What Happened to Holding a Decent Conversation?

By: Tyra Harper

Today is the first day of one of my least favorite months, February, because it always reminds me that in thirteen days I will once again spend Valentine’s Day alone. After discussing with my mother why I was single, I told her that I felt that guys do not approach me. And when they do, they do not know what to say. She replied that many guys are intimidated by a young woman who is very confident and outspoken. She also came to the conclusion that social media has led my generation in the wrong direction socially.

We then talked about how she notices that many young adults have lost interest in the value of face-to-face conversations. Young adults have gotten so comfortable with texting or using social media to communicate that they do not know how to carry on a conversation in everyday situations. I remember having a discussion in my English 1102 class where a classmate felt that many people are more outgoing on social media. When you see them in person, they are quiet and shy.

If you walk around Georgia State’s campus and watch students as they pass by, you will see that most of them are glued to their phones. Many of these students are using some type of social media app or website to communicate to others. But when they are forced to participate in class discussions, they have nothing to say. I can walk past an attractive guy and he will look at me then automatically look away and not say anything to me. Or, you may see one of the people you follow on social media while they act like they do not know who you are. Why do we hinder ourselves when we have something to say? Why is it so difficult to start a conversation?

This generation’s lack of communication not only affects our everyday life but also our romantic relationships. It is very hard to meet someone special if you cannot talk to that person face-to-face. While interviewing GSU student Nii-Kotey Nequaye for a research project on online dating I asked him the question, “Do you use social media apps or websites for dating?” Nequaye replied, “I mean I use it as a place to connect with people. I wouldn’t say strictly for dating but you can meet people through that. Then maybe you can find someone who you can have a relationship with, but I wouldn’t use like Zoosk or something to find someone.” This interview really helped me understand how the fine line between friendly and romantic communication on social media can cross over. Our generation does not necessarily seek online interaction but because it is easier and less stressful, we tend to choose it over traditional conversation.

After having a really great conversation weeks later with Nequaye, I came to the conclusion that it is much easier to communicate face-to-face if you have developed a prior connection with a person. I feel that the anxiety that comes with talking to someone that we do not know and opening ourselves to being judged makes it harder for us to communicate in person. It is also easier to communicate with people that we are already comfortable and familiar with. Maybe as a generation we should challenge ourselves to be as outgoing in person as we are on social media. Maybe then we will all have a Valentine next year.