

Social Networking Sites Can Strain Marriages

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Woman Says Facebook Connected Husband With Old Flame

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NASHUA, N.H. -- The social networking site Facebook has done wonders to connect old friends, but a local marriage counselor said it's also becoming a source of trouble for more and more couples.

The old connections restored through Facebook can cause jealousy, insecurity and, in some cases, affairs.

One New Hampshire woman who asked to remain anonymous said Facebook helped connect her husband with an old flame, which sent her marriage into a tailspin.

"I saw him spending a lot of time on Facebook, and I would look at his wall once in a while," she said. "It was really cutesy things he was posting."

But the woman said the site helped contribute a devastating blow to her 12-year marriage.

"Two weeks ago, he said he is leaving me," she said. "I asked him if it was through Facebook, and he said, well, Facebook started it, so I logged into his account."

She said she and her husband share passwords, and she was able to find out her husband had been corresponding with an ex-girlfriend for months.

"It was someone he knew when he was 16," she said.

The story of Facebook leading to jealousy and affairs is one Nashua's Dr. Carl Hindy said he hears more and more often.

"Rarely a day goes by that Facebook doesn't come up as an issue in my marriage counseling," Hindy said.



He said that as couples struggle with the stress of life, work and children, communication can break down, and Facebook can become an escape.

"You start to look forward to it," he said. "It becomes winding down after work."

Unlike the days before Facebook, when old flames could be tough to track down, a click of the mouse on a high school or college alumni group can mean instant temptation.

"All of a sudden, the flame from 10, 15, even 30, 40 years ago, starts reviving fantasies about how wonderful it was when you were 15, 18, 22 years old," said divorce attorney Amy Wolfson.

Wolfson said that for her clients, the social networking site has led to more than just old friends chatting.

"I've had people who've actually gotten together, met elsewhere and consummated a relationship," she said.

So, are these Facebook connections the cause or the result of a struggling relationship? Hindy said it depends.

He said he has some advice to keep the relationships in check. First, it's a good idea to let your partner know who you're friending.

"If you're not sharing it with your partner because you know he or she is going to be upset by it, well, that should be a red flag you ought to think twice about doing it," he said.

Hindy also suggested that discussing which friends or groups are in or out of bounds. Don't be afraid to say no to a friend request or even unfriend someone. There are ways to break off a Facebook friend connection without the other person even knowing.

He said it's also a good idea to discuss with your partner what information about you or your family is OK to discuss or post. And always, though it may be tough, communicate with your partner before it's too late.

"We had a strong marriage, and I think he would have tried to work things out instead of going to the first woman who he hooks up with on Facebook and take off," said the anonymous woman.





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Experts said it's important to look at the reality of the situation. The sense of familiarity you find with an old flame may just be an illusion since it has been years since you were connected.

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