

## Facebook Causing Divorces Cited As A Growing Trend

According to a recent study conducted by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML), Facebook the popular social networking site is to blame for 1 out of every 5 divorces in the United States. Keeping up with a current trend, Attorney John E. Cereso with the Nevada Law Group says that he has indeed been handling divorces that cite Facebook as the culprit.

"If the power of Facebook can be credited with the Egyptian and Tunisian people breaking with their longtime dictators, then it's understandable how online exposure can also undermine American marriages," said Cereso. "But the truth is most of the marriages ending in divorce were strained to begin with. Facebook just opens the door for online cheating, flirting and whatever."

It stands to reason that social networking was created specifically to help a person become more social with everyone, which in turn makes it easier to get caught up in intimate situations and conversations that are prone to lead to more severe forms of cheating. If your marriage is on the rocks, there's a good chance Facebook will accelerate the divorce process, which helps account for the trend and 20 percent statistic.

"So before you need a divorce attorney, there are some things you can do if you want to stay married," says Ceresco. Here is his advice:

- Remind yourself why you're using a given social networking service and regularly assess your intentions with the people you're frequently communicating with.
- Reserve intimate or deeply personal online conversations only for your significant other, family members, and close real world friends.
- Take time to assess what you're doing and how your significant other could be affected by it.
- Be careful... Online chatting can develop into a full-fledged affair even if a couple isn't experiencing marital difficulties. A person can make themselves emotionally available without even realizing it.
- A couple's safeguard can be to share passwords with each other and place the computer in a common area in the house or apartment. This eliminates secrets.

Cereso emphasizes, "In a short amount of time, the sharing of personal stories online can lead to a deepened sense of intimacy and inadvertently invite physical contact even for people who don't set out to have an affair. It may all start out as innocent curiosity."

In court, the flirty e-mails and messages found on Facebook pages can be used as evidence of unreasonable behavior and come back to haunt you. Computer firms have developed software allowing suspicious spouses to electronically spy on someone's online activities.

Cereso points out that ironically Facebook's motto, which is "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life," can actually lead to a person disconnecting with their significant other.