

Fakebook, Instasham and Outwitter

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I love to keep up with my friends, the news and local happenings on my social networks. But sometimes, it feels like I am missing out: everyone else is on holidays, they are always out having a blast, and their kids are simply perfect. On a good day, it is easy to see those posts and be happy for everyone. On a bad day, seeing everyone else's wonderful life may make yours seem less so. Countless new studies of online networking reveal increased depression and loneliness from people's need to keep up with the Joneses. **Don't be fooled! Much like the photoshopping they do to celebrities on magazine covers, you are only seeing the touched-up versions.**

Here are some tips for how to enjoy being online without letting it bring you down.

Do not compare your behind-the-scenes life with someone else's highlight reel.

I did not make up the quote but it is a beautiful summary of how we experience other people, especially on social networks. This is not new, people have always put on their best foot forward for public viewing - nicest clothes, biggest smile, happy life. How many divorced couples have you known who you thought were happy? You don't see what goes on behind clothes doors or in someone's head. BUT social networks may make you feel like you do. The nature of network sites allows you to be a master spy; both by increasing the number of people you follow and by putting you behind your computer screen so your actions are hidden. Since people do not know you are watching them, this can give you the false sense that you are getting that private insight. You feel like a voyeur on your friend's *typical* day.

Based On a True Story

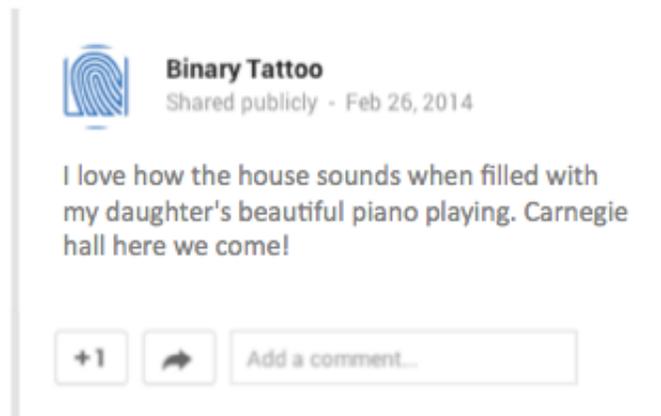
Here is an example of my morning as told in real life vs online...

1. Wake up, having not slept well, squashed between two kids. Feet in my face, no room to shift. There is a 70-pound dog lying across my legs. I believe I have lost feeling in my foot and it has that awful tingling feeling. Exhausted. Grumpy. Twitter post:

BinaryTattoo - Define your digital identity

2. Little one is hungry so she's crying about being hungry. My husband makes them breakfast and they run off. I eat standing at the counter while making lunches. Facebook post:

3. We ask our older daughter to practice piano. Bribe her with a sticker for her book. After protesting, she plays her 10 minutes of Old MacDonald. Google+ post:



4. It is a special day at school so I want a picture. Takes me forever to get them to sit in the same area. I finally have them and the dog is in the way. I really start to wonder how badly I want this picture! After 37 shots, I give up and take one from behind. Instagram post:

The Best Post ... Every Time

The constant effort to make perfect posts can be exhausting. Depending on your online brand, always trying to be enlightening or funny or positive is hard work. My posts for Binary Tattoo, as an example, aim to be educational. A comedian's posts should be clever. Some of these posts are probably being written on the fly but others have been carefully thought out like a script. Get all these people in a room for a party and it is doubtful the conversation will be so eloquently worded. Don't feel the need to make all of your posts Shakespeare-worthy.

Battling a Sabre-Toothed Tiger

I am on Facebook one day and I see a friend has purchased a new SUV. Their friend comments "That's no corvette" and he comments back "Haha...a little bit different than a Corvette. But I'm proud to say I will never own a minivan." I own a minivan. Happens to be that I love my minivan and wouldn't trade it for anything but I am well aware that minivans are not deemed 'cool'. I also own crocs and wear yoga pants on days I am not at the gym (other things constantly being trashed on social networks). Do I care when people mock things I use or wear? In the long run, no, I do what is right for me. But some times I feel a little irked that I am being made fun of, and for what

benefit to the person making the comment?

In trying to understand why people behave this way, I consulted my friend [Amanda Weber](#) who teaches people about how to manage their stress by breaking down the physiological reasons why we do what we do. She explained to me that biologically a stressed person has a fight or flight reaction. Imagine fighting a saber-toothed tiger. If you are fighting for your life, all of your energy in this situation is directed at saving yourself. You are not thinking about anyone else and certainly not considering how they are feeling in the moment. This applies well to social networks too. My friend above would never insult my minivan to my face. In fact he probably wasn't thinking twice about any of his friends with minivans who may be reading his posts. He may have been stressed that day about work or his drive or the snow and thereby selfish in his response. It is easy to forget your audience when you post online and even easier to be considerate of everyone's feelings.

Bottom line? We are all trying to figure out this new world together. People are doing their best to paint a picture of *their lives* online that they are proud of, not to make you feel worse about *your life* . So smile at the posts that make you happy, and roll your eyes when someone insults your favourite shoes. But don't take it personally.