

None of Your Business

My generation may have been the last one born in which privacy was the default rather than the exception. Of course, it didn't take long for that to change.

In my younger years I saw the birth of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat – just about every social media tool there is. As more of these platforms gained popularity with me and my friends, our default attitude about life changed.

Once upon a time we might have asked: “will I share this with someone?”

Now we go somewhere on a trip, hike some mountains, have some interesting days at work – and the default mode is to think that we'll share it somehow. Sharing is inextricable from the activity. Every photo taken is a memory we want to show someone else. Every life change or major event is publicly accessible within minutes, hours, or days. We post the photos on Instagram, or Facebook, and the news is out – perhaps to most of our network of friends and family and random people – in one fell swoop. **We don't demand anything of anyone for profound access to our lives.**

This is a very interesting change. And it's not necessarily bad. We're humans: we like to share things, and we like to look cool. That is not going to change.

But it's still worth noticing – and worth understanding how strange it is in the grand scheme of history.

Most of our predecessors got to experience what it was like to have anonymous or private experiences that people never found out about – or at least found out about later. People had to actually ask them what they were up to: “where are you moving?” “What are you doing for work?” “Do you have a girlfriend?”. And our pre-digital predecessors had to make the decision on a case by case basis about whether to share and how much to share.

What if things were still like this? What if you didn't broadcast everything out to a wide audience? If you don't know or can't remember, it's probably a sign.

Privacy is not everything. But we shouldn't deny ourselves the experience of being the only one “in the know” (about good stuff – not just bad stuff) for a while. We might want to get more comfortable with the phrase “none of your business.” **We might expect people to earn more trust and more respect before we tell them our plans, hopes, dreams, and doings.**

Originally published at JamesWalpole.com.