


Facebook status: Divorced. Why millennials 'killed' how you decouple in the digital age

 [desmoinesregister.com/story/money/2019/02/08/millennials-killed-divorce-how-decouple-facebook-online-real-life/2477581002](https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/2019/02/08/millennials-killed-divorce-how-decouple-facebook-online-real-life/2477581002)

Ryan W. Miller, USA TODAY Published 11:57 a.m. CT Feb. 8, 2019 | Updated 11:49 a.m. CT Feb. 11, 2019

Rosina Bosco and her then-husband were like many couples she saw on Facebook.

They regularly posted photos on vacations, at concerts and of the activities they did together.

Her social media feeds were always bombarded with images of friends getting together and having families. "All you see on social media is weddings and babies," she said.

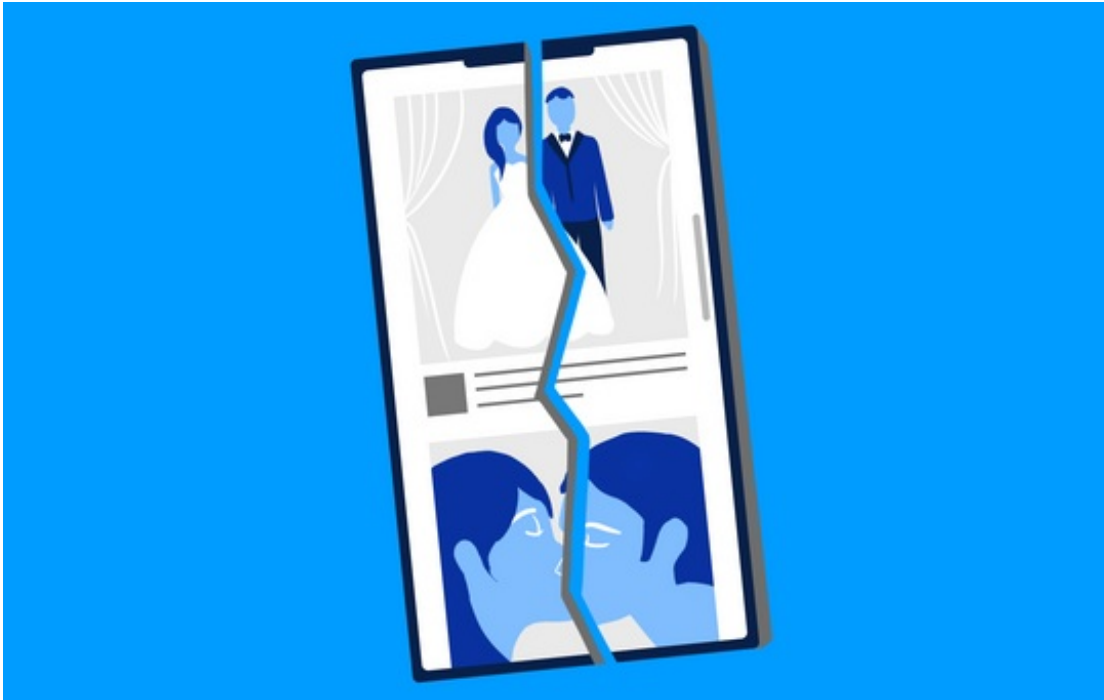
So when it came to updating her profiles after her divorce, it was "incredibly painful."

"All of a sudden I have to basically shed half of my world," said Bosco, 34. "Five years of our relationship was up on Facebook. Like, what are you supposed to do?"

A friend came over one day to go through it. "She would say a name, and I would say, 'yes,' and she would de-friend them," Bosco said. For photos, the task became too challenging, so she created a new profile.

Today, Bosco is in increasingly rare company – divorced and millennial. In September, millennials made headlines for "killing" divorce when research found that the U.S. divorce rate dropped from 2008 to 2017 and that younger couples were driving the trend.

Even so, those getting divorced face an array of changes – decoupling on social media, swiping through dating apps and utilizing online legal services – that comes with splitting in the digital era.



Divorced millennials face an array of changes – decoupling on social media, swiping through dating apps and utilizing online legal services – that comes with splitting in the digital era. (Photo: Teresa Lo, USA TODAY)

Social splits

"Social media can be this knife that stabs into your wound and makes it worse," Bosco said.

Dealing with her social media presence was one of the hardest parts of moving on. She said she wished there was a "101"-guide on being a divorcee online.

New York divorce attorney Bryan M. Goldstein, a millennial himself, said he's seen firsthand how social media impacts his clients.

Whether it's deleting accounts or seeing posts from an ex, using the platforms can be challenging right after a split, said Goldstein, 35.

Dating apps also present new hurdles.

Swiping on the apps after a long-term relationship felt foreign, Bosco noted. "I had to pretend I wasn't recently divorced," she said.

However, apps can make it easier to "get back out there" once a person is ready, Goldstein said.

New lawyer's office

New digital tools can help with navigating the tricky and sometimes archaic process of legally splitting.

Storey Jones, 55, founded [dtour.life](#) as a platform to better facilitate divorces in the digital age. One goal: remove some of the financial stress associated with divorce.

"There's so much chaos and lack of clarity about what (divorce) is, it becomes a black vortex of fear," Jones said.

Dtour.life users can create a dashboard to navigate documents and financial records. They enter bank account information, log assets and debt, track expenses and manage other aspects of their divorce digitally.

While Jones knows technology alone won't make divorce easier on couples emotionally, she hopes the product can make the process more straightforward.

"So much of the 'hating' and animosity honestly comes from a fear of not knowing how they're going to be at the end of the day," Jones said.

Processing a split in a digital way is essential for millennials, Jones and divorce attorneys say. For one, legal bills shrink because attorneys spend less time sifting through paperwork, and clients can have a "smarter hour" with lawyers, Jones said.

"It certainly makes my job easier," Goldstein said. Because millennial clients are digitally organized, using an online tool is natural.

"Rather than making a phone call, a digital platform allows them to communicate when they want to, on their time frame," said Dallas-based divorce attorney Elizabeth Hunter. "And it allows the lawyer the same thing."

On the flip side, millennials are also looking online to prepare for marriage. For example, writing up a prenuptial agreement.

"I don't have to go to an office and sit in a big leather chair and wait in the lobby. I can sit and talk with my (soon-to-be) spouse, pop open the app and say, 'Let's do this together,'" said Dave Coffey of LegalShield.

LegalShield connects clients with attorneys for a variety of legal services, and users can fill out questionnaires to start up prenuptial agreements and divorce proceedings.

Did 'millennials' really 'kill' divorce?

The millennial generation takes a lot of heat. They're accused of "killing" [bras](#), [top sheets](#) and [chain restaurants](#). They love [eating avocado toast](#) and [taking selfies](#).

Last year, divorce was added to the graveyard after University of Maryland sociology professor Philip Cohen found that since the 1990s, the prevalence of divorce for people under age 45 has leveled off, whereas it continues to rise for people over 45.

According to [Pew Research](#), millennials are those born between 1981 and 1996.

But Cohen, who doesn't like the term millennial, said many generalizations for that wide-ranging age group can be too broad. "The category of millennials really doesn't make much sense."

For example, the Great Recession in the late 2000s divides millennials depending upon whether they had graduated college, Cohen noted. And the demographic makeup of the generation is much more diverse than past ones.

As a result, seemingly arbitrary characterizations of who a millennial is arise.

"If you draw those lines by the categories, you can make a story that's not a real story, and you end up giving a character that is not justified," Cohen said.

Divorced but equals

For young people who do marry, they often wait until they're further along in their careers and more highly educated.

LegalShield has seen a seven-time increase in users' prenuptial agreements within the app in the past year, with millennials contributing to 40 percent of that growth, Coffey said.

Goldstein has also seen more prenups in recent years as millennials enter marriage with more wealth. Why? Younger clients view their spouses as equals more so than past generations. That's tamed some of the stigma around them.

"They don't look at their spouses the way our grandparents did," Goldstein said.

As for divorce, even though it's rarer for millennials, it's also less wrought with stigma.

In one case, Hunter's client posted a photo on social media with their ex, smiling as they held finalized divorce papers.

"(Millennials) want to be different and better," Hunter said. "If they end up going through a divorce, they don't approach each other the same way as prior generations."

Follow USA TODAY's Ryan Miller Twitter [@RyanW_Miller](#)