

RELATIONSHIPS AND ADVICE



“We are getting a divorce. It has been in the works for a while now,” Lauren, a 36-year-old mother of two wrote on her Facebook page about her husband of 13 years. She was commenting on a response to the change in her relationship status. “Lauren went from being ‘married’ to being ‘single,’” read the dry, cold fact. The infamous little broken-heart icon fluttered up alongside it. This is how life’s big moments unfold on Facebook: Epic emotions are reduced to emoticons.

During the month that followed, as the marriage continued to unravel and her grief intensified, Lauren began chronicling her divorce via status updates. “*Lauren would cry, but then he wins,*” she wrote. “*There isn’t enough Kleenex in the world.*” “*Lauren is facing the aftermath.*” Her very private ex-husband-to-be soon grew enraged. “I would write that I was upset, and he would assume that every negative thing I wrote was about him,” she said. “I didn’t feel like I was overstepping any boundaries, but he did.” Lauren’s husband then warned her that he planned to “un-friend” her. “So, I did it first.”

We have long known that social networking facilitates hooking up. But what about breaking up? Does processing and broadcasting our feelings from the real, private realm in a virtual, public realm like Facebook make ending a relationship, that most painful of human experiences, more or less difficult to endure? Either way, Facebook is the theater where some of life’s most chaotic, catastrophic and bewildering moments are now being played out.

The bizarre truth is that your Facebook divorce will likely be more public than your actual one. You are stating, in front of perhaps hundreds of witnesses, that the relationship has run its course. It’s like taking out a full-page announcement. “For a long time I kept my status as ‘married. I didn’t want to change it,’” said Elizabeth, who discovered her husband was having an affair and immediately updated her status to read, “*Ladies, Don’t Ever Get Married.*” The etiquette for such a thing remains undecided. If, for instance, you’re breaking up or divorcing in the real world, at what point is it no longer heartless to change your status on Facebook to “single” or “it’s complicated”? Do you need to warn your significant other that his or her status is about to change in turn?

Who can know what prompts people to expose their most intimate moments on Facebook? For some, Facebook makes it possible to confess what might otherwise feel too personal. “A lot of times you don’t get to talk to people about that stuff,” says Elizabeth. “It can be hard to discuss in person.” For others, the billboard approach has its benefits. “It cuts a lot of awkward conversations, because people already know I’ve gotten divorced,” said Chad, whose divorce is in the final stages. “I don’t want to call people up and dump a bunch of crap on them, but I don’t mind if they know my life got screwed up.” But when people do come forward, it creates a feeling of being supported. Chad continued, “People e-mailed saying, ‘I’ve been through this; if you want to talk, great; sorry this is happening. That was the thing that made me feel better -- it was self-selecting. If I talked to any friend, he or she would have said similar things, but they would have felt obligated.”



1. having an extremely bad reputation:
2. to take apart; undo; destroy:
3. to go beyond; exceed:
4. to share or spread information widely:
5. extremely confusing:
6. unfeeling; unkind; unsympathetic; harsh; cruel:
7. to ruin through bad choices or stupidity:
8. compelled to do something:

Why men shouldn't write advice columns

Dear John,

I hope you can help me. The other day, I set off for work, leaving my husband in the house watching TV. My car stalled, and then it broke down about a mile down the road, and I had to walk back to get my husband's help. When I got home, I couldn't believe my eyes. He was in our bedroom with the neighbor's daughter!

I am 32, my husband is 34 and the neighbor's daughter is 19. We have been married for 10 years. When I confronted him, he broke down and admitted they had been having an affair for the past six months. He won't go to counseling, and I'm afraid I am a wreck and need advice urgently. Can you please help?

Sincerely, Sheila

Dear Sheila,

A car stalling after being driven a short distance can be caused by a variety of faults with the engine. Start by checking that there is no debris in the fuel line. If it is clear, check the vacuum pipes and hoses on the intake manifold and also check all grounding wires. If none of these approaches solves the problem, it could be that the fuel pump itself is faulty, causing low delivery pressure to the injectors.

I hope this helps,
John

— Forwarded by Steve Sanderson,
Gilbert, S.C.