

My Friends – Real or Virtual?

An activity of “Paying attention is better than getting attention”

Social media helps us to keep in touch with friends. Almost everyone seems to be on it. But, are there things we need to watch out for? Actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt’s talk “**Paying attention is better than getting attention**” (page 20, *What’s Up* September 2019) is a real eye-opener in that respect.

Social media generates **virtual relationships** — people are not physically present with you and you communicate in cyberspace through online chats, texts, social media, and such. **Real relationships**, on the other hand, are formed by people meeting face to face. Experts have studied these two types of relationships. Some of their views are listed below.

Read the following views. In the last column, indicate which you prefer for yourself — VR or RR.

	Virtual Relationships (VR)	Real Relationships (RR)	I prefer
1.	The people are not physically present. Communication is via electronic-texting and distant.	People meet face to face. Communication is in real life in a shared space.	<input type="checkbox"/> VR <input type="checkbox"/> RR
2.	The friendships can be detached and it is hard to tell whether the other person can be trusted.	There is more scope for close personal relationships based on mutual trust and other shared values.	<input type="checkbox"/> VR <input type="checkbox"/> RR
3.	Identities can be masked. People can pretend to be anyone they want to be, and they can fool you.	Meeting the person gives you more clues about what he or she is really like. You can be a better judge of the person’s character.	<input type="checkbox"/> VR <input type="checkbox"/> RR
4.	People you meet on the internet can easily cover up their real intentions.	In face-to-face meetings, it is harder to hide real intentions.	<input type="checkbox"/> VR <input type="checkbox"/> RR
5.	The number of social-media friends or followers you have can be misleading. Often, high numbers may create a false sense of popularity.	The quality of each real-life friend outweighs the number of friends. Real-life friendships tend to be more meaningful and dependable.	<input type="checkbox"/> VR <input type="checkbox"/> RR
6.	Social media can be addictive. Your constant yearning to check for updates, comments, and to post a reply leaves you with less time for face-to-face relationships.	Real-life friends do not demand round-the-clock involvement. Such friendships are not addictive.	<input type="checkbox"/> VR <input type="checkbox"/> RR

Have you discovered anything new from this exercise? Looking at your responses above, what kind of relationships do you prefer — virtual or real? How would you maintain a balance between both real and virtual relationships? Write your answer on the reverse of this sheet.