

Facebook or Fakebook?

It can be fun scrolling down your Facebook page to read the status updates, vacation pictures and posts of your Facebook “friends”. But it can also make you feel a bit depressed – especially if you feel your life is in



a bit of rut. Viewing pictures of a friend’s second exotic vacation this year, when your budget doesn’t allow for a trip anywhere, can spark feelings of resentment. Reading happy comments about other people’s fabulous spouses or boyfriends/girlfriends can sting if your own relationship is rocky – or over. Posts about fulfilling jobs, perfect kids, grand new houses and fabulous social lives can make you feel inadequate, unloved and a complete failure... which you’re not. But when you compare your life to those of Facebook friends, it’s easy to feel that way.

Facebook is NOT reality

Social networking sites, like Facebook, allow people to be in control of how the world sees them. And most people want to project a certain image of themselves – so they tend to post only the good news or upbeat or witty comments and edit out the not-so-great things. For example, someone may proudly post pictures of their trip to Thailand but won’t divulge that it cost a fortune and they’re now in considerable debt. People are not likely to let the world know that their marriage is experiencing issues or their children are having problems. It’s not what we see on Facebook, it’s what we don’t see – the everyday challenges we *all* face at work and at home. There’s a reason why Facebook is often referred to as “Fakebook”.

Keep Facebook fun

All social media platforms are about communication. They enable us to stay in touch with far flung family and friends, make new connections and even find people we thought we had lost forever. We can engage in conversations across borders and time zones. Facebook specifically can bring us a lot of happiness when we “share, not compare”.

Try these tips to make Facebook fun again:

- **Spend more time on your own page.**
Perusing your own profile (reading old status updates and flipping through photo albums) can raise self-esteem, because it can rekindle positive memories and experiences.
- **Practice gratitude.**
Instead of analyzing others, think of all the things in your life you are grateful for and would not trade with anyone else – your child, your partner, your health, or even your best friend. Many people find it helpful to keep a gratitude journal in which they write down a certain number of things they are thankful for every day. If you keep these positive memories written down each day, you will be able to look back and smile at some of the happy moments you may have forgotten by the time Sunday night rolls around.
- **Make plans with friends.**
Instead of reading about other people’s lives online, call a friend or family member and make plans to have dinner, see a movie or just go for a walk. If people are not calling you, call them. Those with busy social lives are usually the ones who do the calling and planning.
- **Accept what you can’t change and change what you can’t accept.**
Comparing yourself to others online can actually be a great motivator to change what you don’t like about your life. For the things you can’t change, try to accept and embrace them.
- **Seek help.**
If you think you need some support to improve your self-esteem or overcome a challenge you feel is holding you back, call your Employee and Family Assistance Program and ask to speak to a counsellor.

“The only person you should be comparing yourself to is the person you were yesterday.”