



F O C U S



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Excessive Facebook Use Can Damage Relationships

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Facebook and other social networking web sites have revolutionized the way people create and maintain relationships. However, new research shows that Facebook use could actually be damaging to users' romantic relationships. Russell Clayton a doctoral student in the University of Missouri School of Journalism, found that individuals who use Facebook excessively are far more likely to experience Facebook-related conflict with their romantic partners, which then may cause negative relationship outcomes including emotional and physical cheating, breakup and divorce. In their study, Clayton along with Alexander Nagurney, an instructor at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, and Jessica R. Smith, a doctoral student at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, surveyed Facebook users ages 18 to 82 years old. Participants were asked to describe how often they used Facebook and how much, if any, conflict arose between their current or former partners as a result of Facebook use. The researcher found that high levels of Facebook use among couples

significantly predicted Facebook-related conflict, which then significantly predicted negative relationship outcomes such as cheating, breakup, and divorce. "Previous research has shown that the more a person in a romantic relationship uses Facebook, the more likely they are to monitor their partner's Facebook activity more stringently, which can lead to feelings of jealousy," Clayton said. "Facebook-induced jealousy may lead to arguments concerning past partners. Also, our study found that excessive Facebook users are more likely to connect or reconnect with other Facebook users, including previous partners, which may lead to emotional and physical cheating." Clayton says this trend was particularly apparent in newer relationships. "These findings held only for couples who had been in relationships of three years or less," Clayton said. "This suggests that Facebook may be a threat to relationships that are not fully matured. On the other hand, participants who have been in relationships for longer than three years may not use Face-

book as often, or may have more matured relationships, and therefore Facebook use may not be a threat or concern." in order to prevent such conflict from arising, Clayton recommends couples, especially those who have not been together for very long, to limit their own personal Facebook use. "Although Facebook is a great way to learn about someone, excessive Facebook use may be damaging to newer romantic relationships," Clayton said. "Cutting back to moderate, healthy, levels of Facebook usage could help reduce conflict, particularly for newer couples who are still learning about each other."

Source: ScienceDaily
[www.sciencedaily.com/
 release/2013/06](http://www.sciencedaily.com/release/2013/06).

This study is forthcoming in the *Journal of Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*.

*Wishing you
 and your
 family
 peace,
 health, and
 happiness
 during the
 Holidays
 and in the
 New Year!*

Help Kids Avoid a Sibling's Shadow

“Take comfort knowing that sibling relationships are fluid and bound to change over time”

As challenging as sibling rivalry can be for families, it is normal and bound to exist in any household with more than one child. The tenor of rivalry between brothers and sisters—jealousy, competition and perceived favoritism—often depends on the children's temperaments, ages and developmental needs. Clashes can result from children's natural competitive drive to be the best at everything and win parents' favor. “The tensions of sibling competition are not likely to vanish from your household,” says Luis Amunategui, PhD, a child psychologist at University Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital. “Still, you can use parenting strategies that help our children respond more positively to such conflict.”

Steps to take:

“How well the following approaches work to ease competition among your children will depend on their ages, genders, birth order, and relative success at school, sports, work, or social skills,” says Dr. Amunategui. With that in mind, Dr. Amunategui recommends these tactics:

- **Avoid comparing your children's individual talents and achievements.**

A perception that you view one with more favor or pride than the other can feed a feeling of inferiority and competition in the child who may not be excelling.

- **Treat each of your children as an individual with personal strengths and weaknesses.**

Avoid labeling one child “the smart one” or “the star athlete.” this can make the less successful child feel even more insecure, worsening the rivalry.

- **Encourage and praise each of your children for each of his or her accomplishments.**
- **Organize your day to allow you to spend some time alone with each of your children.**

Doing so will help them feel special and successful.

- **Encourage cooperation rather than competition.**

For example, instead of having your children race one another

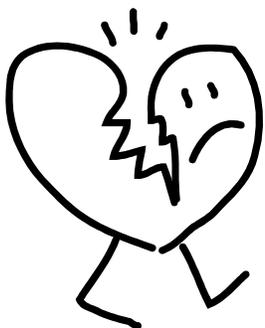
to complete a task, time them together against the clock.

- **Ensure that each of your children has time and space to play with his or her toys and friends without a sibling tagging along.**
- **Foster appreciation among siblings by asking them what they like about one another.**
- **When resolving conflicts between your children,**

Avoid taking sides or backing one child over the other. Instead, help them strive for win-win solutions, where each child gains something he or she wants.

“Take comfort knowing that sibling relationships are fluid and bound to change over time,” says Dr. Amunategui. “Helping your children respect one another and easing competition based on success or lack thereof can teach brothers and sisters to treasure one another as friends instead of rivals.”

Source: University Hospitals of Cleveland Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital



Middle School Dating Consequences?

A recent study, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and published in the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, shed light on the pitfalls of middle school dating.

Researchers gathered data over 7 years for 624 participants starting at 6th grade and going through 12th grade. When compared to classmates who were single, findings indicated that students who dated in middle school: (1) had sig-

nificantly poorer study skills, (2) were four times more likely not to complete high school; and (3) reported double the rate of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use.

Good Vibrations

In his writings, workshops and books like *Just One Thing: Developing a Buddha Brain One Simple Practice at a Time*, Rick Hanson, PhD, provides tools to help reduce stress, fear and sadness and promote well-being. This exercise focuses on a concept called “taking in the good.”

Settle your body. Sit or lie comfortably, with your eyes open or closed. Take a moment to simply notice your body. Next, get a feeling for your breath. Notice your body breathing fine on its own. If you feel uncomfortable, put your attention on your feet or something in your surroundings.

Summon a positive experience. Recall or imagine a place you like being... reading

in bed, at the beach, in a mountain meadow, or anywhere you like. Or think of someone you like being with... a friend, family member, child, a teacher, or anyone you like. You can also try recalling or imagining doing something you enjoy... eating something delicious, smelling something you find pleasant such as oranges or wood smoke engaging in some satisfying activity such as cooking or playing a sport, or anything you like. Try to open up to the positive feelings that come with being in that place (or with that person or from that activity), such as a comfort, contentment, belonging, or safety.

Take in the good: Now sense the positive feelings sinking

into you, perhaps like warm sun on your face or golden light settling into your core. You might imagine a treasure going into your heart., or sensations settling into your back or any other part of your body. Try to feel the positive feelings becoming a part of you, woven into the fabric of yourself.

Be kind to yourself: You may notice some resistance to feeling good, perhaps expressed simply as a tightening in your body. Becoming more aware of that resistance is part of the exercise. But as much as you can, try to be on your own side and let the good feelings grow inside your mind, heart, and body.



Kind Hearts Are Healthier

Doing good for others warms the heart—and may protect the heart, too. Psychologists at the University of British Columbia asked 106 high school students to take part in a volunteering study. Half of the students spent an hour every week for 10 weeks helping elementary students with homework, sports or club activities. The other half of the students did not participate in volunteer work.

Using questionnaires and a medical examination both before and after the 10-week period, the researchers found that students who volunteered

had lower levels of cholesterol and inflammation after the study. Those who did not volunteer showed no such improvements.

The health benefits did not correlate to a specific volunteer activity—such as sedentary homework help versus athletics—nor did they link to improvements in self-esteem. But the researchers did find that students who reported the greatest increases in empathetic and altruistic behavior after their volunteering experience also exhibited the most pronounced improvements in heart health. Although more

research is needed to untangle how health benefits and altruistic behavior are intertwined, psychologist and study author Hannah Schreier hypothesizes that their findings may reflect a “spillover” effect. “Keeping others motivated could improve your own motivation for healthy behaviors,” Schreier says.

Source: Daisy Yuhas for *Scientific American Mind*. September/October 2013

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Staying Sober Under Pressure

About one third of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) members are women, and although the organization helps both sexes recover from addiction a new study suggests that it does so in different ways—in part because male and female alcoholics drink for different reasons. John Kelly, a psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital, and his colleague Bettina Hoepfner analyzed data collected over the course of 15 months from 1,726 AA mem-

bers about their social networks, their drinking habits and how confident they were in their ability to stay sober in various situations. They found that male alcoholics typically relapse when they are in social drinking situations and that AA largely helps them stay sober by inducing them to spend time with nondrinking friends and by helping them cope when they do find themselves with friends who are drinking.

Female alcoholics, on the other hand, are more likely to drink when feeling down, yet AA may not be as effective in helping them handle such emotion-driven cravings. “The findings really underscore gender-based differences in relapse risk,” Kelly says. If AA addressed these needs in its programs, he adds, it could become even more effective.

Source:
Mind.ScientificAmerican.com
July/August 2013

