

teens' crossroads



Vol. 22 No. 1 | MICA (P) 067/08/2012 | ISSN 0129-0665



published by:  
Darul Arqam Singapore  
The Muslim Converts'  
Association of Singapore

Treading lightly on Social Media Social Media & Islam

# all things social media

Fastest Finger First Songs of Innocence The Heart Song



Speaking about one of the  
characteristics of the End Times,  
Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said,

**Great distances will  
be traversed in  
short spans of time.**

Narrated by  
Ahmad and Musnad





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## Printed in Singapore by

KHL PRINTING PTE LTD

## Editor's Note

*Communication technology has brought us into an era where nothing seems out of reach, nothing seems impossible to find, and nothing seems limited. With the efficiency and deficiency of the social media, we find ourselves connected to these same tools for social communication daily without hesitation.*

*This edition of TC presents a spread of features that remind us about discovering ourselves and finding our way through the web of interactions that entangles our connectivity in the social media. Acquiring information from online resources, refraining from the negativity that could go viral in discussions, and remembering to be a Muslim with good etiquette are several means to embrace this era, with wisdom and moderation.*

*TC hopes that our readers are inspired to strengthen themselves to be a better person, for a better community, for a better world. May God guide us towards the straight path - even through all the things in social media. Insha'Allah.*



*Aishah Hussein*

Teens' Crossroads is a magazine for youths published three times a year by Darul Arqam Singapore [The Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore].

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# Treading lightly on Social Media

Embrace this communication tool and also be aware of its impact.

TEXT BY SITI ZUBEIDAH A KADIR

About 10 years ago, a poke would be something you do with a stick, a tweet would be a sound coming out of a bird's beak and a tumbler would be something you are really grateful for on that hot, hot day. Today, all three of those happen as a part of daily life on a virtual level, intangible yet impactful. Coming from a generation that lived through three phases i.e. an internet-less era; the emergence of early social networking sites like MySpace, Friendster; and finally the newer more 'sophisticated' sites of Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr, I have to admit, life has never been the same again.

For teens and pre-teens today, most of whom are in that stage where having a social life is nothing less than a necessity, life probably is not complete without such sites to find out what your friends are up to, post photos of what is going on with your own lives, interact with your friends, and make new contacts. And it is not just restricted to friends and strangers; family seems an essential part of these social networking sites as well. Recently it seems, multiple generations have begun to jump on the bandwagon, so much so that it is not at all strange to find an entire family on a social networking site, from the grandfather right to the youngest in the family. Personally, I am neutral towards having such an arrangement, but I do know of people, both teens and adults alike, who would rather bite their legs off than to make their profiles open to family members!





“ Life has never been  
the same again. ”



## Where is your privacy?

On the other end of the stick, there are also users who are absolutely nonchalant about privacy. A few decades ago, George Orwell wrote about 'big brother' keeping tabs and watching everyone's every move in the book called '1984'. I wonder how he would feel about watching some people's status updates, i.e. from letting people know where you are (blame Foursquare), how exactly you feel, to sharing details that should not even be mentioned (think bodily functions). One wonders, where do you draw the line?

The media reports Facebook getting into trouble all the time. Offhand, I remember them getting into trouble for insufficient protection for young children on the site, which prompted the imposition of a minimum user age of 13. Then there is the ever existent privacy issue of what exactly Facebook do with all our personal information.

The debate about the good and bad aspects of social networking sites have been going on since its inception and it sounds oddly similar to the debate about the internet and the dangers involved. Some of these arguments have been repeated again and again so let us just summarise the following points.

## Addicted to virtual reality, neglecting the real world

Hundreds of studies have been done, and most of them argue about the detached sense of reality that some users have with regards to these sites. Teenagers and pre-teens have been found to be at higher risk of 'addiction', i.e. getting distracted from their current responsibilities and focusing on creating an online persona that they believe would accord them more 'status' with their friends. The danger not only lies with the distraction but also the ease to which these vulnerable teens may be made use by paedophiles, or other preying adults.

## Too much information

So far there have not been any cases of identity theft in Singapore but it always pays to be careful. Uploading too much personal information like your address, your educational background, even your contact number, leaves you and your entire household vulnerable.

## Photos that may implicate you later in life

Job hunters have been warned to watch what they upload in social networking sites as employers are increasingly doing background checks on their candidates. Unfortunately, it might be too premature to warn a 15 year old who is not at all concerned with getting a job or even keeping an 'innocent' online persona about the dangers of putting up revealing photos. However it is always good to bear in mind

that what everything you put out there in cyberspace can and will always come back to haunt you.

We have also come to a point where the users of social networking sites are not only the victims, but the perpetrator. Issues highlighted include:

### 1. Cyber bullying that may fall under criminal laws, including harassment

That comment chiding someone might spiral out of control, end up in front of the eyes of hundreds of people and lead to alleged cyber bullying. It is not just legal or criminal suits that can develop; sadly, lives have been lost.

### 2. Neglecting intellectual property rights, especially copyright infringement

What is the big deal about reposting that really interesting picture, or that song that can be so easily shared? The fact is, it does not really belong to you, and your infringement of copyright laws allows the creator to take action against you.

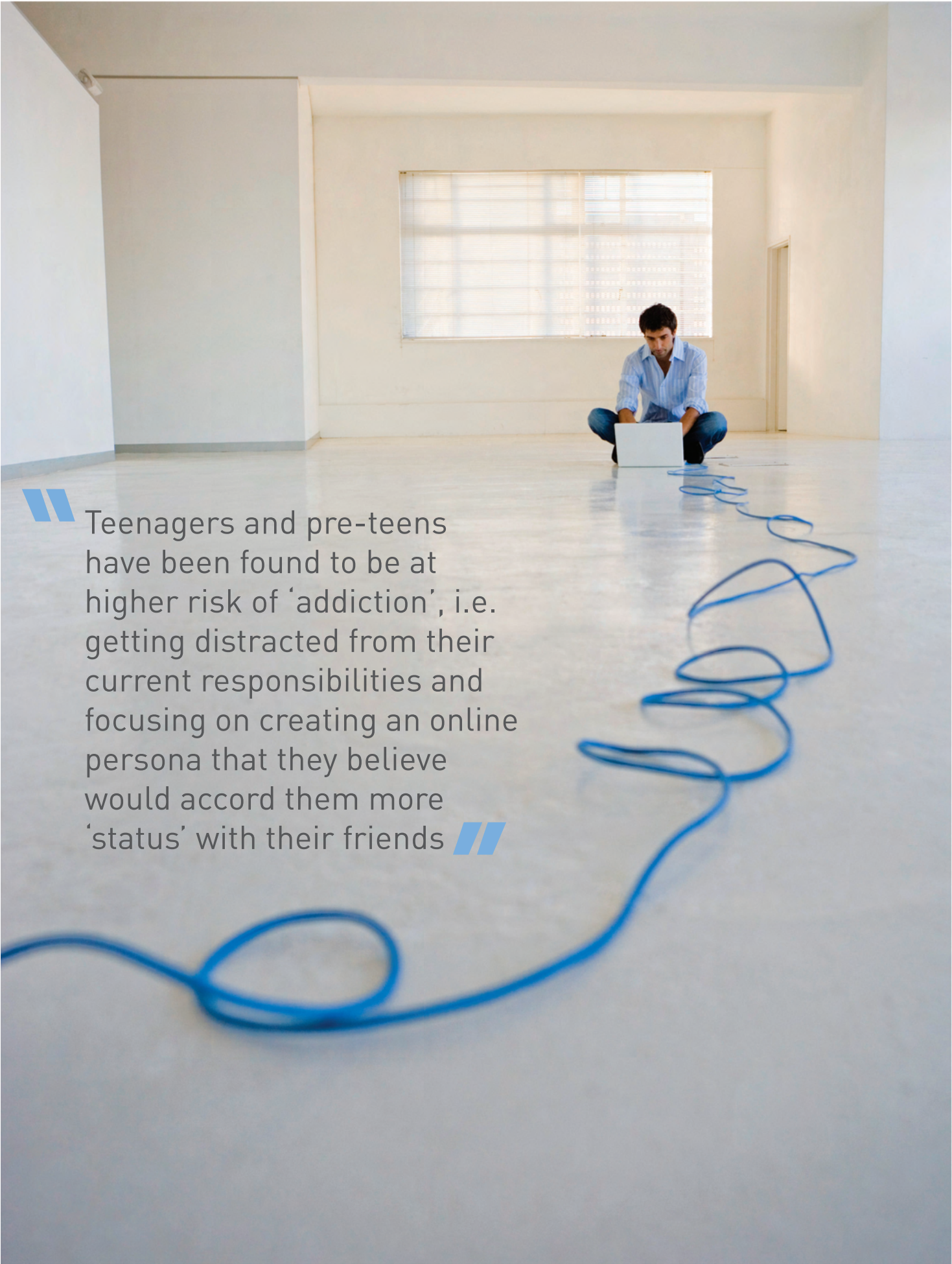
### 3. Defamation

The nature of these social networking sites allows a user to adopt a persona, and sometimes it gets tempting to develop an anonymous one which you would think will remain hidden forever. Unfortunately, this is never the case and defamatory comments can come back and bite you in the 'you-know-where'.

However, when you look at the big picture, social networking sites offer so much more. With necessary precautions, the positive aspects in itself would justify the use.

For Muslims, there is an added element of social networking sites being an added distraction and taking time away from more additional *ibadah* (worship). Sites, like MoslemSpace, millatfacebook, Naseeb, MuslimSocial, Sisters Zone, MuslimGroups, and Salam, were designed to provide an alternative to sites like Facebook. A website which I find particularly useful is Productivemuslim.com which provides useful tips on how to be a better Muslim. Barring the fact that it is the cheaper, more convenient way to keep in touch with distant friends, and relatives even, the fact is that social networking sites create a new information source. Communities get formed with an easy click of a mouse and suddenly there is a whole new world out there that you have never known about. Whether it is to share your interest in a hobby, keen to start a small scale business without much startup cost, or, like in the case of Egypt, start a revolution (highly discouraged in Singapore though), social networking sites are probably your best bet to getting it started. And just like the internet, despite opponents stressing about the dangers of online pornography, identity theft etc., it is still alive and kicking. Facebook and Tumblr might be replaced by another hot new site tomorrow, but like it or not, as long as humans need to communicate, social networking sites are here to stay. **TE**





Teenagers and pre-teens have been found to be at higher risk of 'addiction', i.e. getting distracted from their current responsibilities and focusing on creating an online persona that they believe would accord them more 'status' with their friends





# Songs of Innocence

POEM BY SHASEL

Son, maintain your innocence for as long as possible because once you become an adult, life would be very different as you would be held responsible for every single deed that you do. Son, follow the right religion and do not be easily swayed by eloquent preachers who may not be teaching the right things despite their claims of having great sheikhs or gurus. Son, some people may argue that a manual with some typo errors and contradictions here and there can be forgiven as long as the product is pretty and gives lots of satisfaction.

Son, make a wise decision and pick the faith that brings you not only contentment, joy and peace on this earth but also a place in heaven, and that faith must not be a misguided one. Son, treat animals and fellow humans kindly. Neither abuse others nor be rude to anybody. Be humble at all times even if you knew all the answers and became a very rich merchant. Son, you will face temptations in life that will create lots of confusion. So, learn a lot and do not submit to your desire for many often defy God when seduced by love and passion.



**"WE ARE STUCK  
WITH TECHNOLOGY  
when what we really want  
is just stuff that works."**

~ Douglas Adams, *The Salmon of Doubt*

"First we thought the PC was a calculator. Then we found out how to turn numbers into letters with ASCII, and we thought it was a typewriter. Then we discovered graphics, and we thought it was a television. With the World Wide Web, we've realized it's a brochure."

What do you use the internet for?

"Research, communication, shopping and generally fiddling about. In the old days, writers used to sit in front of a typewriter and stare out of the window. Nowadays, because of the marvels of convergent technology, the thing you type on and the window you stare out of are now the same thing."

#### About this author

Douglas Noël Adams was an English author, comic radio dramatist, and musician. He is best known as the author of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series. *Hitchhiker's* began on radio, and developed into a "trilogy" of five books (which sold more than fifteen million copies during his lifetime) as well as a television series, a comic book series, a computer game, and a feature film that was completed after Adams' death. The series has also been adapted for live theatre using various scripts; the earliest such productions used material newly written by Adams. He was known to some fans as Bop Ad (after his illegible signature), or by his initials "DNA".



*Douglas  
Adams*

born  
in Cambridge, England  
March 11, 1952

died  
May 11, 2001

His fans and friends also knew Adams as an environmental activist and a lover of fast cars, cameras, the Macintosh computer, and other "techno gizmos".

Toward the end of his life he was a sought-after lecturer on topics including technology and the environment.



The background is a complex, abstract composition. It features numerous vibrant, multi-colored light streaks (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple) that sweep across the frame from the bottom and sides towards the top right. These streaks create a sense of motion and energy. Overlaid on this are faint, semi-transparent elements: a large, light blue 'W' on the left, a vertical column of small squares in the center, and large, light grey letters spelling 'Where do' and 'the line?' in the background. The main text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow.

**A few decades ago, George Orwell wrote about 'big brother' keeping tabs and watching everyone's every move in the book called '1984'.**

**W H E R E D O Y O U**

**I wonder how he would feel about watching some people's online status updates, i.e. from letting people know where you are, how exactly you feel, to sharing details that should not even be mentioned.**



# you can DRAW THE LINE?

teens' crossroads





# Social Media & Islam

TEXT BY SAKINA ROSHAN

Social media has become a global phenomenon. The outburst of social networking sites, such as MySpace, Facebook and twitter, facilitates countless opportunities for the exposure of Islam. It provides us with new freedoms to explore and express thoughts once buried deep within ourselves, without any constraints. From being able to initiate a revolution to bringing international awareness to a cause, the power of social networks is not one to be undermined.

How then, can Islam be immune to impacts from such a powerful tool? Well, it isn't.

Today, social media have become part and parcel of our lives. As Muslims, it is imperative that we adhere to our Islamic values and principals online as much as we do offline. However, deviance from Islamic values and behaviour in the virtual sphere could be indeed, but subtle.

## Ease of Information Sharing

As fellow Facebook members, we can recognise the unobstructed view provided to the windows of our social lives to family and friends is quite the 'setting'. We just cannot ignore each other. In essence, social networking eases communication and information sharing to a degree whereby the level of interaction easily transgresses the limits of necessity.

Time spent on delving in matters which does not concern us does little to our benefit. Yet, the ease in which we can do that is troubling to note. The question that arises is: How do we set the benchmark to avoid wasting time during the scrolling down on social networking sites? The answer is simple.

In Islam, manners have been taught to us by the best of creation through the will of our Creator. There is no need to falter in neither our etiquettes nor mannerisms with regard to a virtual or actual arena. Abu Hurayrah(RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, "Indeed among the excellence of a person's Islam is that he leaves alone that which does not concern him." (Chapters on *Zuhd* [Ascetism]): Jami At-Tirmidhi]

This hadith illustrates the need for abstaining from unnecessary chatter and pointless activity as it is a prerequisite for the personality of a *Mu'min* (a faithful Muslim). This does not mean becoming antisocial or reticent on our social platforms but instead, nuancing our responses only to occasions concerning us, for the sake of Allah (SWT) – easier said than done.

## Flourishing Online Debates

Another impact concerns the discourse with and within the Islamic community. Online debates and discussions flourish, lacking the hegemony of religious institutes, allowing Muslims all over the world to connect, define and shape their identities in the global arena. This access is warmly welcome especially by today's youth

as they continue to learn more about Islam. With numerous virtual resources at our disposal, freedom of speech is regularly expanded to its limits.

The ability to establish a one-to-one connectedness on social networks makes this media platform a preferred choice for Muslims to connect with each other outside their mosques. The interconnectedness of these platforms offers multitudes of views and ideas about Islam. It also adds a sense of diversity to the Muslim community. This is necessary to clarify stereotypical notions, both good and bad, about our community in society.

## Watch Our Interaction

The emergence of social networks as the next most prominent platform means it is a suitable background for our *deen* (way of life) to be seen and understood for what it truly is. Significantly, this impact is based on the interaction between our community and everyone else. It is only befitting of us to be inclusive of our non-Muslim friends and not get carried away with our own schools of thought.

Its influential role can determine how perspectives of Islam are shaped or distorted. Therefore, the truest benefit is reaped when the knowledge of Islam spreads outside the enclaves of our *ummah* (community) to those who need it the most. Our online personas could shatter the negative views on Islam or sink them deeper into the quagmire of stereotypes fuelled by the media.

On the other hand, the sharing of Islam can thrive when interactions with members of our community are accessible within a click. The reality of our Islamic community and values comes to light, with the help of social networking, as people get to interact with Muslims. Colloquial, conversational and most importantly, genuine interactions can be forged to help thaw the frozen, prejudiced notions of Muslims. No longer are we boxed away in mosques or religious ambits; we get to make our presence seen, heard and felt – peacefully.

But, we should not take this accessibility for granted. The enslavement of Islamic values and demeanours cannot be dismissed as a thing of the past. Though social networks offer much convincing evidence of our identity, the true persuasion of what Islam stands for and what it means to be a Muslim is achieved through our daily interactions in life and cannot be subjugated to the virtual sphere. The greatest impact of social networking is that it has made this time a better one for Muslims to actively embody the teachings of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Narrated Abu Musa (RA) that when Prophet Muhammad (SAW) sent him and Mu`adh bin Jabal to Yemen, he said to them, "Facilitate things for the people (treat the people in the most agreeable way), and do not make things difficult for them, and give them glad tidings, and let them not have aversion (i.e. to make the people hate good deeds) and you should both work incooperation and mutual understanding, obey each other." (Sahih Bukhari) **TE**





# Islam



**KINDNESS is  
the LANGUAGE  
which the DEAF can hear  
and the BLIND can see.**

**VOLUNTEERS  
needed**

if you enjoy  
research and writing, and  
would like to be actively  
involved in  
producing our publications,  
email to  
[alshah\\_hussein@yahoo.com](mailto:alshah_hussein@yahoo.com)

teens' crossroads





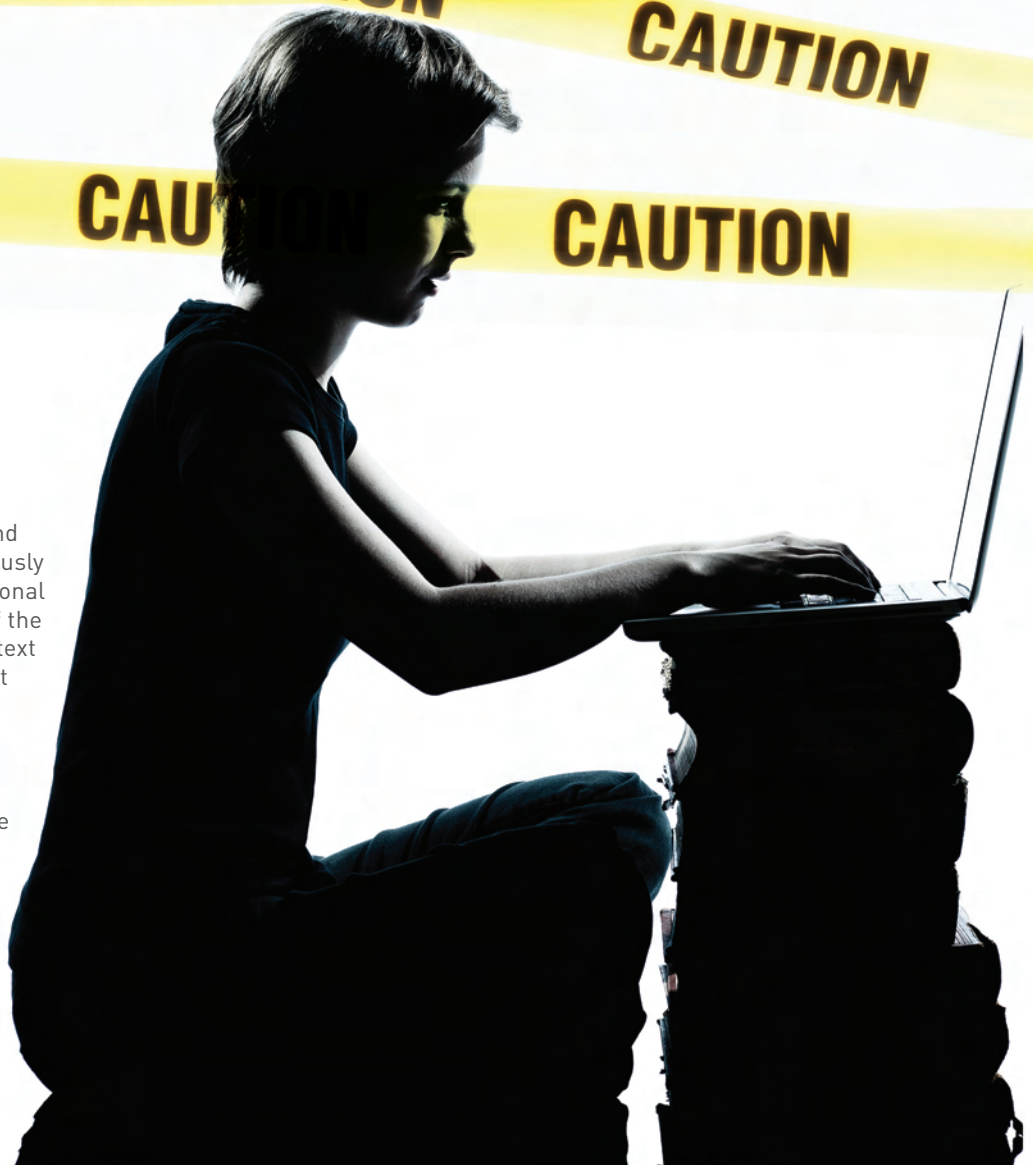
# FASTEST FINGER FIRST

Social networking is a major part of teenage life, but be wary of treading into the zone where negativity breeds.

TEXT BY FIDZ AZMIN

Like a photo, comment on a tweet and follow a person. These jargons obviously are as familiar to you as the navigational menu on your smart phone. Some of the more ambidextrous of you can even text a message without taking a glance at your phone's screen.

Welcome to the world of social networking. Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter are simply some of the sites that make your life more colourful and exhilarating. Not only do they keep you closely connected to your friends and family, these portals also encourage creativity, promote inspiring values, update you on the latest news around the globe and among your peers, as well as help independent businesses flourish.





While social media has its merits and impact on the volatile adolescent years in a good way, it is not utopia. Growing up, you already have a lot to deal with. Throw in a hyper-connected social life to the mix and you get a whole new set of challenges to face as a teenager. Because when keeping tabs becomes too much and grows to the point of obsession, boon might just turn into a great bane.

## Beyond face value

Let's face it. Your social life is far more active online than offline. As an avid user of social media, checking up on the day's updates and posts is a necessity. It lets you catch up on the latest OOTD (outfit of the day) and hip hangouts places, as well as get a glimpse of another person's life, whether they are a celebrity or a classmate.

However, when you start checking whether your sepia-tinted picture on Instagram garnered a thousand 'Likes', whether your Twitter feed elicited comments more frequently than usual, or when you take the time to check into every location you pass by including the bathroom, it is possible that you have turned into a social media addict. This happens when the time spent online spins out of control because access to these platforms is too easy and, literally, at our fingertips.

You can get distracted from schoolwork and start isolating yourself from family and friends. This addiction can also be hazardous to your self-esteem and physical health. How many times have you felt horribly incompetent and less than perfect while looking at the latest photograph of a popular blogger? Yet, you frantically return to her profile page to view more pictures, in the hope of finding a flaw somewhere. Can you keep track of the countless times you wish you had her sharp nose, flawless complexion and beautiful eyes?

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross says, "The most beautiful people are those who have known defeat, suffering, struggle and loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These people have an appreciation, a sensitivity and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."

Jealousy is a negative, regressive state of mind that can breed from being too active online. An overwhelming feeling of envy might just be fuel for irrational hatred. To avoid letting resentment overwhelm you, start by changing how you feel about yourself. Instead of trying to live up to the image of perfection in your mind, find a way to embrace your flaws and love your strengths. You may hate your button nose, but a loved one might find it adorable. Or start with a little game by asking your closest friends what they find beautiful about you, and do the same for them. Allah (SWT) has made all of His creations beautiful and we have to be thankful that we are born healthy.

## Through thick and thin

"I am so fat and flabby. I hate myself", you say. Yes, we have all been there. In fact, it is proven that we always perceive ourselves to be a lot bigger than we really are. Scrolling through pictures of svelte celebrities and sexy models on Pinterest does not make it any better. In fact, it might just aggravate our insecurities and hinder us from embracing our imperfections. Instead of being motivated to practise a healthier lifestyle by eating well and exercising regularly, most turn to fast slimming tricks online. Worse, it may lead one to become bulimic or anorexic.

Islam's holistic approach to life offers us the ability to stay fit. In order to fulfil the obligations in the five pillars of Islam, we are required to be of sound health. As Muslims, it is vital that we keep ourselves in the pink of health, not starving and emaciated. Frankly, a body with bony limbs and a protruding ribcage is not the most attractive. We are encouraged to keep weight down, not for the sake of vanity, but health. The Quran says, "Eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for God loves not the wasters" (Al-Araf, 07:31). A Muslim eats to live, not lives to eat. In a nutshell, moderation is key.

Exercise is also vital as it complements a healthy diet. If going to the gym does not get you going, kick-start the weekend with exhilarating activities like canoeing and trekking, or take an evening dip with a close friend. Not only will you be at the receiving end of endless gratification, you will also enjoy a toned and trim body that beats those photoshopped pictures on Tumblr!


## Gossip girls

No one enjoys being gossiped about. In fact, gossiping is a form of indirect bullying where its purpose is to socially humiliate or hurt a person. Unfortunately, as it is easier for one to verbally abuse others online than it is face-to-face, social networking sites provide the perfect breeding ground for such negativity.

As a teenager, there is also a tendency to conform to what is deemed popular without considering if it is right or wrong. Most of you might even be unaware of the damage caused when you make a nasty comment online. You might even be guilty of spreading malicious lies about a person and harassing them online.

To prevent these negative behavioural tendencies from amplifying, let us start by being a responsible young adult. Imagine what it is like to be in the other person's shoes and how it feels to have false accusations hurled at you. Else, go out and play! Having an active social life outside the Internet is not only good for your soul, it lets you connect with friends and family even better than social networking sites ever will. **TE**





“ To avoid letting resentment overwhelm you, start by changing how you feel about yourself. Instead of trying to live up to the image of perfection in your mind, find a way to embrace your flaws and love your strengths ”



# The Heart Song

POEM BY SHASEL

How wonderful  
our life would be  
if by just reading  
a good story  
we can be what  
we want to be  
and achieve a  
great victory.  
How awesome  
our life would be  
if by just hearing  
a powerful song  
we can feel as  
high as can be  
and stay happy  
all day long.

Songs and stories  
are essential food  
for our mental and  
spiritual well-being  
only partake  
what is good  
to be a wise  
human being.  
Bards and writers  
be very aware  
of the power  
of your words  
broken things  
we can repair  
but not a heart  
we badly hurt.

Hearts react to  
things of beauty  
as worshippers  
to a prayer call  
take this song  
of humanity  
as a reminder  
to one and all.





Through the mind and ingenuity of  
man, it is Allah that creates new  
things hitherto unknown to man

**And He has created  
(other) things of  
which you have no  
knowledge.**

An-Nahl,  
The Bees,  
16:08

