

Pro or Con, Does Facebook Social Networking Influence the Nation's Divorce Rate?

While researching current topics of conversation online, I became intrigued with a question, "Has Facebook Social Networking been a catalyst to higher divorce rates?" Since having facilitated a support group for divorce in the past, my personal interest for this sort of relational psychological information is my candy.

If there is one subject I can attest to having an expert opinion about, it's divorce. Been there, done that and someday maybe I will write a book about it. I can tell you without a doubt...it is the pits to go through a divorce.

After researching the question posed, it appears to be a resounding *YES*.

Today Facebook boasts of 200 million daily users and simultaneously Google posts reports from the legal community attesting to a statistic that 1 in 5 divorces today have a direct correlation to Facebook social networking relationships. To me that's huge, though not surprising and enough to make you go, hmmm what are we doing?

American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers Completes Survey

According to a survey completed by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers on Facebook, more and more lawyers and spouses are coming to divorce court armed with evidence from Facebook that their spouse is cheating, flirting, or changing their relationship status on Facebook.

In fact, the survey claims that 20% of divorce cases are Facebook related break ups. Let's examine what is it about online chatting or friendly relationships that potentially jeopardize the marriage relationship?

Is Facebook really to blame for a Divorce?

In itself, Is a social networking site really to be blamed for a relationship going south? I don't think so. Isn't a computer controlled by its user? Yep, the last time I checked. Can it be the comfort of daily use to blame? Or maybe the immediate emotional energy surge caused by the unrealistic virtual intimacy in an online conversation that is the potential culprit leading to marriage failure? What is really happening here?

I have observed people sharing personal information today with one click, a broadcast announcement goes out, many times without a second thought of who will be reading it. Is it easier to have these one way virtual conversations? Sure it is..these friendships are obviously less likely to be challenging and more immediately fulfilling than real relationships that need hard emotional work to

endure the tests of time. So the level of blame is within the users control. I would say so, yes, but where?

What about Cyber-Flirting, Isn't It Innocent Fun?

What do you say, let's ask the 20% of the marriage population who attribute social networking to their divorce what they think.

As people become more comfortable using Facebook as a primary means of communication, it becomes more increasingly acceptable and easier to get emotional needs met in the wrong places.

As a result, it appears that the opportunity to meet and converse with 200 million users highly contributes to the rising divorce statistics.

I personally believe the need to be accepted and loved unconditionally is the actual culprit of these divorce statistics and to that end Facebook social networking serves as a readily available contemporary catalyst in fulfilling this human emotional desire in today's world. An easy answer to getting some ego strokes by someone online.

Public flirting for all to see through online bantering of daily muses seems innocent in nature, or does it? The high probability of flirting taking the place of the real marriage partner is very high, even to the point of divorce.

Psychologists warn that most people don't have any self-control to this kind of attention, so when faced with so much temptation (200 million options), they buckle to the pressure and step over the boundary from friendly to flirting as if single once more, a definite RED FLAG.

Facebook Social Networking Like High School Days

Let's face it, people online talk mostly about fun social things by having level one types of conversations, not the kind of conversations that are needed for deeper, meaningful relationships.

The shallowness of the online chatter can be a thrill for the ego and emotionally fulfilling temporarily.

Online chatting can give a sense of acceptance and have a surreal intimacy.

Facebook reminds me of high school in a way where everyone chatted all day long about what everyone was doing yesterday, what everyone is doing today, who they are doing it with, what they will be doing later, and why.

Facebook was actually started by a college student. Go figure.

Facebook is like watching reality TV

Social networking is like watching a reality television show.

Reality television shows like *Dating in the Dark* and the like are like peep shows of the 21st century.... what is up with that anyway?

I remember stay at home moms back in the day were hooked on *Days of Our Lives* and *All My Children*. How many hours are spent watching reality TV, chatting online, and/or reading posts of other people than having a real conversation with your spouse or someone else in your family?

I think it is a psychological addiction that will eventually become toxic to a close relationship; especially so when the desire to participate in the lives of other people is greater than that with spouse or immediate family.

Ask yourself, when something exciting or fun happens, who do I tell first, my spouse or someone online? Does the spouse or significant other find out important happenings in life at the same time as the online collective? Where do you hang your heart, at home, or online? Where is your reality?

In The End It is All About Trust and Sharing

Facebook tips for married couples

I thought the following tips I found online were worth sharing:

1. **Share online passwords spouse** – This is the easiest way to prove you are not up to any nonsense and allow your partner to trust you. By sharing your online passwords you will find the relationship to be much easier to deal with and a lot of questions the spouse may have will go away.
2. **Disable Facebook chat** - The instant messenger feature on Facebook can lead to a lot of bad news if the wrong person pops up while your spouse is over your shoulder. In addition, it can lead to a lot of people making sexual advances at you as well. Do yourself and marriage a favor and just disable this function.
3. **Forward facebook messages to email** - Don't be afraid to forward your inbox messages to email and share that email as well. This again will cut down on confusion and doubt in the relationship. It is better to share too much than too little and live a miserable life.
4. **Should you facebook friend an ex?** - If there is any doubt in your mind that your spouse wouldn't be 100% ok with your new found social friendship, then don't do it. It is not worth the pain and heartache. It may also depend

on how you handle the situation and what the motivation is as to whether or not it is a good idea.

At the end of the day, people have to be mature enough to be committed to their marriage or significant relationship.

We need to trust and believe in our relationships with our partners. The temptations of the Internet world are valid and need to be addressed in a positive and purposeful manner.

Being in control of who, when, where, what and how we function in the social networking community is key.

Do not let Facebook or any other catalyst interfere with the trust of the marriage relationship by building strong communication with your spouse or significant other like that of no one else in your life. You and your spouse are worth the effort.

Facebook itself, Not the Real Problem

It is the way people choose to use Facebook is the underlying culprit. So what about social networking sites are harmful to the marriage bond and a potential catalyst for marital demise?

Everyday hundreds of thousands of words and pictures are posted and shared by countless people on social media. To me sometimes, it is a huge red flag.

We have to protect our important relationships by asking ourselves almost daily, What and whom am I looking at, talking to, sharing personal information with every day on the web that my husband/wife/significant other knows nothing about?

Facebook can be a form of voyeurism. Ask yourself, Am I viewing pictures of another man/woman in a way that would potentially be harmful to my marriage or personal relationship? Do I secretly save pictures of other people and view them in private?

Modern technology allows for instant downloads and communications of what we are doing at every minute of the day to anyone who will watch, listen, text, tweet,

It is kind of like living life on a soapbox blindly shouting out to the crowd to whoever will listen or look.

Social media has become the new mainstream addiction.

So many people go absolutely berzerk if they loose their online signal for even an instant or have to turn off the phone for any reason.

I see and hear people walking around stores talking out loud to people while shopping. My pet peeve is when someone cannot take two minutes to call someone back as they are checking out at the register and continue to talk during the process. ARGHH, it is so totally rude.

Modern technology has us all connected like the Borg on Star Trek. The Smart phone is a device used to keep us plugged into the coveted collective.

Some use it for unhealthy reasons, fighting those feelings of loneliness, others to gain needed personal attention. Whether it is a healthy attention or not, attention is attention regardless if it comes from someone married or not.

Set Healthy Perimeters for Facebook Relationships

It is up to each person of a relationship to equally protect the emotional bond of trust between them. A decision to set perimeters for personal friendships outside of the marriage is necessary to preserve the marriage relationship from the negative influences and statistics of the social networking community. How a person uses social networking and to what extent is very important in determining these healthy boundaries.

A good barometer for making decisions is to ask questions of yourself. Does one person in the relationship care more about sharing personal thoughts with other people on social media sites than in the marriage or other primary relationship?

Does either person talk more about or seem to care more about what is happening with someone outside of your relationship?

Is your spouse welcome to read your facebook messages/email or is the account you have kept secret?

Are the messages read in private and quickly exited when your spouse enters the room?

How these questions are answered determine if your relationship is under serious threat.

One or both of you can be getting emotional needs met through electronic communications with other people instead of each other. This is very dangerous ground.

Those seemingly innocent communications can become physical connections over time turning into phone texts, phone calls, incidental meetings over an innocent cup of coffee/drink at the local pub. When either person believes that

sharing time, personal feelings, and family information sacred for a spouse or significant other is ok to do; then sadly, divorce statistics report that your relationship is in great jeopardy.

Most affairs happen very innocently because a man and woman become friends and choose to share and enjoy personal details, stories, and experiences together. Anyway, isn't that what we call... dating?

What is Too Close?

Professional and close personal relationships of the opposite sex have been turning intimate for centuries.

The media fiasco this year was about two couples where all four people hung out as friends, kids played together, cookouts, vacations together...the works.

A man from one marriage and a woman from the other marriage decided to divorce their respective spouses and marry each other professing their undying love on national television. Eeeesh! What a cluster.

I felt so sorry for the other spouses and children of the families involved. These selfish and immature people were so wrapped up into satisfying their own personal desires.

There was obvious guilt displayed by these two emotional derelicts for the need for public approval. The total disregard for everyone else's feeling but their own... was indeed heart-wrenching at best.

Not to Judge: Just Stating the Facts

The subject of this hub is not to judge whether couples are happily married or not or if divorce is preventable for those who decide that a divorce is a better answer for them.

It is the writer's perspective that in the case of social networking sites and in lieu of the 20% contribution to divorce, online communication has a great need to develop healthy boundaries and protocols regarding the sharing of personal information online, especially when in a committed relationship.

I am sure some of you are at the opinion that each person has a right to chat, view, spy on, follow, tweet, Skype, link, IM, and whatever else is out there at the time of this writing. You are entitled to your opinion.

However, statistics do not lie. I personally feel that we are at a point of personal information trivia overload and we spend far too much time mass communicating

in place of good ole face to face relationship building activities.

So if in any doubt that an online communiqué has the potential to compromise the integrity of your marriage just ...DELETE IT. Or as my pastor says... kill it.

It is such a liberating little button. If you are finding this article too close to home, I hope these words have helped you to decide not to become part of those adverse marriage statistics. Just say no and delete it!

Links for your information

- Facebook divorce rate Facebook divorce rate - The divorce rate may be increasing because of Facebook and I don't think you will get vary many people to disagree with this claim. It
- Online: Facebook And Your Ex. It usually starts out totally innocent. You catch each other up on what has been going on in your lives since you saw each other last. However...