

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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All in the Facebook Family

Do you want to be friends with your parents online?

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What Happened:

If Facebook's users founded their very own country, it'd be the world's third largest behind China and India. More than 500 million folks use the social networking site, and much of the network's growth is coming from folks over the age of 30.

This is not an altogether welcome trend for youth—the demographic that made Facebook so popular initially. About one in five teens say they're losing interest in social networking. Many complain there are just too many old people online these days.

Some youth particularly are put out because their parents have joined Facebook or other social networking site, because most parents friend their kids. From a parents' point of view, it just makes good sense: You want to connect with your children as much as possible. Many teens believe friending their parents will cramp their style. They're liable to jump into conversations or make embarrassing comments online.

According to a recent study by AOL, about 16 percent of teens they're leaving Facebook because their moms or dads have joined; more than a third have considered unfriending their parents.

The trend has spawned a YouTube video called "My Mom's on Facebook" that's garnered 1.2 million views (and counting), and there's now a site—myparentsjoinedfacebook.com—that allows exasperated youth to post their parents' most embarrassing Facebook posts.

"The moms like to overshare about things [such as] menopause that their kids want nothing to do with or know anything about," says Jeanne Leitenberg, one of the site's founders. "They join out of the mentality that they're the cool mom, and they just want to be part of the gang. They don't realize how horrifying or intrusive they actually are."

Talk About It:

Numerous studies suggest that youth and their parents are as close as they've ever been. Many teens say family is the most important thing in their lives; most say they love, respect and listen to their mothers and fathers. Do you think these kids—even kids who truly care for and trust their parents—may still be reluctant to "friend" them? Why?

Are you friends with your parents on Facebook? If so, are you happy about that? Does it sometimes feel like an intrusion? Have you ever been embarrassed by something they've said or asked online? What about your friends?

If you've ever been embarrassed by your parents on a social networking site, did you talk with them about it afterward? Have *they* ever talked to *you* about how to behave online? Have they ever made you change anything on your profile?

If you had children old enough to have a Facebook page, would you want to be friends with them? Why or why not?

What the Bible Says:

“Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding. The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him. My your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice” (Prov. 23:22-25)!

“My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you. When you awake, they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way of life” (Prov. 6:20-23).