

# Is Facebook Fouling up Friendships?

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Facebook appears to be one of the new social phenomenons among the middle aged and college crowds. Within LDS culture it is a great way to connect, update, and share your family with others. Ironically, a woman in my previous ward was posting that folks should contact her about visiting teaching visits. So yes, it has and is impacting our culture in some unique ways. While MySpace is being inundated with teens wanting to add friends and unknowns to their 'friends list' and sexual predators are trolling the pages of junior high girls MySpaces, you have Facebook quickly growing and now taking a large portion of the 'social networking market share'. This mass of people are college age and middle-aged adults reaching out to network and otherwise connect with others. I was amazed when purchasing a smart phone and found that it had a preinstalled application on it for Facebook, already loaded and ready for use right out of the box. Truly, communication is changing as technology evolves and we find new ways to get messages through, but are we losing some humanness in the process? People are tweeting and texting and getting updates but it appears the depth and nature of the relationships is changing. Less visiting on the phone or bare minimum emailing, as individuals can simply peck out a quick 'status update' and let the world know what is going on in a few words. No need to call that relative hundreds of miles away, simply drop some digital photos in

your Facebook album and they'll be notified.

Elizabeth Bernstein recently wrote an article that hit home with me and I resonated with similar sentiments in her article on WallStreet Journals online site, [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com). Here is a small piece of her article that captures the essence of what she offered that I felt compelled to include in this article. "Like many people, I'm experiencing Facebook Fatigue. I'm tired of loved ones—you know who you are—who claim they are too busy to pick up the phone, or even write a decent email, yet spend hours on social-media sites, uploading photos of their children or parties, forwarding inane quizzes, posting quirky, sometimes nonsensical one-liners or tweeting their latest whereabouts. ("Anyone know a good restaurant in Berlin?")" She couldn't of said it better. My individuals that didn't really develop a core Self earlier in their development are using Facebook to support their underdeveloped ego and esteem. She was right on the mark in her article. I have captured a copy of the entire read should you want it from her, it is posted in my article archive [1] (see footnote below)

Is Facebook addicting? Absolutely! The rewards and pleasure of connect, value, friendship, and visual stimuli (photos of old time friends) do provide so much utility to individuals that they often find themselves updating their status multiple times a day to 'announce' their presence and thoughts to the world or staying up long hours into the night to see what old flames are doing online. CNN.com had a solid article on it as well, titled Five clues that you are addicted to Facebook [2], I recommend giving it a quick read. Here is the the key elements taken directly from the article, [1. You lose sleep over Facebook - "If you're staying up

late at night because you're on Facebook, and you're tired the next day, Facebook may be a compulsion for you," Lipari said. "You shouldn't be neglecting yourself because of Facebook."

2. You spend more than an hour a day on Facebook - Pile says it's hard to pinpoint exactly how much is too much time to be spending on social networking. "I can't imagine that anyone would need more than an hour a day on Facebook, and probably no one needs more than 30 minutes," she said.

3. You become obsessed with old loves - Reconnecting with old friends is one of the great attractions of Facebook, and there's nothing necessarily wrong with "friending" an old boyfriend or girlfriend. But Pile warns that it can get out of hand very quickly. "One of my clients met up with an old boyfriend on Facebook. They started spending hours and hours into the night talking to each other on Facebook. She made some really inappropriate comments about how unhappy she was in her marriage," Pile said. "Her cousin saw the comments and told her parents, and the parents told the husband, and now they're in the process of getting divorced."

4. You ignore work in favor of Facebook - "If you're not doing your job in order to sneak time on Facebook, you could have a real problem," Lipari said.

5. The thought of getting off Facebook leaves you in a cold sweat - Sarah Browne, who writes the Guru of New blog, gave up Facebook for Lent last month when she realized that she had a "mild" addiction to the site. She's come up with "Seven Signs You May Be Ready for a Social Media Detox."]

For example, I have spoken with a few individuals while authoring this article and one person in particular did sheepishly admit to me that she intentionally posts pictures on her Facebook for accolades and praise of others. She feels that she still does not measure up and wants to show the world, mainly friends, that she is valuable and she does have a decent life. We went on to process during the discussion that it is more about her proving to herself she is valuable and hiding behind putting it up to 'simply' share with others. Now, don't mistake, not all Facebookers are emotionally underdeveloped but this great networking tool can be a haven for such persons. The profile photo is one such indicator. Have you noticed the men and women that have near-glamour shots for their profile image? We are not talking about an image with their spouse or one of them with their kids but a photo of them in a 'hey-look-at-me-i-am-so-beautiful' kind of photos. If you are a social networker I caution you to be aware of your networking time and don't develop and foster a sense of core-Self based on trite comments online or simpleton surveys people create. Instead, use social networking to build your relationships and catch up and stay connected; remember to ensure you are not shying away from what is key, physical real time human relationships.

I was recommended a solid reading on the subject about what the Brethren are saying on the topic. Elder David A. Bednar gave a talk titled, "Things as They Really Are" at a CES Fireside: May 03, 2009. [2] I highly recommend you read the article as it discusses pointedly the realities and dangers of social networking if caution and judicious decisions are not made with such activity.

Facebookers, use at your own risk. While Facebook is not inherently damaging or unhealthy on the surface, it does in fact

foster a sense of pseudo-reality a 'hey I've got 324 friends, we don't talk on the phone but we are friends' that really are more like online peers that share in some mutual benefit from the service. The tools are great, the photos are fun, yet the quizzes and clubs and pathetic surveys don't appear to foster depth and connection but a false sense of connection and belonging; a sense that after 'drinking' from the Facebook pipe you leave thirsty for genuine relationship and human connect.

[1]  
<http://www.ldsphonecounseling.com/articles/facebook.pdf>.

[2]  
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/04/23/ep.facebook.addict/index.html>

[3]  
<http://www.byub.org/talks/talk.aspx?ID=3543>

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