



ONLINE PERILS

By Laura S. Blackman, Esq.

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn,

Tinder, Jswipe, and the list goes on and on.....Social networks have popped up all over the Web. Social media is a daily routine in our society and the interaction is dramatically changing the way people communicate with one another. "Flirting" in texts, tweets, Facebook and the numerous online dating sites have become a huge disruption in relationships and marriages. Some would agree, as do I, these seemingly harmless interactions via text messages or on social media when in a committed relationship or marriage is emotional cheating. If your online or digital behavior is such that your partner would be "uncomfortable" with, then perhaps you should think twice before pressing the "SEND" button. Has social media and smart phones helped or hurt your relationships or marriage? I can tell you that this issue is prevalent in most of my cases and more often than not, may lead to a messy divorce.

Social media is such a huge part of our society that many couples are now including a social media clause in their Prenuptial Agreements. A Prenuptial Agreement is an agreement that is entered into before the marriage and is effective on the date of the marriage. While the Agreement addresses how the parties shall treat their existing and future property, it can also address the parties expectations during the marriage, separation and post dissolution. Why is this clause important? Because it addresses how and what in-

formation could be posted and shared in the social media world we live in..... negative, insulting, embarrassing photos, images or other contemptuous content would not be permitted and could have dire consequences on the violating party. Many clients now end up in my office after online cheating has surfaced and reconnections from prior relationships are made.

So what is a person who wants to continue to enjoy connecting in a healthy and functional way in the social media world to do, if they are in a committed relationship or marriage? Are you in a love/hate relationship with Facebook? As much as one claims to hate Facebook, the fear of missing out is just stronger. Does this social media platform make you feel good when you get a "LIKE" on your "POST"? If you are part of the social media world and wish to not unravel your relationship or marriage perhaps you should consider picking up the phone before you text, as often the texts are taken out of context, and ask yourself if your online behavior may be upsetting to your partner (while having a huge impact on your life) and perhaps you will think twice before hitting the "SEND" button.

The hacking of the Ashley Madison website, wherein data was stolen from the infidelity dating site, has also created a surge of new clients filing for divorce. Suspicious spouses scour all social media sites their spouses may have used which may lead to breakdowns in marriages or to some, very difficult conversations. Attorneys now

regularly obtain incriminating information online. Remember, anything shared digitally throughout the social media world we now live in will follow you....forever. **stb**

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