

# 21. Whiskers let your beloved ones feel your mood

**A**lthough the Digital Age has made verbal communication over long distances extremely easy, non-verbal communication (like feelings as expressed by body language) has received much less attention. We develop new ways of non-verbal communication over long distances. Our demo consist of two 'whiskers', placed separate from each other. The demo looks like giant whiskers for humans that you can put in your home and that are connected via the internet to a whisker in the home of a beloved one.



By touching and moving a whisker in your place, the whisker in the home of your friend or relative starts to move in the same way. This is an innovative way to communicate your feelings in a subtle way without being physically together.

### ICT science question

What is a suitable medium for non-verbal communication using the internet? What is technically possible? What and how do people want to communicate non-verbally over long distances? Some existing products and concepts explore this idea, but generally use different modalities for the input and the output signal. For example, an input signal is translated into a blinking light as an output signal. Instead, in our prototype the input signal (giving a swing to one of the whiskers) and the output signal (the other whisker is swinging) are the same. This improves the feeling of being together.



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### Application

We develop Whiskers in the first place for elderly people who go through a transition in life. When an elderly retires, loses a dear one or suddenly has to cope with a physical disability, he or she might start to feel socially isolated. Whiskers create a new way of feeling socially connected.

### Alternative Application

As social connectedness benefits everybody, we want to create solutions for other target groups as well. In that way we also hope to avoid creating a stigmatizing device ("a device only for elderly"), but a pleasant experience that anyone wishes to have.

### Nice to know

Whiskers or vibrissae are specialized for tactile sensing (other types of hair operate as more crude tactile sensors). Vibrissae grow in various places on most mammals, including all primates except humans! (Wikipedia).

### Quote

"What a good idea to communicate through movements."  
"Whiskers could be used to let others know all is fine without having to call them."



Loneliness increases the costs of healthcare. One step in solving this hidden problem is to increase social connectedness between people.



Movement as a mean to feel each other at a distance is new, and could help people to feel more connected to each other.



Loneliness is a huge social problem. Whiskers are a simple idea to make people feel more connected when they are separated from one another geographically.



Whiskers support a feeling of connectedness over a distance, without being explicit. It is like a virtual pat on the head.



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