

Breaking up in Internet age adds a layer of pain

By Nick Bilton, New York Times

The last thing I remember was the tears running in rivulets down my cheek as I confirmed that, yes, I did want to delete the picture on my Facebook page.

Several hours later, I, grossly hung over, was awoken by a flash flood of the rising sun through my hotel room. My face looked like Bubble Wrap after I fell asleep (likely with a thud) on the carpeted floor. And a bottle of whiskey, now empty, lay stranded amid a ruin of scrunched tissues, dried from my tears and snot, which sat in a makeshift shrine around me.

For a moment, as I started to piece together where I was, how I got there and what had happened the night before, I looked over at my laptop, which was clammed-open on the floor, and I felt sick to my stomach, not from the hangover but even worse, from what might be waiting to greet me on the Internet.

“Please God, let them be gone,” I thought. “All of them – gone.”

This had all begun a few weeks earlier, when my wife at the time and I decided to get a divorce. Saying goodbye was difficult, but removing a life we had both lived online for the better part of a decade proved to be close to impossible.

The web was littered with pictures, videos, check-ins, likes and tweets of our every moment. Now that online reality show that I produced, directed and starred in was there to remind me in an almost demonic tone that I was single and that those images weren't going anywhere.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other sites are happy to lure you to post every intricate moment of your relationships online. Yet when things go wrong, these social tombs do nothing to help people easily delete those memories.

If breaking up is hard to do, breaking up in the age of social media is unfathomable.

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