

# The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

[HOME](#) | [PUBLICATIONS](#) | [ADVERTISERS](#) | [EDITORS](#) | [COLUMNS](#) | [CONTACT](#)

## Longing for the Days Before ...

By **DEBORAH STRANGE**

Texting is stressful.

Those ellipses that pop up on an iPhone when someone is typing a message to you are “quite possibly the most important source of eternal hope and ultimate letdown in our daily lives,” Maryam Abolfazli, a writer in Washington, told The Times.

The ellipses can follow a conversation through rising action (“What could he be typing?”), a suspenseful climax (“Why have the bubbles stopped?”) and a disappointing denouement (“A one-word response?”).

“This is the new human condition,” Neal Bledsoe, an actor in Los Angeles, wrote to The Times, via text message. “We’re all desperate for human connection, and all we get — after all that typing — is a paper-clip emoji.”

Pining for the golden days of personal contact, even the electronics-dependent are rediscovering the joy of talking face to face.

Pandora Media, the Internet radio service, usually interacts with its audience with a computer algorithm. Listeners tap a thumbs-up icon when they like what they hear, and Pandora cues similar songs. But in September, Pandora got more personal, surprising seven users with a live performance by the violinist Lindsey Stirling. The one-song concerts, part of an advertising campaign, will be followed by others with different artists.

Ms. Stirling and backup musicians were in a Los Angeles studio, facing a huge screen as they video-chatted with the listeners and performed.

“It was very emotional for listeners, and very emotional for Lindsey, too, because she could see them one-to-one in a way that she doesn’t even get to in a concert,” James Robinson, of the advertising agency TwoFifteenMcCann, told The Times. “She could see what her music meant to these people.”

Grace Ban can understand that pleasure of connecting with an audience. Ms. Ban, an assistant manager of social media at Bergdorf Goodman, the Manhattan luxury retail store, has 65,000 followers on Instagram. One of them recognized her at a party, an introduction was made, and friendship followed. “After you interact with someone virtually for so long,” Ms. Ban said, “it’s nice to meet them in person and find out you can be friends.”

The party was hosted by the Spring St. Social Society, which arranges dinners and other events that simply put people in the same room. Patrick Janelle, a founder of the group, said his digital-focused life (Instagram account: 276,000 followers) had lacked human contact.

“I want to be remembered for bringing these people together,” he said.

At another Spring St. dinner, Ms. Ban sat next to Georgina McDonald. The two shared their travel aspirations — Ms. Ban, maybe to New Zealand; Ms. McDonald, all across the United States. They exchanged phone numbers.

“People want face time and to have different experiences,” Ms. McDonald told The Times. “The best thing about these events is that you know it is going to be a real experience.”

Bevy Smith, the creator of another get-together group, Dinner With Bevy, said there was a market for this service “because people have lost the fine art of conversation. People are so busy trying to network, they forget about connecting.”