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OLD DOGS CAN LEARN NEW TRICKS

So now that my youngest is off to college, I have joined the community of empty nester parents. With a mid-week September birthday last week, he said he was too busy to meet with us due to an evening basketball practice. Furthermore, his roommate uses Skype™ software on the Internet to talk to his parents for free and we should give it a try. Can old dogs really learn new tricks when it comes to technology?

I knew that millions of people all over the world have Skype™ or other kinds of software that do videoconferencing but I really had not seen a need to use it yet at home. Not only can you talk for free but you can use live video pictures and see each other. The mid-week birthday long distance was a good excuse to try.

The key is the person on the other end also needs a Skype™ ID and software downloaded on their computer. The setup and to register was easy. When I first tried to connect with my son it would disconnect all the time and vice versa. After multiple attempts I learned what my mistake was. The microphone on my laptop was turned off. Once the microphone was turned on, the connection and video picture was perfect. Maybe too perfect, you could hear and see right inside the dorm room.

For video you must have an in-built camera or plug in a webcam. Then you can talk face-to-face over live video. Or type a chat message to a friend and send them your latest photos. I learned how fast and easy it is to talk long distance for free or talk with live video.

In 1962, George, Jane and other space-age characters on the cartoon show called “The Jetsons” spoke to each other through linked video monitors, which closely resemble the Skype™ technology. The George Jetson technology is now here. We are in a time where person-to-person networking through the internet will continue to increase. In Extension we are using Breeze technology to connect to others and be involved in long distance meetings via the web.

Someone has said the reason we never developed air cars is that we have the internet. But Skype™ has taken the internet to a higher level. The background in peer-to-peer networking makes Skype™ a different type of telephone service in a number of ways. Skype works on a decentralized model, meaning there are no big phone switches and controlling computers in regional data centers.

Don't get any new ideas though. If our Extension Office phone line is ringing busy, it was bad enough listening to my cell phone ring at the same time I am talking on the landline phone while more emails just came in the inbox. Communicating on the landline phone and between texting, instant messaging and now connecting via Skype™, that's too many ways to get that instant information. Should I really trade for that new style cell phone?



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