

<div class="zemanta-img"> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution"> Friendship. It's a word that used to have a fairly consistent meaning amongst people.

There are certain things you would do and wouldn't do to your friends. There was a certain responsibility to the process of friendship because you had a great deal of accountability and very little anonymity.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">But that was back when our friendships were defined by our face-to-face interactions.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">In the present day world of social networking, it has come to mean something, well, completely different. It's a strange new world out there now that social media is a part of our daily lives.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">There was a time when your friendships evolved from time spent together in each others' presence, snail mail, and maybe even a phone call or two. You certainly didn't have a digital existence. It was all so analog. And simple.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">But then there was email, followed shortly thereafter by Prodigy, America Online, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter & the list goes on. Now, you have a digital filter. Now, you have a degree of anonymity behind the monitor. Now, you have LOL and LMAO and emoticons. Now, we're faced with the context of a digital existence dovetailing with your life. The journey that is friendship shows some tricky new twists and turns. Or does it?</p> <div class="zemanta-img"> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">Maybe it sounds a little old-school, but I remember a time when if you wanted to be friends with someone, it was a very active process. And in the same breath, if you then decided that you didn't want to be friends with someone, it was probably an active process as well. There may have been some inciting incident. There was probably a discussion, an argument, or a growing apart that was visible and perceptible. Maybe you agreed to disagree. It wasn't always convenient or easy to end a friendship. But, more often than not, you both knew it was happening.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">Now, in a digital existence, all you need to do is un-friend them. No hurries, no worries, and far more impersonal. Where's the depth of meaning behind friendships when you can just click a button and then your friend is poof and gone? And then, there is the perceived obligation of your friends to un-friend you as well. How dare they un-friend me! I didn't do anything to them! I thought they were my friends? But it's far too easy to become a friend, and far too easy to be un-friended. It all takes on a whole new meaning. Then you start to wonder about what friendship really means in a world of social networking.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">But wait, we've seen this type of behavior before & it's called high school.</p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">Social networking sites can suddenly look, sound, and feel a lot like high school, all over again, before you realize it. You know, it's all the things about high school you loved and hated all at the same time, by all the same people, but now 30 years later. And some even regress to those same attitudes and behaviors of yesteryear. But now, it's just a digital version of he said she said or I've got more friends than you or my dad is better than your dad! It's acceptable behavior once again. </p> <p class="zemanta-img-attribution">When, in real life, do you just remove a friend from your friend list without them even knowing why? Now you have to truly be aware of the fact that it is too convenient, too easy, to just hit the un-friend button without a proper discussion or true communication.</p> </div> <p>Having said this, I can state with great certainty that social media has opened up a world of people, conversations, and interactions,

that might not have existed otherwise. And yes, great ♦real-world♦ friendships evolve from these social media interactions. Yes, it does allow you to re-connect with people you♦d never intended to lose contact with in the first place. Social media also presents many great new tools and opportunities in the business world. So don♦t get me wrong ♦ there is a huge value to the relationships we develop (and maintain) in the context of a digital world. </p> <p>Maybe it♦s not so much about social media as it is about those who partake in it, and how they do so. Perhaps the challenge of effective communication, and how it presents itself in the digital era, really isn♦t that much different than our bygone past after all.</p> <p>Photo credits: <a

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