions that anchor our memory, sustain our relationships, and provoke new ideas. A focus on everyday riches—an apple, a date book, a laptop computer—show us how objects bring philosophy down to earth. Objects carry both ideas and passions.

Identity Technologies

Identity technologies are at the heart of the story of technology in the 21st century—technologies that change people's sense of possibility, who they are and who they might become.

Faced with always-on/always-on-you communications technology, faced with online worlds that truly offer the possibilities of a parallel life, faced with sociable robots that make eye contact, track our movements, and engage in simple conversation, we are at a crossroads. Are we more alone or more together in our new digital culture?

The Robotic Moment and the American Head

Interest in robots that may serve as surrogates, particularly in the care of children and the elderly (the nannybot, the elderbot) is increasing. Often these robots are introduced as playthings, but Turkle's work shows that there is growing acceptance of the idea that if people are able to bond and be comforted by the inanimate, then they should be. What are the moral, developmental, emotional implications of a certain technological promiscuity? How is it reframing what we mean by intimacy, about what is special about being a person?

BIOGRAPHY

A professor, author, consultant and researcher, Sherry Turkle has spent the last 20 years researching the psychology of people's relationships with technology. She is the Abby Rockefeller Mauzé Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society at MIT. She is the founder and current director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, a center of research and reflection on the evolving connections between people and artifacts.

One of the few researchers in this field, Sherry offers a unique perspective on meaning and mechanisms—on humans and technology and social interaction. Sherry is the author of several books including *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud's French Revolution*, *The Second Self: Computers*

and the Human Spirit, and *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. She is the editor of *Evocative Objects: Thinking With Things*, *Falling for Science: Objects in Mind*, and *The Inner History of Devices*.

Profiles of Sherry have appeared in such publications as *The New York Times*, *Scientific American*, and *Wired Magazine*. She is a featured media commentator on the effects of technology for CNN, NBC, ABC, and NPR, including appearances on such programs as *Nightline* and *20/20*. Professor Turkle received a joint doctorate in sociology and personality psychology from Harvard University and is a licensed clinical psychologist.