



Psychology Today



“It is possible to reduce worry and rumination by identifying and removing the cues to rumination.”

Edward R. Watkins, Ph.D.



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Contemplating Divorce

Whether you should stay or go
by Susan Pease Gadoua



Susan Pease Gadoua, L.C.S.W., is the author of *Contemplating Divorce* and *Stronger Day by Day*. [more...](#)

Break Ups Are Harder AND Easier Today Thanks to Social Media

Do we have access to too much information or is the internet keeping us safer?
Published on July 28, 2013 by Susan Pease Gadoua, L.C.S.W. in *Contemplating Divorce*

How It's Harder To Break Up

With the proliferation of photos and social media postings we now enjoy every day to memorialize even the most insignificant moments, breaking up is harder to do than even 15 short years ago.

Today, many of us bring our smart phones with us wherever we go, so we no longer have to remember to bring along a camera to special events and we have cameras at the ready for spontaneous “must have” photos. As a result, people have hundreds of photos of all kinds of occasions (last I looked, I had over 400 on my phone alone and many more on the external drive I had to purchase to house the ones taking up too much space on my hard drive).

It's hard to erase memories. When a relationship ends, many people are faced with the decision to permanently delete any and all reminders of the union that once was, or archive them. This is a serious emotional conundrum. In fact, it's a problem that has become so prevalent, it's actually been the subject of a recent study.

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In their paper, "[Design for Forgetting: Disposing of Digital Possessions After a Breakup](#)," UCSC professor, Steve Whittaker, and co-author Corina Sas, of Lancaster University, examine the challenges of digital possessions and their disposal after a romantic breakup. Whittaker and Sas found that, because people are living more of their lives on line, there is an endless stream of data to capture moments in time: photos, music, videos, emails, texts, tweets and more. These mementos become an extension of the self and there is a tremendous sense of attachment to these items.

For some, hanging on to the memorabilia can be a way to hang on to the relationship. It gives a false sense of connection that can actually prolong the pain. Still, it's hard to let go. It's so final.

And then there's the dilemma of whether to defriend someone you're no longer in relationship with. It's usually a pretty easy decision: if it's a bad breakup, hack that pathetic-excuse-of-an-ex right out of your friend library; if it's a good split, no need to let go completely. But, the decision is sometimes a tough one. If you're not sure how you feel about the breakup, you may want to hang on to the ex and just hide their profile for a while until you sort out your feelings.

As a professional who works with divorcing people every day, I hear story after story about how people hurt one another after the marriage is over. Facebook has — hands down — shown up as the greatest source of divorce-related social media wounding to my clients (Twitter is a very close second).

Painful offenses may include the threat of outing an ex (“If you don't give me more custody, I'll publicize your dirty little secret.”). These blackmailing tactics can be very effective. But there are those who really do post the secrets or the sordid details of the marriage that led to the [divorce](#)

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([addiction](#), [infidelity](#), [sexual identity](#), criminal behavior) for friends, relatives, neighbors and bosses to see. While the one posting the dirt is likely hoping to humiliate or bring harm to the ex, the outed secret can be permanently detrimental. In one case I know of, the information leak led to the ex being disbarred and, as a result, she lost her livelihood.

There are other ways social media can make a relationship dissolution agonizing. Anyone who's been broken up with knows it takes much longer to recover for you than for the dumper. As the dumpee, the temptation to hang on and see what they're up to may lead you to some level of "cyber-stalking" (hacking into their emails or bank accounts to see what they're up to or who they are communicating with and following them on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc). It can feel like salt on a wound if you discover that this person who once professed their love to you has moved on so quickly, perhaps even with another partner.

Some people are purposely insensitive to the hurt feelings of others (thus the title of this article, "In Your Facebook). The husband-stealer of a woman I know actually wrote a long essay about her illicit affair and posted it for the world to see. The betrayed woman's daughter was the one who happened upon her Facebook writings and this is a glimpse of what she read about the affair her father had:

"The first kiss was amazing! Knowing it wasn't supposed to be happening made the connection steamy hot — even thrilling! I longed for his touch on my thigh and when his hand connected with me, I lost all control..."

"If his 16-year-old daughter hadn't read all of our emails, we'd still be enjoying our clandestine affair! She had to open her big mouth and tell his wife who then told my husband. Now the cat is out of the bag. But perhaps it's all for the best. We were meant to be together and we plan to spend the rest of our days together. We are in love."

This posting begs the question, "**Who is this written for???**" Aren't affairs private for a reason? Most of us don't want to be forced into voyeurism, but the ex-wife and children being let in on the sordid details of an affair that broke up their family up and shattered their mother is cruel and insensitive no matter how you look at it.

The only solace this woman who was cheated on has is the knowledge that one day, when her husband and this mistress are no longer in the romantic bubble, and she has a fabulous new guy in her life, she can post on her Facebook page with a big smile on her face, "I've never been happier in my life!"

How It's Easier To Break Up

Ending a relationship and willingly jumping into the pit of [loneliness](#) and singledom is not an easy choice to make. It's so hard, in fact, that many people either stay and suffer in unhappy or even unhealthy relationships, or they line up a new lover and then make their break.

The internet has made meeting a potential new mate as far away as a click of a mouse. And there any number of websites to accommodate people trying to meet this way, ranging [Match.com](#) to [AshleyMadison.com](#) (a professional on-line escort service whose motto is, "Life is short. Have an affair").

Of the Social Media outlets, [Facebook](#) ranks number one as the place where unhappy spouses go to forget about their miserable marriages and [fantasize](#) about a better life. Today, with well over a billion users, that's a lot of browsing!

Insecure spouses keeping an eye on who their mate is communicating with on-line undoubtedly curse the day Facebook (originally called, [Facemash](#)) was born when they notice that old flames are included in the friend line-up. "Facebook-induced jealousy" has often led to arguments concerning these past partners.



by Alex Korb, Ph.D.

4 [The Rare Truth about "Tight" and "Loose" Women](#)

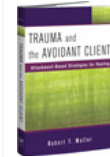
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The key to satisfaction lies within risk

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And for good reason: Not only were there more conflicts but, according to [one study](#), Facebook users who connected or reconnected with other Facebook users, were more likely to resort to emotional and physical cheating.

In December of 2009, Facebook was blamed for causing the break up of nearly [1 in 5 marriages in the U.K.](#)

The internet, with its immediacy, sense of anonymity as well as access to the underworld has increased the temptation to stray physically and have [E-motional affairs](#). This makes it easier to leave a relationship that is dying or one that has died long ago. Yet, for some, it also makes leaving a newer relationship a more viable option.

[One woman](#) watched to see when her new husband was going to change his Facebook status to "married." He didn't. Two months later, she asked for divorce stating she couldn't trust him. Were it not for the internet, it might have taken her years — or even decades — to figure out he was a no-good-cheat.

It might be a good idea to plug your partner's name into a search engine to see what you find. You might be surprised (pleasantly and not so pleasantly) by your discovery and be aware that it may mean the end of your relationship.



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