

## Navigating Physical and Virtual Lives

Before the internet, I made more trips to the library and more phone calls. I read more books and my point of view was narrower and less informed. I walked more, biked more, hiked more, and played more. I made love more often.

The seductive online sages, scholars, and muses that joyfully take my curious mind where ever it needs to go, where ever it can imagine going, whenever it wants, are beguiling. All my beloved screens offer infinite, charming, playful, powerful, informative, social windows into global human experience.

The internet, the online virtual universe, is my jungle gym and I swing from bar to bar: learning about: how writing can be either isolating or social; DIY Drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) at a Maker Faire; where to find a quantified self meetup; or how to make Sach moan sngo num pachok. I can use image search to look up hope or success or play. I can find a video on virtually anything; I learned how to safely open a young Thai coconut from this internet of wonder.

As I stare out my window, at the unusually beautiful Seattle weather, I realize, I haven't been out to walk yet today – sweet internet juices still dripping down my chin. I'll mind the clock now, so I can emerge back into the physical world.

The physical world is where I not only see, I also feel --- a friend's loving gaze in conversation; the movement of my arms and legs and the breeze on my face as I walk outside; and the company of friends for a game night and potluck dinner. The internet supports my thinking and the physical world supports that, as well as, rich sensing and feeling experiences.

It's no accident we're a culture increasingly obsessed with the Food Network and Farmer's Markets – they engage our senses and bring us together with others.

How has the internet changed my thinking? The more I've loved and known it, the clearer the contrast, the more intense the tension between a physical life and a virtual life. The internet stole my body, now a lifeless form hunched in front of a glowing screen. My senses dulled as my greedy mind became one with the global brain we call the internet.

I am confident that I can find out about nearly anything online and also confident that in my time offline, I can be more fully alive. The only tool I've found for this balancing act is intention.

The sense of contrast between my online and offline lives has turned me back toward prizing the pleasures of the physical world. I now move with more resolve between each of these worlds, choosing one, then the other – surrendering neither.