

# Einstein May Not Have Said It, But It's Still True

☒ I recently received an email which included this picture of Albert Einstein and the quote. Included with the email were pictures captioned, “a day at the beach,” “cheering on your team,” having dinner with your friends,” “out on an intimate date,” “having a conversation with your BFF,” and “a visit to the museum,” all of which showed young people texting in the company of others.

When I first read the email, I said to myself, “Wow! How prophetic. How did Einstein know this would happen?” Well, of course, any time I get an email like, I have to “snope” it out and, of course, I found out that no matter how wise the words are, Albert Einstein never said them. But if he had lived in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I’m sure he would have.

Now, I’m certainly not a luddite. I love the internet. Anything I need to know I can find within a few minutes. For example, I read an interview with Eric Clapton and he was asked, “if you could’ve written any song, what would it have been?” He answered, “The Folks Who Live on the Hill,” written by Jerome Kerns and Oscar Hammerstein II. Well, I found the song in about ten seconds; I can’t imagine how long it would’ve taken me to find the song without the internet.

But not all technology is good all of the time. The obsession with texting is what I’m talking about. According to a communications-analytics company, Quantified Impressions, people should be making eye contact 60% to 70% of the time to create a sense of emotional connection. This is no longer happening because of mobile devices. I don’t know about you, but I’ve sat with friends who hold their phones in their hand while they’re talking with me, waiting patiently or impatiently for something to pop up on their device. Now, I

may not be the most stimulating conversationalist, but neither are they, and I find this type of behavior most rude and annoying. According to QI, "it's almost become culturally acceptable to answer the phone at dinner. A common feint, texting while maintaining eye contact, not only is difficult but also comes off as phony."

I recently heard a great solution for this problem. A family was at a restaurant for lunch. One of the women, a tough schoolteacher-type, gathered everyone's phones and put them in the middle of the table. She said, "the first one to reach for their phone, pays the check." I know I'd get a lot of free meals.

Psychologists have even pointed to "FOMO" or "fear of missing out" on social opportunities, according to a study published in *Computers in Human Behavior*. How ridiculous is that? What about the social opportunity someone is supposed to be having with the person next to them. I've seen people in the theatre, at the beach, in restaurants, museums, and even at a recent Perseus Meteor Shower, all missing out on what's actually happening around them, because they're too busy texting.

The CEO of Decker Communications, a training and consulting firm, says that holding eye contact words best for 7 to 10 seconds in a one-on-one conversation and for 3 to 5 seconds in a group setting. I remember watching a teenager sitting with her parents on the ferry. Of course, her smartphone was in her hand. Her parents would speak to her and I counted the number of seconds she actually kept eye contact with them. She didn't last 7 seconds before she was compelled to look down at her phone. I continued to watch this interaction and found it extremely sad.

There's actually a new app that sends breakup texts to your girlfriend or boyfriend. You answer a series of questions about the relationship and it generates a "fitting" breakup

text. Maybe it's a joke, maybe it's not. I'm sure someone will pay \$.99 to have a smartphone do something that deserves personal attention.

I'm sure if Albert Einstein were still alive, he'd say, I don't get it.

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## Technology – At What Cost?

✘ I don't get texting. I don't text and I'm not sure my cell phone even has the capacity to text although my husband says it does. Besides, what could possibly be so important when I'm in a grocery store, restaurant or in my car, that I would have to text someone? If I have something to say to someone, I wait until I'm home and pick up the phone or email them.

Now I do know that my niece has to text her babysitter otherwise the teenager won't call her back. That's the way it is now. But I really don't get it. I love the sound of my husband's voice and I guess he's used to my Brooklyn accent, so we call each other a lot. I enjoy using Skype because it brings me and my family another step closer than the telephone. But that's just me.

We're told all these new advances in technology are supposed to improve and increase our ability to communicate with one another. What I see is a growing lack of interpersonal interaction. Instead of enjoying each other's company, I see young people sitting together, texting, and ignoring one another; no one is talking. They're all on their little machines thumbing messages to someone rather than talking to the person next to them.

I've even sat with a young man in a restaurant who was holding his phone under the table, texting away, hoping none of us would notice but we all did. Now how rude is that?

My husband tells me there are now cell phones with two cameras that enable a person to text while they're walking and still be able to see the street in front of them on their screen. How insane is that? I foresee plenty of lawsuits by people being hit by cars because they weren't watching where they were going.

The use of Twitter and Facebook and other social media networks has also added a dehumanization and anonymity factor into the mix which makes it possible for anyone to say anything without any fear of reprisal. It's also allowed for schoolyard bullies to do the same damage, except they can now hide behind their computers.

I saw an interview with the creator of Pandora Radio and he was asked, "if you could advise students in college today what they should focus on, what would it be?" I was surprised when he said "public speaking" but I guess when young people can't or don't even talk to the person sitting next to them except monosyllabically, the number of articulate teens dwindles while a growing number are incapable of speaking to anyone especially a large audience.

Another thing I don't get is the shorthand of texting. I guess if you're limited to the number of characters you're allowed in a text message it might make sense, but when I'm on Twitter, I find it far more interesting to figure out a way to succinctly say something using real words.

I've even heard of a teacher who gave her students an assignment to send a note by mail and actually had to take the time to show them how to fold the paper, address an envelope, and put a stamp on it. I actually feel sorry for young people today who'll never experience receiving a beautifully

handwritten passionate love letter in the mail from their beloved. Instead, they've probably grown accustomed to texts that say, "Wanna hook up?" Very sad.

I wonder what our eloquent Founding Fathers would think about all this. I'll bet they'd be shocked to learn how far we've advanced technologically yet have lost our ability to interact and communicate with one another.

I'm going to say they'd agree with me and I've no doubt if they were going to text, they'd write, without contractions, of course, "IDNGI, but if you do, God bless you."