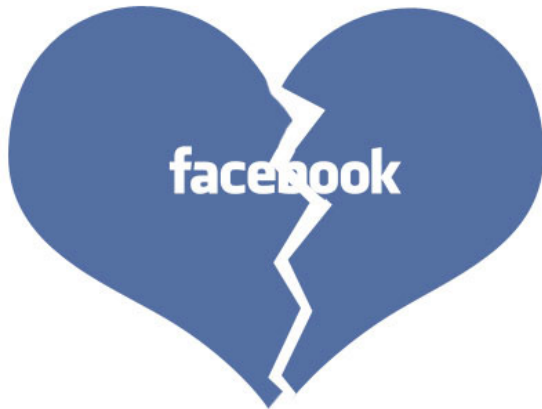


Facebook and Divorce



The Facebook homepage boasts: "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life." It appears that this statement could not be more incorrect. Clearly, when writing these immortal words, Mark Zuckerberg didn't realise this same site would have couples running for divorce lawyers.

A survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reveals that twenty percent of divorces have cited the popular social networking site, Facebook, as a main contributor of marital breakdowns. It appears that married couples not

only have to be aware of physical infidelity, but also must consider the very real threat of cyber infidelity, which is just a mouse click away.

The social networking site has been blamed for reconnecting former lovers and sparking new flames.

Just one of the thousands of individuals who have experienced a marriage break-down citing Facebook as a main factor, Ken Savage, knew something was wrong when his wife stopped checking her Facebook in front of him. A computer savvy Savage tracked his wife's Facebook messages to discover she was having an affair with a former boyfriend. Now, Savage is the founder of facebookcheating.com, a site where individuals can go to get advice on cyber infidelity.



Social networking sites can provide a utopian dream for the user, who is able to escape their own reality of whining children and around the clock work by living out an online affair. This unrealistic fantasy can lead a marriage that is already skating on thin ice to fall through completely.

Facebook has not only been attributed to reconnecting old lovers, but the highly personal nature of updates has also allowed spouses to see their partner's physical infidelity through

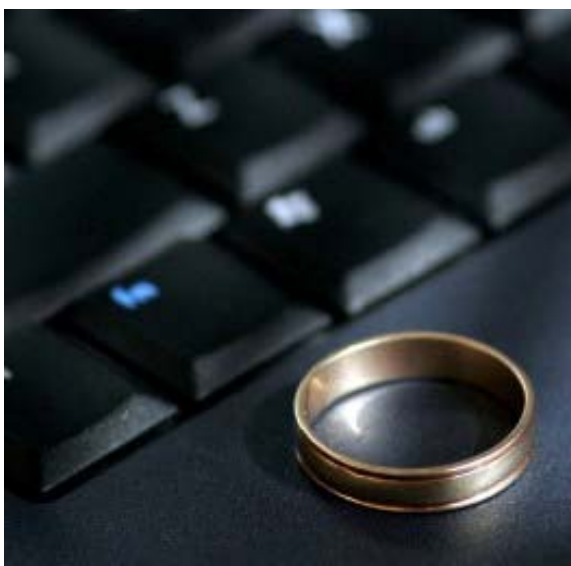
photos and intimate friends' comments.

Facebook itself is riddled with sites such as "Facebook ruined my marriage!", where individual spiels on cheating spouses and indecent behaviour discovered through Facebook are abundant.

Dan Kuszpa from the United States knows all too well the potentially detrimental effects of Facebook on a marriage. He wrote: "My wife of two years was calling an old boyfriend she found on Facebook. Today she tells me she's moving to New York to live with him".

It is clear the negative effects of have been around longer than most realise. The pinnacle of the detriment Facebook became obvious in 2009, jealous husband, Brian Lewis, killed after she changed her relationship from 'married' to 'single' on her profile.

Social networking sites have also been to creating anxiety in users and decreasing self-esteem. An Edinburgh University study found that more than Facebook users said Facebook made anxious. The ability to see others' lives excitement and happiness they are experiencing through photos and constant status updates can often have the negative effect of making individuals compare their lives to those in cyber space, exposing the meagerness and inadequacies of their own life in comparison. The pressure users feel to come up with updates about their life for a large number of people is having harmful side effects, leading individuals to desire a different life to the one they currently live, which may escalate divorce rates.



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While the social networking obsession is bad for some, divorce lawyers are lapping up society's stupidity. Eighty percent of divorce lawyers have reported a rise in the number of cases that use social networking evidence in trials. Lawyers have quickly learnt to look online for evidence when a spouse is suspected of being unfaithful. Your saucy Facebook photos, twitter tweets, flirty messages and other incriminating information will be sought out and used against you as evidence of cheating, and general bad behaviour. This is not only limited to divorce cases but lawyers are also using social networking evidence in child support cases to show signs of bad parenting.

While Facebook can have detrimental outcomes for a marriage, it is also been used to solve legal issues. Courts in the United States of America have enabled lawyers to serve documents on Facebook when a party to a case cannot be located. Facebook has also been used by lawyers to locate individuals subject to legal proceedings.

To all of you out in cyberspace, the message is clear. Think before you type. You never know who will be reading your Facebook.