

**Entry Title:** Dying Art of Conversation

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**Entry:**

Upon entering a gymnasium, one's ears should be assaulted by squeaking shoes, exasperated whistles, and shouted commands, by principle. However, as Coach Clarke entered the hall of sweat and tears, not a sound was to be heard. Her whole team sat on the bleachers, all reclining at awkward distances from each other. Not a single word was whispered. The teammates contentedly ignored each other, all too engrossed in the blue light of their phones. So much for team bonding. Clarke sighed as her footsteps echoed across the hushed gymnasium, wondering if perhaps this was the reason for their disappointing season.

For the modern-day teenager, the line between extrovert and introvert is fading into an uncertain chasm, as even the loudest in the room prefers to absently scroll through Instagram, instead of striking up a conversation. Cafes, once a hub of socialisation, now act as a zoo. Free entry to see the evolved Homo sapiens utterly unaware of their surrounds and company. Once inquisitive eyes now glued on a piece of glass. It is sad but true, losing yourself in your phone has become a human reflex.

The teenage years are pivotal to developing social growth and understanding. As the instant gratification of social media encourages the use condensed language, teenage conversations become more wearisome with each Apple software update that adds another 50 emojis. William Shakespeare would be horrified at the lack of expression and eloquence in 21st century communication. Instead of his "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts.", teenagers think the abbreviation YOLO will suffice (You Only Live Once). Devotion is not shown by comparing "thee to a summer's day. Thou art more lovely and more temperate.", Gen Z prefers, "Wow they're hot!". Of course, words and styles come in and out of fashion, that is the natural course of language. However, the fleeting messages people now converse with online, standardise shallow communication between people, leaving feelings and thoughts up to interpretation. As we all know, this interpretation can lead to a wealth of trouble and miscommunication.

Silence, for the second week in a row. The reticent atmosphere compelled my posture to shift with each passing second, suddenly insecure under the unnatural, awkward silence. Silly to feel so self-conscious really, no one else on the bleachers cared enough to spare a glance in my direction. Surely, I cannot be the only one who senses such a lugubrious destitution of social ambiance is out of place in a gymnasium created to absorb noise. Each new arrival from the changing rooms gave me a new hope to share my obscure synonyms for this awkward silence. A hope proven futile, as they quickly took an isolated seat and pretended to look captivated by the bore of their phone. Eventually Coach Clarke walked in late, as was routine for her each week. The previously occupied eyes now darted towards our coach, eager to begin the compulsory afternoon training, which would cease the awkward silence. So, I was not the only soul on these bleachers, hyper-aware of our lack of dialogue. I sighed in unison with Coach Clarke, laying flowers in my mind for the dying art of conversation.