

We created a survey to find out what sort of communication problems people face today, particularly people who live far from their families or significant others.

Some notable responses are below.

On what they miss the most, when far from a loved one:

"Facial expressions, vocal mannerisms, and a general sense of mood...A certain amount of physical activity which normally conveys affection is also missed; you can't poke someone in the tummy or punch them in the arm over the telephone." -Adam

"To feel and/or see the person." -Alexander

"The physical contact, like touch and stuff like that." -Wes

"Their voice. And warmth." -Mat

"Being able to make them laugh." -Ely

"Their voice...their warm touch, especially their companionship." -anon

"Smiles." -Tracey

"Being able to tell them and hear about our daily lives." -Meghan

"Seeing their face and being able to hug them." -anon

"Face to face contact with them. I usually don't keep in touch with people I won't be able to see face to face anytime soon." -Matt

On what is missing from current communication:

"I guess accessibility is the most important thing. There are so many different ways to communicate these days but for IM or webcam, or internet phone, both parties need to have access and that is difficult to coordinate." -anon

"More honesty. Or more readily available videophones, either one really." -Welch

"Emotional understanding." -Mark

"Video recorded messages." -Robert

"I think that maybe if we could find a way to better communicate emotion that would be a great improvement." -Wes

"Expressive body communication. Closeness of proximity. The ability to give someone a hug or other friendly gesture. Even a full scale immersive VR environment cannot simulate these things in communication, but it would be nice to have a vid-phone.

"Maybe more visual aspects of communication." -Steve

"Better streaming video software for net communications." -J

"Even though already invented, the video phone should be reinstated and made more affordable to everyone." -anon

On preferred method of communication:

"Face to face. Definitely. i just like talking to people, understanding their body language. i think facial expression is the most important thing. it can add a lot of humour to a conversation." -Tom

"I prefer face to face....irony doesn't work without irony signals."
-Alexander

"I like to use all these methods I suppose. i talk to people I'm close with face to face. Writing to people I want to avoid or fear talking to. Visual with people I don't know well or a large audience I want to give some type of message or another." -anon

"Usually face to face, this way I can see the facial expressions and tell if they are lying." -Chris

"Email--I can read it when I have time and I'm not feeling rushed, and I have a written record so I don't forget to get back to them." -Robert

"In person is always best, but IMs are a great little tool and I like to type more than being on the phone." -Al

"I prefer Instant Messenger, because I can talk to multiple people at the same time, or talk to one person and do work while talking to them."

"Face to face because I like to see people and their reactions in conversation." -Mark

"Face to face. I HATE phones. HATE HATE HATE them. I like to look people in the eyes." -Chris

"Written because it is easier to say what you really want, the distance provided by not being face to face gives you an added sense of security, especially if you are a shy person." -Margriet

"Face to face has the best feedback, is the most sincere form of communication. Though often written is good in certain situations where more strategy, thought and planning must go in first." -Andrew

On long distance relationships:

"There was definitely a communication breakdown at times. We communicated mainly through letters, which is a very slow process and things you say right now, won't be read for about a week. Sometimes one of us would be a bit down, and this would come out in the letter, but by the time they reached it, our attitude might have changed, so we'd have this kind of messed-up communication at times. I think the worst was talking on the phone...It was really difficult to understand what the other person was thinking or feelings you couldn't see their faces, so there would be a lot of mis-interpretation, and often, some uncomfortable silences." -Tom

"Lack of communication made it hard, though maybe it was the lack of touch and the communication only possible through touch, rather through lack of communication in the more conventional sense." -Robert

"Instant messenger is good because we can IM each other about random stuff all day since she is usually on at work. Also, webcams and voice are nice things to have." -Andrew

"We probably stayed together a lot longer than we should have since we didn't talk too much." -anon