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Confessions of a Facebook Stalker

Why are you so attractive? Why do you tempt me with a text when I'm in class, knowing I can't respond? Why do I long to poke you in all the right places? Why, Facebook, why?

Stalking online has become a major part of today's society. It does not have the same connotations it did even five years ago. Stalking, and Facebook stalking in particular, is something everyone in my generation has taken part in at least once. Facebook stalking, as defined by urbandictionary.com, is "a covert method of investigation... good for discovering a wealth of information about people you don't actually know."

I am a stalker—a Facebook stalker anyway. That sounds horrible; however, it is the truth. I will sit at the computer and look up people that I have talked to once or twice and feel like they are my friend. It happens, and I know I'm not alone. It has become a cultural phenomenon, and places such as Facebook and MySpace promote the casual stalking of "friends."

Sites like Twitter have made it acceptable and encouraged us to know what everyone else in the world is doing at any given time of the day. They go so far as to call Twitter friends "followers," as if the person tweeting has achieved idol status. Ten years ago, that would have freaked out so many people. Today, the more "friends" or "followers" you have, the cooler you are. Unfortunately, the reality is that they are not always people you are friends with or have even met.

I am a face in the tribe of Facebookers. Mark Zuckerberg, creator of Facebook, is our chief. There are over 400 million fellow Facebookers in our tribe; of those 400 million, 343 are my "friends." They are the ones I consider to be in my personal tribe. They watch everything I put out daily and are expected to "comment" or "like" whatever appears on their walls or homepages throughout that day. In return, I must check my homepage several times in order to respond to whatever they are typing out to the world – or me in particular – so the circle can continue.

The stalking part comes into play when I write on someone's wall or look at the new pictures they've posted. Someone else who I recognize may have commented on that picture or on their wall, but maybe I haven't talked to them in a long time. Obviously, I need to stalk them so I can feel content "knowing" what is going on in their life.

Friends of friends are the most interesting to stalk. They are people who I might know or find interesting if I take ten minutes to check out their pages. If you don't have your privacy settings at the highest level, please understand that I *will* find you and stalk you. There is some fascination in our modern-day culture with checking up on people and seeing what is going on in their lives. I, for one, believe it comes from reality shows such as "Keeping up with the Kardashians," "Jersey Shore," and "Teen Mom."

Along with the wonderful liberties of being able to say whatever I want to say, to whomever I want to say it, whenever I want to say it, comes a great burden. Unknown to my 14-year-old self when I created my Facebook account, whatever goes on the Internet can, or will, be there as long as the world would like it to be. Sometimes we let our emotions get the best of us. This doesn't happen to me on many occasions, but at times, I will get a little fiery and want to take it out on someone. In my eyes, Facebook was the perfect opportunity to make that happen.

I don't consider myself a busybody, but I do consider myself protective. One of my friends, on Facebook and in person, Jenna, had a boy that was her "boyfriend." He wasn't very smart. The boy, Alex, was at a pool party at my house, and he was having a lip-locking moment with another girl in my pool. Hands were everywhere, and two bodies were silhouetted by the flood light. That didn't go over very well with me, and Alex denied it when I confronted him. Hello! I saw you! Alex is/was my "friend" on Facebook, so later that night—about one in the morning—I decided to send him a brief message. I let him know, with the use of some colorful language, that he was a—let's just say "scum bag"—for having a girl on the side.

Alex still denied the whole thing. Whatever. I know what I saw; it doesn't bother me that he wouldn't admit to the truth. However, what does bother me is the fact that a week later his mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. It came way out of the blue, and I felt horrible because I didn't know the whole story of what was going on in his life.

I would love to blame Facebook for not giving me all the information, but I can't. It was completely my fault. I thought by Facebook stalking someone, I would get the full story. I thought I had all the information and had Alex figured out. I did not, but I like to find the good in every situation, regardless of the outcome.

I do belong to the Facebook tribe, and more specifically, the Facebook stalker tribe. Now I have a better understanding of what that means. Facebook can be great for entertainment and can be even better for finding out *basic* information about someone. It does not mean that Facebook tells the life story of the person I am stalking.

Recently, I deleted over 200 "friends" on Facebook. They don't need to know what I am doing and, quite frankly, they probably won't even notice I'm gone. I've come to realize that it's important to know who is truly a part of your family or tribe.

Facebook, I still care about you and want you in my life. Your 399 million other tribe members and I appreciate you for bringing us the opportunity to stalk each other. But in the future, I won't expect you to provide anything more than *basic* information about all my "friends."