

## Social Distancing, but Staying Close to Each Other's Hearts

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I love animals and have a rabbit called Ram. Rabbits are timid animals and they do not trust people easily. They figure out whether others are safe or dangerous through their senses of sight, sound, smell, and touch. These same senses are used by humans every day protecting us from dangers.

Recently, social distancing has become very important. Therefore, messages from school and chatting with friends are done online or by email. This shows how communication has become computerized. But I prefer interaction also using our senses. I strongly believe that face-to-face conversations are more satisfying, allow us to feel greater closeness, and can inspire self-disclosure between people.

One day, when I came home, my mom had cooked my favorite dish. I was surprised at how she knew I was a little depressed from losing a badminton match. As I ate the delicious food, I felt my mom was encouraging me without using words. Similarly, my younger sister always talks to me a lot when I'm frustrated because she knows that I can release my anger by chatting with someone. My family and I are extremely close, having spent much time together we share empathy, and understand each other without words, sensing each other's needs.

According to research on communication, when receiving a message, people only understand the sender's full meaning 50% of the time. However, the sender assumes that the listener understands it fully 90% of the time! This means, misunderstandings often happen. I feel this is quite true.

Once, I had forgotten homework that had to be handed in that day, so I messaged a friend, but was totally confused by her reply. She messaged me back "great,LoL." However, I had no idea what she meant. Was she happily saying that my misfortune was great? We always got on so well, and I'd never seen her act like that! Had I just not noticed? I started to get increasingly worried. I didn't realize that she was just using sarcasm. If, however, I had heard her reply "great,LoL" in her voice, I would have known that it was sarcasm from the tone of her voice, her intonation, and her facial expression.

How well I can convey this feeling to you through my recording? Now, with social distancing, there is a real physical gap between people communicating. However, I don't want to also create an emotional gap between us and our friends. If we can find ways to better spend time together and share experiences, we can create an environment that creates empathy, which will keep our hearts closer together.

When rabbits judge others, they rely on sight, scent, sound, and touch. We humans are quite similar, in that we need our senses to clearly understand others and maintain good relationships. Social distancing is necessary now, but let's stay close to each other's hearts. Thank you for watching.