



The Danger of Using Social Media

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Do you think you would ever walk into a bar, stand on a table and start shouting out all the details of your life?

What about walking up to a complete stranger in the mall and asking if that person would like to be your friend or build a relationship with you?

Well, those who use the internet and social media often do things online that they would never do face-to-face or in public.

The problem is that when you post things that you think are only for the eyes of friends or family, you forget that there are thousands of other people who can also view them. Some might be innocent bystanders whereas others might not have noble intentions. And don't try to tell me that you have an antivirus program to protect you. If there are people smart enough to hack into the Pentagon's computer, there are people who can get around your program.

This week, researchers have warned that no matter how secure your site is, those who play *FarmVille* can easily become victims of identity theft. The terms of agreement that you likely didn't read when you made a *Facebook* account state that all information and photos you post become the property of *Facebook*. That means that you might see your photo plastered on an advertisement for Viagra or in another place that you would not otherwise approve in the future.

Teenagers who grew up with the internet tend to use it as their major form of communication but they don't seem to have gotten the message that what you put on the internet stays there forever - even if you think you have erased it. Imagine how embarrassed one might be in the years to come if or when others access information you wrote as a youth just when you are applying for an important job, running for a political office or trying to be an example for others to follow.

And the problems are not just occurring because of the actions of children and teenagers. Adults who think it is cute to post pictures of their children or grandchildren risk having them be seen by perpetrators - and some of them might not just be interested in looking. When you add personal information, it sets the child up for a kidnapping - or worse.

I have heard people state that they are not worried about identity fraud because they don't have any money anyway. Well, consider this. Have you ever lost your wallet? Think of all the problems you had in trying to replace ID and notify credit card companies about the loss. Now add to this the fact that someone is out there ruining your reputation as they try to impersonate you in any number of ways.

Someone told my daughter that you should never post anything you wouldn't want your mother to see. Well, that doesn't even take it far enough. You can trust your mother - but you can't trust everyone else who has access to a computer.

It's time to stop playing innocent or pretending that it won't happen to you. When you put information on the internet, you risk your financial security, your reputation and may even set up the ones you love the most for serious harm.