

# How Facebook can ruin friendships – and waistlines



BY DAHLIA KURTZ ,QMI AGENCY

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The Wall Street Journal uncovered soon-to-be-published research from Columbia University and the University of Pittsburgh that finds the social network lowers our self-control and can influence behaviour much like alcohol. (Fotolia)

Facebook can make us big, fat meanies. Literally.

The Wall Street Journal uncovered soon-to-be-published research from Columbia University and the University of Pittsburgh that finds the social network lowers our self-control and can influence behaviour much like alcohol.

Instead of doing shots, just post pictures on Facebook. Once people start clicking “Like” the intoxicating effects set in. (Unfortunately, you may still get the same caloric effects of booze, as the research also indicates high-frequency Facebookers were also more likely to stuff their faces and have high Body Mass Indexes.)

Keith Wilcox, co-author of the study and assistant professor of marketing at Columbia Business School, told The Wall Street Journal, “Think of it as a licensing effect: You feel good about yourself so you feel a sense of entitlement.

”And you want to protect that enhanced view, which might be why people are lashing out so strongly at others who don’t share their opinions.”

A couple of years ago, Ben Margolies made what he thought to be an innocuous comment on his sister’s Facebook wall. “She wrote a status update about eating shark fin soup, and I commented explaining that this type of soup is endangering sharks and not to enable the trade.”

That quickly escalated into a shark fight. Margolies and his sister no longer talk. Needless to say they are not even Facebook friends anymore.

Would this fight have happened if they were face to face? Maybe not.

British psychologists from the University of Lincoln have just found the amount of physical space between people may

influence how they react to each other. The further you are from someone, the easier it is to dehumanize that person, thus the easier it is for you to act less humane.

And in cyberspace, it can feel like you're light years apart.

It's where some humans become aliens – "trolls" – who post inflammatory comments online for shock value and controversy. These bullies hide in bits and bytes shielded by anonymity.

But Facebook fights still happen with the very people who are closest to you. When you're not face-to-face with someone, you can feel invisible and, with a heightened sense of ego, perhaps invincible –especially when armed with the CAPS LOCK BUTTON. (Just an example. I'm not angry at you.)

A Pew study says 15% of adults and 22% of teens have ended a relationship after a bad social networking experience.

Sometimes all it takes for things to unravel is mentioning the name "Obama" or "Romney" – even if you're Canadian.

Paul Jacobs can get political online. When the Canadian mentions American politicians in his updates, it often leads to arguments he and his cohorts would never have in person. Recently, Jacobs received a message from a long-time buddy saying, "You're a great guy to have a beer with, but we can no longer be Facebook friends because I can't ignore what you write."

So, do you think that Facebook makes us fatter and meaner?

WELL I DON'T REALLY CARE WHAT YOU THINK. OBAMA! ROMNEY! HECK ... TRUDEAU!

Oh, and while you're at it, please click "Like."

Catch Dahlia on Twitter @DahliaKurtz

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## POLL

How often do you check Facebook?

**47%**  
**Every day.**

**825**  
**votes**

**8%**  
**Once every few days.**

**148**  
**votes**

**4%**  
**Once a week.**

**62**  
**votes**

**11%**  
**Rarely.**

**192**  
**votes**

**30%**  
**Never, I'm not on it.**

533  
votes

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