

For the first time in history, we have constant access to the entirety of human knowledge at our fingertips. We can talk to anyone, anywhere, and at any time. The world is in your pocket. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 90% of Japan owns a smartphone and uses it daily. Think about how many social media apps and followers you have. You might have a lot. However, have you ever felt like something was missing from an online conversation? Technology has made life faster and easier, but I believe there are two things we must never lose. These are the real learning that stays with us and in-person communication.

In a world overflowing with information, it has become common to just search for answers and move on, but is this beneficial for real learning? When I was studying, I used to rely on apps to quickly find answers to things I didn't understand. I thought that I was saving time by finding the fastest answer. However, sometimes the results were not great. Why? I wasn't really thinking about the "why" or the "how". Instead, I was collecting facts for the test but not understanding them. Easy come, easy go. Slowing down to ask questions and thinking deeply allows knowledge to stick with me. I realized that the time I spent taking detours was actually essential learning time.

Beyond information, our screens can connect us instantly to anyone in the world,--but those connections are lacking something. Recently, I was talking to my grandmother on a video call. Her smile was bright, but I couldn't feel the warmth of her presence. When I finally visited my grandmother, I held her hand, and was truly able to feel the warmth. While I was giving her a massage, I noticed her shoulders had become smaller. When we were walking side by side, I found I had grown taller than her. Just sitting quietly and drinking tea together brought us closer in a way that messages and video calls never could. Another time, my wind ensemble performed in a major competition. The hall was filled with music, and the audience could feel the emotion in our songs. When the last note faded, there was a silence — not empty, but full. Full of shared emotion, quiet awe, and invisible threads that tied us all together. We were united by something real that no video or live stream could replace. These two experiences made me understand that the best kinds of connections are the ones where you can feel each others' presence.

We live in a world where speed and technology are more important than ever. But some things can't be rushed. Let's not forget what truly matters. Here is my challenge to you: Tonight, put down your phone for an hour. Take your time to learn something. Talk to someone face-to-face and share a laugh, or even a quiet moment. Treasure it; you'll feel the heartbeat of life. Technology will keep changing, but our hearts will remain the same. I will keep asking "why" or "how" and seeking real learning. I will keep visiting my grandmother, playing music, and creating these moments that matter. I hope you will too.

As I stand here now, can you feel my excitement, and maybe my slight nervousness? We're sharing a real moment and learning a lot here that no apps can replace, and these are the things that we should hold on to.

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Things to Hold on to