

## ***Facebook For Parents – Part 1***

***By Elizabeth Fazio, Psy.D***

Social networking is here to stay. Long gone are the days where the home telephone is the main source of communication to others outside the home. So many people no longer even have a "land line". The good thing about this is that you don't have to wrestle your children to make a phone call. The problem is that social networking is confusing and frustrating for a lot of parents. Many parents already have their own Facebook page and understand it, but for some it is uncharted territory. Not knowing how Facebook works creates panic for many Moms and Dads. Parents who do have their own Facebook page are often asking me if they should "friend" their kids on Facebook or leave it alone? It is interesting because in the world of parenting advice we are often talking about being a parent, not your child's friend. The underlying meaning, of course, is that your kids need you to set rules and boundaries, help them make good choices and understand the reasoning behind those choices...not be their friend. However, in the world of Facebook, I think being your child's "friend" is usually a good idea. I know many kids who are seriously appalled by this idea, but if being on Facebook is contingent upon "friending" (yes, this word can now be used as a verb) you, they may concede. For high school and college kids, this is a harder idea to sell. For older, resistant kids, have an aunt, uncle, or trusted friend become Facebook friends with your child. Kids spend so much of their life on Facebook and parents need to be a part of it.

If you don't have a Facebook page, it will be very hard to understand so much of what your kids are doing or saying (assuming they are on Facebook). It will be impossible to "friend" them as well. So if you would like to learn more you can sign up for the new course being offered at Stanford University — Facebook for Parents. The creation of BJ Fogg, Director of the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford and co-editor of "The Psychology of Facebook". The classes will be hands-on, and the goals are to help parents navigate the site, create their own page, learn about threats and safety and examine ways that Facebook can teach kids life lessons and social skills.

Ok, so most of us are not going to travel to Stanford for this information. The great news is that Fogg also has a website, [facebookforparents.org](http://facebookforparents.org), which is filled with the sort of tips he will be sharing in class.

To get started, for instance, he walks you through the five simplest steps:

#1. Join Facebook.

Yes, you should sign up for Facebook. This service was once just for college students, but today it's for everyone. Parents need to be part of this world.

#2. "Friend" your kids.

To "friend" someone on Facebook means connecting to them. Your kids will probably complain about you "friending" them. That's normal. If you're opposed to friending your kids, you should still join Facebook to learn how it works.

#3. Review your kids' profile pages.

Go to the profile pages for your kids and review the content. At first, you'll see the "Wall." But don't stop there. Click on the tabs for "Info" and "Photos" to see more.

#4. Review who is "friends" with your kids.

On the profile page for your kids, click on the words "See All" in the Friends box. You can then see who is linked to your kids. Seeing who is friends with whom is typical Facebook behavior.

#5. Select "More About" for your kids.

Watch for an item about your kids in your News Feed. Click on that item and select the "More About" option. This tells Facebook to show you more about that person in the future, sort of like turning up the volume. Expert Facebook users do this routinely to tailor their News Feed.

In "Facebook for Parents – Part 2" we'll talk about what to do – or not to do – with what you see on your child's page.