TODAY, SMARTPHONE apps can spur new friendships, diverting love affairs, even stable marriages. In his book "Dataclysm," OkCupid co-founder Christian Rudder analyzes data that suggests meeting digitally may even be the most efficient route.

I don’t need tech to help me find a tryst. Recently, however, when my wife once again...
caught me being a selfish ass, I began to wonder if tech could teach me to become a better husband. Turns out it certainly aspires to.

She has since forgiven my bout of solipsism, but I’m pretty self-centered outside my marriage, too. I’m frequently late, for instance, when it comes to sending cards to my mother and sisters. I’ve always rationalized this failing as a consequence of how busy I am—a weak excuse. Fortunately, I’ve discovered there’s an app to improve nearly any relationship, whether you want to be more thoughtful with a spouse, your neglected friends, far-flung family or even exes.

The most universal of the apps I tried was Monaru—Irish for “manufacturing”—a full-service A.I. assistant that examines your life and closest relationships, and then sends you tips to engage in these relationships more smartly and considerately ($20/month, monaru.io). For instance, if your girlfriend is a coffee fiend, it might clue you in about a new espresso bar opening near her place and prod you to feed her passion by taking her there.

Before you can start using Monaru’s trusty robots, however, you first must talk to a real human team member about the 15-20 most important people in your life. During my call, we chatted about my wife’s appreciation for shared time—evening walks, traveling and communal cooking—as well as my mom’s love of Scandinavian murder mysteries. The latter disclosure triggered a message from Monaru that week suggesting I pick mom up a copy of Jo Nesbo’s “The Bat” in advance of my next visit with her.

“We’re building the automation as we go,” said co-founder Patrick Finlay, explaining how they mix human and computer intelligence by cultivating a bank of suggestions that surface per each user’s criteria, but are reviewed by humans before being sent along.

Monaru’s prescient attention to detail is what won over Bay Area app developer Rajiv Ayyangar. After his recent onboarding, it suggested he take his brother to an impressively appropriate event at the San Francisco Botanical Gardens, in which visitors could wander the shrubberies looking for hidden pianos to play together. The
app was aware that his brother had moved to the city recently to study classical piano, so its suggestion perfectly connected the dots, said Mr. Ayyangar. Monaru, he added, “doesn’t just suggest some random get together. It’s something actionable you can do immediately.”

Monaru also lets you set how often you want reminders and who in your life it should focus on. You can ask it to remind you about anniversaries well before you’re forced to grab a drugstore gift on the drive home. Occasionally the app will ask questions—like, “Feeling spontaneous?”—and guide you to find a small gift, make a call or “spontaneously” surprise someone with a night out. It might ask, “Who are you thankful for?” and nudge you to reach out to someone you haven’t seen in a while.

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Sean Bolton, 24, another overworked tech grinder in San Francisco, was concerned his 60-80 hour workweeks were causing him to lose touch with his family. “I was especially worried about my grandparents. They’re not tech-savvy,” he said. So when Monaru suggested he mail them a card, via the online service Postable, he was thrilled. “I did it entirely from my desk. I didn’t have to get up and go find a card or go to the post office.” Soon after, Mr. Bolton’s mother texted him a photo of his grinning grandmother holding the card.

Life, however, isn’t just about making time for each other. If your relationship suffers, instead, from the strain of prolonged money squabbles, you may need Honeydue, an app that tries to eliminate financial feuds in relationships. Dustan Shuman and his partner Andrew Horne downloaded Honeydue after having prickly meetings over just how much each of them was spending, and where. Mr. Shuman said the app helps extinguish that tension: “It lets both of us see our entire cash flow on a single table, and set goals.”

Trying to establish harmony among a larger, logistics-challenged group? Pathshare (free, pathsha.re) can ping a chosen set of friends to meet at the same spot—a bar, coffee shop, bowling. Everyone you invite is sent the location’s GPS pin and you can see each other gravitating slowly toward the center as dots on a map, each with a listed ETA.

For divorced couples who share children and want to communicate more considerately,
Coparenter ($13/month, coparenter.com) can help coordinate child drop-offs and limits text bickering by letting you set filters for conflict words when you use its messaging stream. When it catches foul language, it subtly hints that you might want to curb your vitriol.

After weeks using Monaru I’m not yet the world’s best husband—apparently almost buying flowers doesn’t count. But the fact that the thought actually occurred to me suggests the app is starting to do its job. Now it’s my turn.

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