

MOBILE MENTAL WELLNESS

ARE YOU MY "FRIEND"?

Social media has had a societal impact on our relationships, our privacy, our businesses, the media, and has even changed the meaning of the word friend.

We now have larger social networks, the ability to connect globally, and instant and easy communication. In addition to the relationships that we love and care for, we now have to manage "friends," followers, and contacts. There is a natural limit to how many people we can emotionally engage with; therefore, what is supposed to connect us, may actually be disconnecting us.

Facebook has built its business around our relationships and the innate human need to connect. In the process, it has also hollowed out the word *friend*, removing the intimate and emotional connection involved in a true friendship. "Friend" is often now a verb rather than a noun.

The definition of a friend:

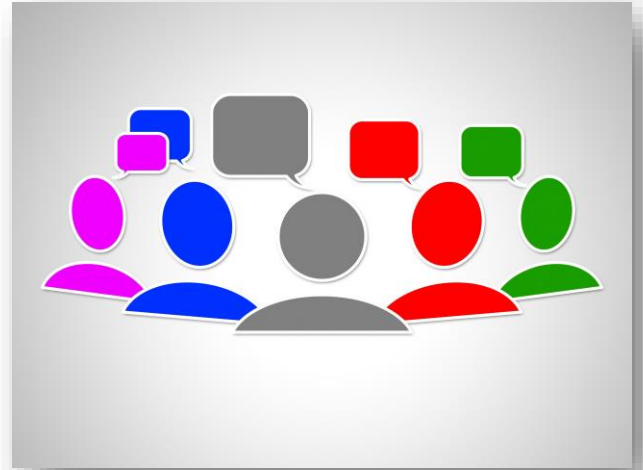
Noun:

a person whom one knows and with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically exclusive of sexual or family relations.

Verb:

add (someone) to a list of contacts associated with a social networking website.

Is the ease of social media and its likes, shares, and insecurities taking the energy we used to devote to nurturing real-life relationships and sending it down a rabbit hole?



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ARE YOU MY "FRIEND"?

Online, Offline, or Mixed Mode. What's the Difference?

ONLINE

Vulnerability

It can be easier to be vulnerable with those we don't need to face.

Access

You can initiate conversation anytime without the constraints of time or location.

Disposability

You can easily friend or unfriend with the touch of a button. Conflict can be ignored, and a false sense of confidence can lead to hurtful words or actions.

OFFLINE

Emotions

Weakness, insecurity and conflict resolution are often expressed in deep relationships.

Senses

Person-to-person touch, tone of voice, and affection can be very healing.

Commitment

Real friendship will push through discomfort and forgive, leading to strong trust and intimacy.

MIXED MODE

Different Strokes for Different Folks

You might discuss personal matters in a private group, share a specific knowledge base on your business page, and display your creative flair on Instagram. Be free to be you based on opportunity and mood with no expectations.

Flexibility

Maintaining a relationship through the addition of online forms of communication can strengthen the relationship, especially if distance is a barrier.

While social media can be a great way to keep up on the lives of our friends and family, be mindful of aspects that can ruin relationships. Oversharing, comparison, miscommunication, peer pressure, jealousy, and sharing comments and opinions that should be private can all result from social media use. Remember to dedicate quality, face-to-face time together with those you care for. Keep things in perspective and use technology as a complementary tool to maintain valued and trusted relationships. A shoulder to cry on during a difficult time, the sound of a friend's laughter, or a congratulatory hug for a recent accomplishment offer valuable means of coping with and celebrating our days. Social media can simply never satisfy these needs.



Sources: <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-social-media-is-ruining-relationships#9>
<https://www.lifewire.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-social-networking-3486020>