

Facebook tries to ease heartache of breakups with new tool (Update)

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This July 16, 2013 file photo shows a sign at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif. The heartache of a broken relationship may soon become less painful on Facebook. The world's largest social network is trying to help people who have split up with a spouse or lover, offering a new feature that spares them from constantly seeing their former partner's posts and pictures in their news feed. (AP Photo/Ben Margot, File)

Facebook is trying to ease the heartache of breaking up.

A feature announced Thursday will allow people who have split up with a spouse or partner to turn on an option that spares them the emotional pain of constantly seeing their ex-lover's posts and pictures in their news feed on the world's largest social network.

Facebook will begin testing the breakup protection on mobile devices in the U.S. before deciding whether to offer it to all of its 1.5 billion accountholders worldwide.

The option is designed for people who don't want to risk offending a former husband, wife, girlfriend or boyfriend by taking the more extreme step of ejecting or blocking them from their Facebook network.

After changing their relationship status on Facebook, people will also be allowed to remove their names from past posts linking them to a former partner.

"This work is part of our ongoing effort to develop resources for people who may be going through difficult moments in their lives," Facebook product manager Kelly Winters wrote in a blog post.

The breakup protection serves as another reminder of how deeply ingrained Facebook has become in society. More than 1 billion people now hang out on Facebook at least once a day and those who have the network's addictive mobile application installed on their smartphones tend to visit even more frequently.

The Menlo Park, California, company has incentive to try to keep its users as happy as possible. People who become upset with what appears in their Facebook feeds are more likely to avoid coming to the network, depriving the company of the opportunity to collect more information about their preferences and show them ads aimed at those interests.

The formula has turned Facebook into a huge success story since Mark Zuckerberg founded the service in a Harvard University dorm room more than a decade ago. Facebook's market value now stands at \$300 billion.

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