



[preview] LEIGH GOESSL is a freelance writer for Helium, an online forum where the writers serve as the editors and rate each article published to the Web site. Goessl has a bachelor of science degree in business from Empire State College in New York and is presently working on her MBA. Her primary areas of interest include family, life, technology, music, and, of course, writing.



In the following article, which originally appeared on the Helium Web site, Goessl argues that the use of Facebook can be detrimental to your relationships.

How Facebook Can Harm Your Relationships by Leigh Goessl

Facebook has rapidly soared to become one of the most popular websites across the Net. Every day millions of people across the world log-in to connect with their Facebook friends. These friends may consist of family, friends, long lost relationships, colleagues or new friends. On any given day most people typically see a lot of interaction on their Facebook homepage.

While there are many advantages to being a Facebook member, there are also several drawbacks. It is important to assess the value of Facebook when determining the level of interaction you plan to spend with Facebook.

The drawbacks might be something to consider if you find yourself becoming too involved on Facebook. One of the significant problems that has resulted in society as a result of social networking sites such as Facebook is the impact and harm this interaction has caused to relationships.

All relationships in life pose the risk of being impacted. Here are a few ways Facebook friendships can harm your relationships:

• Marital and Committed Relationships

There are many ways that Facebook can harm committed relationships. Infidelity, addiction, offering too much information and inappropriate interactions are some of the many ways relationships are negatively impacted.

One of the fastest rising factors that is attributed to infidelity is social networking websites. Facebook makes it really easy for people to reconnect and one of the first things many people do is search out their old relationship partners.

Sometimes this is done out of curiosity, but other times it is done with a specific intent to rekindle old flames. Either way, if the person seeking out their old significant others is married, this treads into dangerous territory, especially if the marriage is going through a stressful period or has other issues.

For instance, if a person is frustrated with their significant other, they may turn to the web to look for comradeship, support or an ear to vent to. This can be a very slippery slope, especially if the unhappy partner looks to members of the opposite sex to lean on.

A Facebook addiction is another consideration to look at when assessing how relationships are harmed. One facet of Facebook is that it tends to be overwhelming with so much information being streamed; this is especially true if there are a lot of people listed as friends. Time spent on Facebook is time spent away from the love relationship. A significant other may become jealous or frustrated from the amount of time spent on Facebook.

As part of the Facebook experience, a popular activity is sharing comments, notes, chats or photos with other members. A spouse or significant other may become upset at the types of interaction occurring or the level of personal information streamed onto the site. Often people forget that the web is a public place and comments and photos posted can be embarrassing to a mate.

• Family Relationships

Sometimes people complain, vent or share family problems when they log onto Facebook. This can lead to problematic issues in the family. When private family matters are streamed across Facebook, this can lead to marital strife, problems with children, parents or other extended family. This kind of carelessness can be devastating to family relationships.

Addiction can also impact family relationships. If a parent, child or spouse spends most of their time on Facebook, this means they are less involved with the family. This can result in anger, resentment or major friction.

Either situation can lead to a major argument or rift in the family. A family who likes to keep familial issues private may not be so keen about Facebook.

• Friendships

Facebook can also harm friendships. Insensitive comments can be made, friendships may be ignored in favor of Facebook interaction, and the addiction potential can also factor in. It is always important to consider the feelings of others when making comments or listing photos on Facebook. There is a possibility someone's feelings may get hurt or be embarrassed over something shared, even if strides are made to keep people from seeing things posted.

As mentioned above, Facebook is not private. Sure you can customize and heighten the level of privacy, but it is never really totally private as things can be forwarded or copy/pasted off Facebook pages and e-mailed separated. There is also the interaction of groups that can be joined; these can often be seen by anyone on the Internet depending on the privacy levels set by the group's administrator.

Offline friendships can be harmed if people begin to feel neglected by their friends who are deeply immersed in Facebook. It is a problem when someone knows more about what's going on with their Facebook friends than they do their offline friendships. Additionally people may begin to connect strictly through Facebook instead of picking up a phone or making a visit which can put stress on a friendship.

• Work Relationships

It is pretty common for people to connect with bosses, colleagues and other professional relationships on Facebook.

Facebook is a great networking tool, but one of the side effects is that it blurs personal and professional lives.

Many behaviors people exhibit when off the clock are quite different than the way they act when they are at work. People have to really be careful and not exhibit any levels of unprofessionalism when on Facebook if they are connected to people they work with.

Anything that might be construed as unprofessional can really put a negative impression on a person and lead to problems in their career. Another way work relationships can be harmed is if a person is addicted to Facebook and spends the day interacting on the site. This could cause discord with colleagues and anger bosses when time is frittered away playing instead of working. Facebook is great, but it can damage relationships if you aren't careful. Today's online interaction has begun to really blend with offline relationships and sometimes it is very difficult to maintain both.

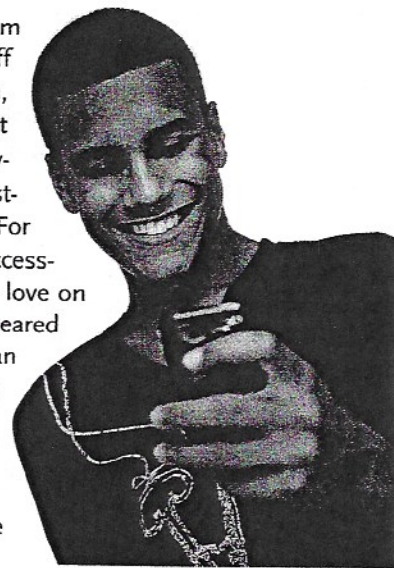
In the early Internet days, people used pseudonyms and there wasn't a big problem, but business models such as Facebook are structured to use real names. This has led to people exposing themselves wide open with their online interaction, and unfortunately a negative side effect has been the way it has harmed real-life relationships. If due care isn't taken when on Facebook, people can seriously or permanently harm the people they care about.

Source: Leigh Goessl, Helium, www.helium.com/items/1731100.

>> READINGS AND REFLECTION



[preview] **AL RODRICKS**, who is from Enfield, Connecticut, is a staff writer for the Web site ImagineWeMeet.com, an online dating site that allows people to post free personal ads. Although Rodricks' work covers a variety of topics, some of his most interesting articles relate to the online dating scene. For example, in "How to Make Online Dating Successful," he offers useful tips for anyone looking for love on the Internet. The following article originally appeared on the Imagine We Meet site, and presents an opposing viewpoint to the previous article, "How Facebook Can Harm Your Relationships." Where do you stand on the issue? Are social networking sites helpful or harmful to your relationships? Will you agree with Goessl or Rodricks by the time you finish the next article?



The Benefits of Social Networking on YOUR Social Life by Al Rodricks

I remember when the Internet was just starting to get really popular. Many folks feared it would be the end of

social interaction. They pictured everyone huddled away in their rooms, typing anonymously to strangers, and giv-

ing up any form of human contact whatsoever. Well, as we have seen, this is not the case. In fact, thanks to the advent of social networking, people have been more active than ever before meeting new people, re-connecting with old friends, and learning about different cultures from all over the world. One thing that social networking sites have done is give folks a new and perhaps safer method of online dating.

Social networks, unlike traditional methods of meeting someone, allow you a pretty in-depth method of “checking people out” before actually meeting them. Most social network profiles contain information about the person’s interests, work life, family life, and much more. You can even see whom a person is connected to as well, and oftentimes this is how folks meet.

Let’s imagine that you just re-connected to an old high school friend. You may not have talked to him or her in years, but thanks to social networking sites, here you are, messaging away to your old buddy! Then let’s imagine you start scrolling through the pictures of the people they are connected to online. You see someone who is cute, and you would like to know a little more about him or her. Your friend can give you the scoop, and perhaps even do an online introduction. This process can be much simpler than trying to arrange an in-person date, and MUCH less nerve wracking. Spending a few minutes chatting online with someone is far less intimidating than showing up face to face for a blind date, wouldn’t you agree?

In addition, meeting someone through a social network can be a lot like meeting someone through a personal ad, only with a few more “quality checkpoints” installed. Online dating personal ads have been around pretty much since the first power-up of the Internet years ago. The problem is, on a dating profile, it seems that people tend to exaggerate just a bit. I know you are shocked, but it’s true. They assume that the only people who will see their ad are others who are “looking for love” as well, and they want to seem as desirable as possible. The same can be true of social networks, of course, but while folks may try to put their best foot forward, the fact that all of their friends will see their profile tends to discourage outright lying.

As far as communicating with those you meet on social networks, the methods are plenty. You can message them right through the platform, chat with them in real time, upload video or audio clips, or perhaps even talk to them live using an interface like Skype, for instance.

It is important to keep in mind that many folks who are members of social networks are not on there exclusively for the purpose of dating. But, if you are looking for true love, spending some time on your favorite social network may just help get you there...

Source: Al Rodricks, “The Benefits of Social Networking on YOUR Social Life,” ImagineWeMeet.com.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Compare and contrast the articles by Goessl and Rodricks.

Considering Ideas

1. What is each author’s claim?
2. Which article presents a more convincing argument? Why?
3. Based on these articles, as well as your own experiences, what effects, if any, do Facebook and other social networking sites have on relationships? Why?

Considering Writing Strategies

1. In addition to persuasion, what other writing strategies do Goessl and Rodricks use? Give several specific examples from the articles to illustrate your point.
2. Discuss the writing styles of each author. Which author did you connect with more? Why?

3. Which types of appeals (logical, emotional, and/or ethical) does each author use? Give specific examples from the articles.

Writing Suggestions

1. Has a social networking site, such as Facebook, ever enhanced or harmed one of your relationships? Write an essay persuading the readers that the Web site is beneficial or detrimental to relationships. Use your own experience (and possibly other research as well) to support your position. Be sure to cite any sources you use. See Chapters 13 and 14 for more details about citing sources.
2. If you have never used a social networking site, would you consider using one now? Why or why not? Write an essay persuading the readers that using a social networking Web site has positive or negative effects on relationships. Use one of the previous articles (and possibly other research as well) to support your point of view. Be sure to cite any source you use. See Chapters 13 and 14 for more details about citing sources.