



Is facebook ruining *your* relationship?

By | Kristine Boujaoude

Interview with **Dr. Eli Karam Ph.D., LMFT**
Marriage and Relationship Therapist

Facebook, tweeting, texting... technology has taken our lives and our relationships on a roller coaster ride. Remember the simple days when a simple phone call would do the trick to ask someone out on Saturday night? Ok, maybe you're not that old my fellow reader...but seriously, how did relationships get so complicated? Technology is meant to make our lives easier, isn't it? So what happens when social media outlets, such as Facebook, start to create some waves in our serious relationships? Does that mean it's time to log off? You can remain logged on if you follow some great tips that will make you and your partner happy in cyberspace.

Dr. Eli Karam specializes in couple and family therapy and maintains a private practice in Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A. With over 10 years of experience as a mental health professional, and a graduate of both The Family Institute at Northwestern University and Purdue University's Department of Child Development and Family Studies, Eli is currently the President Elect for the Kentucky Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and an Assistant Professor in the Family Therapy Program in the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville.

Relationships and technology is a popular topic nowadays and many have questioned Dr. Karam about the dos and don'ts of Facebooking. He offers FIT'N STYLE some simple and easy advice in regards to Facebook and your significant other. If you overdo it online...your relationship can be in jeopardy.

You can learn a lot about a person by looking at their Facebook profile. Is this necessarily a good thing or a bad thing?

Social media, such as Facebook, can be a great tool if you know how to use it and follow certain guidelines. While indeed you can learn a lot about a person by looking at their profile and their photos, there are also many pitfalls that can have an effect on a serious relationship. If you are in a committed relationship (marriage or otherwise), there are some dos and don'ts that one should be aware of.

What is your first tip?

First off, you must be open and transparent with your partner about Facebook friends, chats, and messages. Don't do anything on Facebook that you would want to keep or hide from your partner. Do not "friend" someone you don't want your partner to know about...and don't get defensive when they ask, "Who is that?" on your Facebook page.

Would you not agree that people simply don't talk face to face enough anymore? It seems to be all about messaging back and forth nowadays. What is your advice about this?

This refers to my second tip which is... don't post when you should just talk. Posting is a nice way to share words of encouragement and give brief news updates about your life, but not necessarily the appropriate venue to discuss the "nuts and bolts" of your relationship. We have all witnessed wall battles between people; they may be entertaining for others but you shouldn't be making a public display of your personal matters. Private conversations should be kept just that: PRIVATE. Instead, pick up the phone, or better yet, talk face to face!

What advice can you offer in regards to photo posting?

This is a very important aspect to discuss and refers to my third tip...be careful about the photos you post. Photo posting can be very damaging from your career to your relationship. Remember, it is your digital footprint and it will not disappear; it will be here to stay. What may seem like a good idea at the time may not be a good idea at all! Keep photos tasteful. Others learn a lot about you by looking at your posted photos. If you are in a committed relationship, and your photo posting appears otherwise, it can be offensive. In addition, when posting a questionable photo of you and your significant other, always obtain your partner's consent beforehand.

What about those people who love to change their relationship status on a regular basis?

Changing your relationship status often or on a whim reveals a lot about your personality and character. It paints a picture about you that may not be too positive. My fourth tip for everyone is to avoid revealing TMI...that is... too much information!

What is your final tip for our FIT'N STYLE readers?

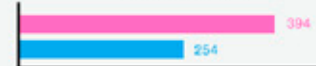
Finally, my last tip is to know when to log off. Life and relationships are all about balance. You don't want to be spending three hours a night on Facebook. You have limited time with your partner during the week; you don't want to be logging on when you can be spending quality time together. Facebook is a great social tool...but don't overdo it.

Men vs Women on Facebook

Average men and women both have around 130 friends.

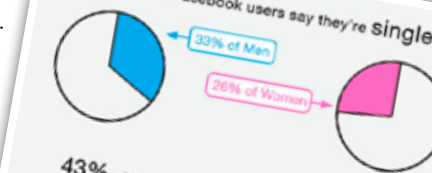


But women have 55% more posts on their walls than men.

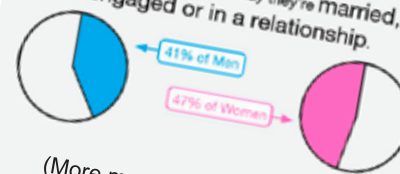


(Women get more comments and messages)

31% of Facebook users say they're single.

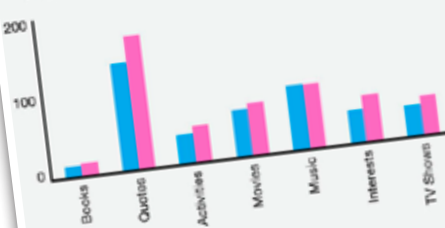


43% of Facebook users say they're married, engaged or in a relationship.



(More men say they're single)

Amount of Profile Information Provided



(Women describe themselves more)