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Forget 'social networking site', Facebook is a relationship minefield, laments **Rose Crompton**

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Two years on from its launch, Facebook has over 200 million users logging on to share photos, post status updates and write on each other's walls. Far from being a social blessing, though, when it comes to relationships, the site's just trouble.

Take my mate, for example. After he finished a relationship with a woman he met via Facebook, she messaged all the ladies on his friends list to tell them he was a "scumbag" who "preys on single, vulnerable women". Then she set up a group dedicated to dissing him, in which she posted lots of lies about him as well as his work phone number. Suddenly, my mate started receiving threatening phone calls from strangers. He called the police, who eventually slapped the bunny-boiler with a restraining order, but it was two weeks before Facebook deleted the group.

Pre-Facebook, splitting up with someone didn't get much more complex than deleting a phone number and ripping up a few photographs. Not anymore. Now you have to log on, list yourself as single – which means your new relationship status is dramatically announced to everyone on your friends list – and, to avoid receiving regular and painful updates about his life afterwards, you have to 'defriend' your ex and his mates, then get your mates to defriend him, too. Oh, and then there are all those pictures you uploaded of the two of you together which you have to tediously delete, reliving memories as you go.

If you don't cut your ex off on Facebook, you risk entering a new realm of obsession where, instead of posting couple-related updates and photos all the time, you start scrutinising every new friend your ex adds and checking his relationship status on a daily basis. I know this because I've been there, reading way too much into wall posts on my ex's page, so that instead of having a straightforward break-up I'm wondering who his new female friend is or what certain people's comments mean. And then, inevitably, the day comes that your ex does get a new girlfriend and Facebook bluntly breaks it to you with a cute little heart symbol on your news feed.

Facebook's also a place for forgotten exes to find and message you. Where normally you wouldn't dredge up the past, they can track you down and invite you out for a drink (translation: open old wounds). That's not an appealing idea, but checking out all your new boyfriend's exes' profiles can seem a very attractive way to kill some time, just to see how you measure up to them. Suddenly, you start worrying that you don't, not that you can admit to that. One female friend of mine even went so far as to add her husband's ex-wife, who she hated, to her friends list. The reason? She said she felt obliged to appear friendly.

Facebook is a relationship nightmare, feeding our insecurities and encouraging us to obsess over relationships. So, here's my latest status update: Rose refuses to add new boyfriends to her friends list. 

