

How Social Media Can Impact Relationships

by: Alexandra Miller

IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND **HOOKUP CULTURE**, NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS IS DIFFICULT TO SAY THE LEAST, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A COMMITTED ONE.

One of the things that attracted me the most to my current partner at the beginning of our relationship was when he asked me if I believe in monogamy. My answer, of course, was yes. His question was the tip of the iceberg to something that our generation has had to cope with that no other generation has before. With 24/7 access to Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc. along with a plethora of dating/hookup apps, it's not difficult to meet new people, develop relationships, or just hook up with someone for a night. An article on redbookmag.com poses a thought-provoking question: "Experts say apps like Tinder and Hinge make it easier than ever to meet your match – but it's also the easiest time ever to cheat. What does a married couple do?" – or couples in long term relationships.

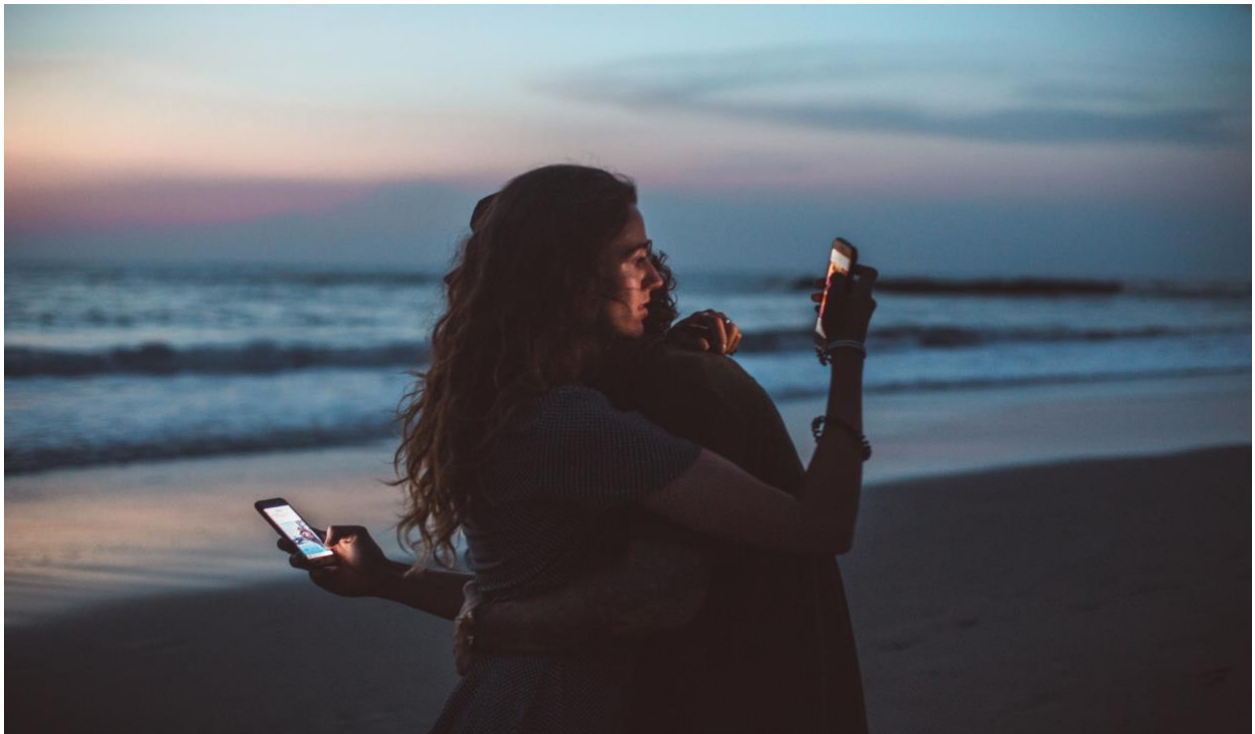
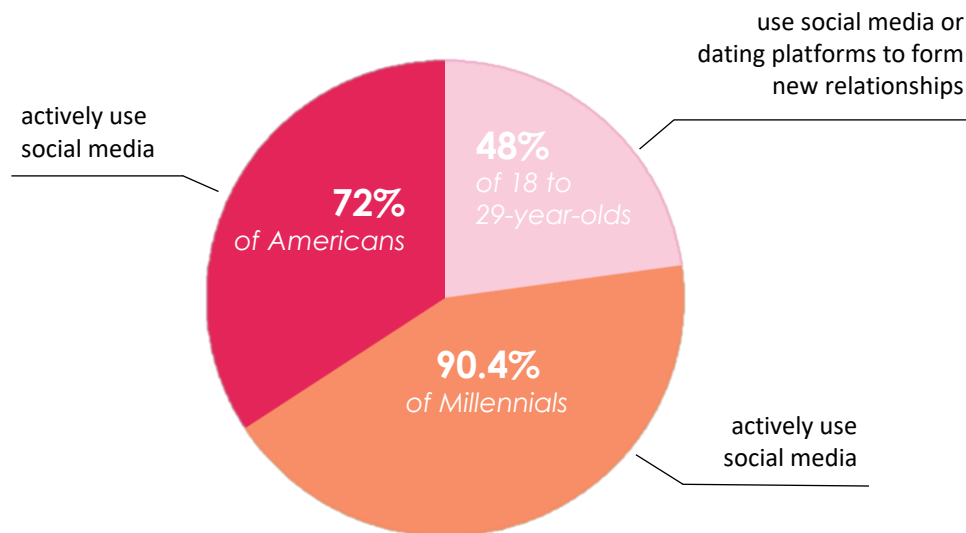


Photo by **ROMAN ODINTSOV** from **Pexels**

ACCORDING TO A 2019 STUDY, **90.4% OF MILLENNIALS AND 72% OF AMERICANS** ARE ACTIVELY USING SOCIAL MEDIA, AND A 2020 REPORT BY PEW RESEARCH CENTER REVEALED THAT **48% OF 18- TO 29-YEAR-OLDS** ARE USING SOCIAL OR DATING PLATFORMS TO FORM NEW RELATIONSHIPS.

Chart by **Alexandra Miller** on **Adobe Spark**; Statistics from **Oberlo & Pew Research Center**



Fostering a new relationship is hard enough as it is without the influence of external factors, like social media and other online dating/hookup apps. Don't even get me started on internet pornography – which, by the way, has been proven to **double the chances of divorce, increase infidelity rates by 300%**, and was the culprit of **56% of divorce cases in 2004**.

I feel ridiculous if I become hurt by my partner's actions [or lack there-of] on social media/online because I know it shouldn't be a big deal – but it is. Most of us can probably agree that when in a new relationship, it takes time before we feel comfortable enough to be our "real" selves. When my boyfriend and I started dating, it took me an ENTIRE YEAR before I could use a bathroom in *my own home* if he was there... Crazy, right?! No wonder I didn't speak up about 'petty' social media issues.

“MOST OF US ARE UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT THESE TYPES OF INTERACTIONS BECAUSE WE WORRY THAT SOCIAL MEDIA IS TOO FRIVOLOUS TO ARGUE OVER, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT [SOCIAL MEDIA] BRINGS UP REAL FEELINGS, AND THOSE FEELINGS DO MATTER.” [HTTPS://NYTI.MS/3GUXID9](https://nyti.ms/3GUXID9)

Discussing a partner's online behavior in a relationship – whether it's new or long-term – is a topic most people try to avoid as it can lead to misunderstandings, embarrassment, or other unwanted outcomes. You don't want your partner to think you have been 'stalking' their social media activity, but you also don't want to ignore their behavior and dismiss your feelings. After my boyfriend and I had been together for some time, I eventually told him how I felt about some of his social media/online habits [lucky for me, he isn't an avid social media user]. To my surprise, he was happy to talk about it and addressed some of the issues he had with my [active] habits as well. We were able to have a productive conversation and come to an agreement about what is/isn't acceptable online behavior in our relationship.

A STUDY PUBLISHED IN **COMPUTERS IN HUMAN BEHAVIOR**, PREDICTS THAT COUPLES WHO DON'T USE SOCIAL MEDIA ARE OVER 10% HAPPIER IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP/MARRIAGE THAN THOSE WHO DO.

Some use social media for networking, as a personal platform, or to form friendships/relationships. So how can we know where boundaries should be set if individuals choose to use social media during their relationship?

Dr. Karen Ruskin, a psychotherapist and relationship expert, explains that partners are likely to feel controlled or devalued when asked by their significant other or spouse not to post [about them] online. On the other hand, Attorney Ann-Margaret Carrozza tells ABC of the “humiliation and pain” partners endure when their S.O. posts unflattering photos of them or post “revenge porn” of their partner.

Let's say you're in a new relationship and you and your new partner haven't talked for a few days, but you notice he has been active on Facebook. Later, you see he liked your friend's picture on Instagram. Before you know it, you're worrying if you're the only one he's talking to or feeling jealous/insecure/hurt that he liked her picture before texting you [the one he slept with two nights ago]. It sounds ludicrous to worry about something so insignificant, but if you don't know where you stand with your partner, the lines become blurred – there are problems even when you do know where you stand.

AFTER ALL, A **2012 SURVEY** REVEALED THAT SOCIAL MEDIA [FACEBOOK] WAS CITED IN A THIRD OF U.K. DIVORCE/SEPARATION CASES.

This is probably why an increasing number of couples are starting to incorporate social media clauses in their prenuptial agreements, also known as the “social media prenup,” which is essentially a contract stating what they can/can’t post online. It’s laughable to think people are actually creating social media prenups, but surprisingly, there are a growing number of attorneys across the U.S. who specialize in social media prenups and represent clients in social-media-related divorce cases.

I’ve always heard “if you wouldn’t do in person, don’t do it in online,” and I totally agree. To add to that, I think if you wouldn’t do it online, you shouldn’t do it in person. My boyfriend and I have definitely had our fair share of inconveniences and setbacks. There was a time when NEITHER of us felt comfortable with the other posting about our relationship on social media. It eventually caused more harm than good. Social media emphasizes creating this fake image of yourself and only showing people what they want to see – but all it’s doing is setting unrealistic expectations for people and couples. You want people to think your relationship is rainbows and butterflies, but realistically, every relationship has its challenges. Sure, the counterargument that social media/online behavior is not the “root cause” of these intermarital or relational issues has solid reasoning. We should be able to trust that our partner wouldn’t engage in dishonest behavior, hide messages, friend their ex, or whatever you might deem as “inappropriate.” I don’t think we should have to “monitor” online behavior, but even if you fully trust your partner, you are allowed to express your concerns about their social media activity.

It’s a proven fact that social media is easier to access now than ever, which is why it’s healthy to set boundaries and address issues concerning online/social media use with your partner – whether you’re in a long-term relationship, married, or just started dating.

Resources:

<https://bit.ly/2Vqaf4f>

<https://nyti.ms/300aYuj>

<https://bit.ly/2Dz8Zpt>

<https://cnb.cx/2W9ueo1>

<https://bit.ly/2CtUC5m>

<https://bit.ly/3fwvuJu>

<https://pewrsr.ch/38NAsiB>

<https://bit.ly/38KoC95>

<https://bit.ly/3jOIESH>

<https://bit.ly/3iSgKXv>

<https://bit.ly/2OgiOyK>

<https://bit.ly/32f4WZs>

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<https://bit.ly/324MFOF>

<https://bit.ly/3fIlZwV>

<https://bit.ly/3ekN2ai>

<https://bit.ly/2WddqwG>

<https://bit.ly/2W9zNTL>

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