

Opinion: The Good Samaritan

by Jordis Brown

In our short-sighted way of existing, we as a society have lost the realization that our actions – even those in private – do affect the world around us. We all carry burdens and many of us possess unseen scars from our day to day life. This has impacted us as a whole, to positively affect the community. Your conscience, awareness and empathetic nature has fallen asleep. This is my plea to everyone who reads this....

Wake Up.

Many years ago there was a young teenage girl who lived with her adult boyfriend. She was naive in every sense of the word. He exploited that to its fullest. There was abuse masqueraded as normal pitfalls in a relationship. There was no guidance or healthy relationship for her to witness so that she could know what was happening was wrong. One night she ran and he followed. Yelling every insult, spewing every threat you could think of at her.

She cried and cried and clutched her pillow and kept walking quickly trying to avoid main streets, feeling afraid and embarrassed. She was simply trying to make it to her parents. She approached the avenue and a stranger stopped her and asked if she was okay. He wasn't afraid of her boyfriend like she was. He kept repeating himself until she nodded and made an excuse, still embarrassed and still afraid. She made the wrong decision and went back to the house with the boyfriend that night.

Nearly two decades later that short interaction still brought that girl, now a woman, comfort. Faith. It woke her up days later to realize that someone else, a stranger, could see there was something wrong. Why couldn't she? Her own life and its hardships put her to sleep. Even though they could never

be erased, she would no longer allow them to dictate her future.

All thanks to a stranger who he himself was awake enough to see someone needed help.

I want you, the stranger reading this to be happy. We most likely have never met, but I say this sincerely and honestly. *Be happy.* We affect the world we live in and I want to live in a happier place. I want to see more random smiles from strangers than glares. This community has hardships and not a single person I have ever met – neither very rich nor very poor – has been able to avoid something awful in their life from happening.

Stop punishing yourself, by continuing the cycle of self-pity, doubt, hate...you punish us all. Wake up! Are you with someone that is unchanging? Do they make you a better person or are you miserable? Wake up! Do you turn to drugs or alcohol to fill a void put there by someone in the past, a person who should have loved you, but didn't. By a memory or by habit? Wake up! If you die tomorrow will it have been a life worth living? Did you notice neglect, abuse, a crime? Does your self-righteous opinion prevent you from doing anything? Do you live as a silent witness who shakes their head and does nothing? You take on what you've seen as a personal burden now because you are now as culpable.

The attachments you have in your life might be what has put you asleep to the world around you. Family, friends....people who are truly happy, often say they feel alive. Awake for the first time. It is very difficult to cut the ties that bind us down, but when we do we fly up to the surface like a bungee cord freed from an anchor. Be a participant, not only in the community, but in your own life. Stop letting your burden dictate your fate.

Please for the love of yourself, for the family you have or

the family you want: Wake up.

Oversharing with social media



Do your friends have annoying social media habits?

by Jordis Brown

Oversharing on Facebook is that elephant in the room that no one wants to directly talk about but you'll gladly repost a funny meme having to do with it. "Dirty laundry goes in the hamper not on your Wall". I think we can all agree that there are several different types of Facebook sharing that is better left offline. Let's address a few:

"Selfies"

Typically taken with a smart phone, this is a practice done by many. Almost everyone has taken a selfie at one point or

another. But how many is too many? Well if you feel the need to take and post a picture of yourself daily, sometimes multiple times a day, you may in fact be annoying. With captions such as "I'm bored" "Bad hair day" or "Just chillin" you really help aid in the opinion of others in thinking that this person has a really high opinion of their self. I've learned in the past that when a friend post a picture and says "I'm fat" they don't want you commenting on where they can find a good gym! They either want you to lie to them or hate them a little for thinking 118lbs is somehow overweight.

"I'm in love"

I think after the first 20 posts expressing how madly in love you are, that your friend's list gets it. You are in love and he or she is "the one." We'll ignore the fact that Facebook has a timeline and you said the same thing six months ago with someone else.

We'll even ignore that fact that your ex is either on your friend's list or you share friends and this seems oddly reminiscent of high school antics to make your former partner jealous. Maybe I've outgrown the need to prove to others that my relationship is on solid ground and we're eachothers soulmates. Or I just don't want to make single friends feel bad. Real relationships are not perfect and full of sunshine and happiness. So if you're only posting about how wonderful things are there is a better chance than not that you are being dishonest.

"Politics overkill"

You and everyone else who has an awareness of the world around them has taken sides with a political view and feels the need to share it. That's fine. It's our right to express our opinions and almost our duty to stand by our beliefs. But if your other posts are of bar hopping, complaining about your parents giving you a curfew at 21yrs old or if you are the type that 'chooses' not to work or in anyway contribute to mainstream society...then there is a chance you are a poor

representation for your convictions. Much like a 'Jesus is my Co-Pilot' bumper sticker on the car of someone who is driving recklessly doesn't really want to make anyone subscribe to the faith.

"Look at my Kid!"

Okay first let me say that I do this all the time! I am damn proud of my children and find them to be the only beautiful thing I have and feel the need to share. It has its benefits. If I didn't create albums on Facebook, I would lose many pictures that I've taken. Like so many others I failed to order prints and just simply upload them to my computer. I'm sure it's annoying to see so many children/baby pictures filling up your newsfeed. Odds are, if you think that way, then you are one of two people...a non-parent or a detached parent who doesn't see one's child as the most amazing part of your life. Again, I'm biased here.

"So & So is a jerk"

Most of the time ranting about someone has to do with a relationship that ended badly. We're on a social media because we like to share and network, so it's only natural to post a few angry comments about someone who has done you wrong. It's those that don't shut up about it, that really need to find some other outlet. If it has to do with an ex and you go on and on about how he cheated on you while you were pregnant or how she hooked up with your best friend, you are creating a response from your friend's list much like a Jerry Springer show audience. The support may give you a uplifting boost but don't assume that when you reconcile that relationship and 'forgive' that person that your friends will do the same. If anything, they may see you in a whole new light and it's not in your favor.

Oversharing is just part of social media. The great thing about facebook which may save your sanity and perhaps some

friendships, is as easy as a settings change. Just click unfollow.

Healthy thing...one woman's perspective on diet and fitness



Does following a diet or fitness regimen involve struggle?

by Jordis Brown

There is nothing more annoying than hearing “the only reason you are not in shape is because YOU don’t want it enough”!

We see it on TV and now online. We hear it from pompous

relatives or newly in shape strangers. There is nothing that is going to bother me more than that sentence. They are all right. I have a million excuses, some very viable, on why I'm not where I should be physically. The overall truth is I haven't wanted to be in shape enough to commit to lifestyle changes. It's hard work!

First I have to break habits then I have to install new ones. Habits that have been there for YEARS! Although there is no cookie cutter method to getting in shape there are some obvious things that need to happen to help the process along.

Eating right for one. There are a million diet plans out there and several food substitutes/shakes, etc. that promise to either help you lose weight or give you the nutritional needs right for your body. I couldn't tell you which one to follow. The truth is any commitment to paying attention to your intake is going to work.

I was Certified in Nutrition many years ago and what I pretty much took from that was how to read a label. Years pass and what doctors can agree on in regards to what we need or can or cannot have changes. The best you can do to help yourself is to understand if there is a pattern in the foods you eat (are they high in sugar, sodium, etc). Read the labels. There are great online sites like sparkpeople.com or even the government site for the food pyramid which allows you to enter the foods you eat (listing many popular brands) and breaks down your nutritional intake. At the end of the day it shows you what you are either missing in your diet or getting too much of. Taking a log of what you eat is more important than what you might believe.

Honestly, you don't always believe things till it's in bold print in-front you. All free of charge.

Exercise. Kind of unavoidable. Just not exactly what you may think. This doesn't mean that you need to hit the gym.

Truth is, if you're not comfortable in a gym environment you're not likely to go very often or stay as long as you should. Think of exercise as any physical activity. Walking is a very basic YET effective form of exercise. Swimming, also a great exercise that's low impact and great for people just getting into shape. I doubt you own an indoor pool, if you do please comment with your number so I can be your new best friend.

The New Bedford YMCA has a great pool and gym. They even have financial assistance available and even if you do not qualify, many health insurances reimburse you for gym memberships. What if you don't like to walk or swim or hit the gym? Do you like to climb? It's the kid in every one of us that looks at a big rock or tree and thinks for a moment what the view might be like from the top. You couldn't keep me from climbing up until I was a younger adult. Now I'm afraid that if I did scale a rockside I'd have to make a very uncomfortable 911 call that would go something like this...

"I'll tell you where I am if you promise no sirens or lights. I just really need help getting down"

There's an indoor facility like Carabiner where they hook you up and you can climb away without fear of gravity or broken shards of glass from teens on rocks. If so far none of these things are appealing then you really have to take another look at that aggravating statement

"The only reason you are not in shape is because YOU don't want it enough"

Being out of shape isn't a number on a scale, your reflection or what others think of you. It's your ability to push your body without hitting a wall too early. It's not being exhausted from walking around a store or too tired to play with your child. It's being able not to hide in layers of clothing and being confident. When you are healthier

physically you are healthier mentally. This is the key to happiness within yourself. Those annoying people who are active, eat right and smile all the time and legitimately happy. Don't you want that for yourself?

I'm a little older this year. So are you. Time will not stop and wait for us to get our act together.

Opinion: Letter to single mothers

By Jordis Brown

This is to all the single mothers. The mothers of young children who are faced with the difficulty of not sharing the physical and emotional hardships and triumphs of being a parent. For whatever reason or whatever path that has brought you to where you are, I wish you strength.

Over the years our area has seen horrific abuse cases involving young children even infants at the hands of the boyfriends of single mothers. Although these are truly the exception to the rule, these incidents did happen. Being a mother, especially a mother to a little one is a blessing with fine print attached. Your little one will trust and love you from day one and that bond is hard to break. Sometimes, being a single mother is too much to deal with and the need to seek out someone to share your life with is overwhelming especially in the beginning years where some women face a great deal of depression. So you start to date while your baby is still a baby or still very young. Although your time is now divided,

you are still the person meant to keep them safe. You may fall in love with a man and he may fill that void. You may spend time all together with your child and in your presence he may be as loving as you are. There is something important to remember...that bond you share with your child is yours and yours alone. You can't assume that someone who loves you will love your child just as much.

You must defend your children from a known threat and the unknown threat of harm. If he loves you, he'll understand and respect you for it. This means that you do not leave your child alone with someone that may have signs of little patience or aggression. Attributes that you may find attractive in a partner may be dangerous in a guise of a possible future step-father. Although your life has taken a serious turn, dating in the beginning should be casual and away from your little one. Start slow, and get to know one another. Set standards and don't make exceptions. If they fall on hard times this isn't your burden to assume. You're already taking care of a child. If there is a rush to move in together re-evaluate how that will affect the stress of the situation. Visiting one another all the time is very different then never leaving. Have the same family oriented goals but make sure that they are actually being worked so they can be realized. It's nice to fantasize and agree on wanting that picket fence life, a whole other story to accomplish it. Especially with the financial burden of children.

Do your research. When you start dating, put off introducing them to your child but welcome being introduced to their family and friends. Find out if he's a hot head or has a history of short relationships with messy outcomes. Your child does not need the drama you may be okay with. It's important for mommy to be happy, healthy and more importantly for that little one to be. With that comes sacrifice. Your child's heart can be broken just as easily. Their safety can be compromised with a distracted parent as well.

Whether or not to date again while your children are young is your decision to make. If the father is involved and hopefully the relationship is good, then it might be worth discussing so there is no strife caused by the shock of you moving on. It's important to do what is right for you child first and foremost and sometimes it means taking a step back and slowing down. Happily ever after is a dream that everyone has and for some reason it did not work out the first time with you. Before trying again, remember that the circumstances have changed and another persons happiness and overall well being is at stake.
