

Important things that every woman needs to know about

“Are you on Facebook?” This has become a common question asked by people of all walks of life, from corporate professionals to high school students. Facebook, and more recently Twitter, have changed the way that people meet and interact all over the world. Facebook, Twitter and MySpace are collectively called Social Networking tools. In 2010 and 2011, Facebook and Twitter were the spark that helped start the fire that was the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring was a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests that occurred in the Arab world beginning on Saturday, 18 December 2010. As a result of the collective action of people through Facebook and Twitter, rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen have been forced from power. This shows that Facebook and Twitter are indeed powerful tools for change. But it is not all seriousness and work on Social Networks, there is also a lot of fun to be had on Facebook and Twitter, as well as learning and sharing.

Like everything else, these social networking sites are also subject to abuse, and can be a source of great insecurity for many young women today. It is important for young women to know how technology affects them, and how to find their way around the sometimes crazy, but exciting world of Social Networking.

The most commonly used Social Networking tool by young women and men is Facebook, with Twitter slowly catching on. As they say on their homepage, Facebook ‘is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them.’ Facebook allows you to control how much information you let other people access and who accesses this information. If you are thinking of joining Facebook, or you have already here are some important things to take into consideration before you join Facebook or if you are already sign.

1. RESPECT THE AGE LIMIT

By law, only people aged over 13 years old are allowed to sign up for Facebook. This is because many young people might not understand just how far and wide the information that you share on Facebook can travel over the internet, and can expose themselves to **sexual predators**.

2. ONLY MAKE FRIENDS WITH PEOPLE YOU KNOW

There is a current trend amongst young people to see who can have the most number of friends on Facebook. This means that you send out requests to everybody and you accept requests of friendship from anybody. This is risky because you don't know what someone might post on your wall or what they will do with information that they might access on your Facebook page. If someone you don't know requests your friendship, first see if you know them, or if you have any friends in common. In fact you can send them a message and ask them how they know you and decide if you want to be their friend or not.

3. CAREFULLY SELECT WHICH PICTURES YOU POST ON FACEBOOK

Facebook is such a fun way to share pictures with our friends, and is also a fun way to collect pictures of you and your friends out having a good time. But something many people don't know is that once something is on the internet, it can be there forever. You never know who can get hold of your pictures and what they will use them for.

When putting up, or posting pictures on Facebook, make sure that the pictures are not the kind that will embarrass you in the future. Many young girls like to take **seductive** and sexy pictures of themselves and post them on Facebook. While there's nothing wrong with wanting to look sexy, posting these sexy pictures can attract the wrong kind of attention, and some people accessing your pictures might use them on other websites.

4. DON'T GIVE AWAY TOO MUCH INFORMATION

Facebook has become a new way that people try to bully others. Sometimes, someone can decide to **vandalise** your Facebook page by posting nasty comments or links to nasty websites. This can really hurt you because some your friends on Facebook, and possibly at school can continue the bullying. You can report and block people who post content and comments that you don't like on your Facebook profile. This prevents them from posting nasty things or getting access to your page through other ways.

5. DON'T PUT UP WITH BULLYING ON FACEBOOK

Like where you live, what you are doing every minute, you telephone number or email address, and so on. You never know who is online and what their **intentions** are, and people who get hold of your number can use it to bully or harass you. Making public your living address also allows people to know where you live and you might attract a **stalker** that makes you feel unsafe in your own home. Don't ever post your home or post office address, and also don't post your number or anyone else's number on Facebook.

When you sign up for Facebook, make sure you read all the instructions and the get well acquainted with the settings. You can control many of the settings on Facebook, and is your responsibility to do so, to ensure that your Facebook experience is a pleasant one. Don't be afraid to ask an adult or someone else if there are features and settings that you do not understand. Remember, knowledge is power.

Sister Namibia's Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/SisterNamibia> to stay updated on Sister Namibia's activities and magazine updates!



GLOSSARY

Sexual predator- A person who obtains, or tries to obtain, sexual contact, and for that reason is seen as threatening.

Seductive- To win over or attract someone

Intentions- The goal or purpose behind a specific action or set of actions

Stalker- A person who secretly follows someone, sometimes with bad intentions.