

We should ban children from social media before it ruins their futures

Luckily, my son is too young to know what social media is, but when he finds out, I'm going to prohibit him from using it – for his own good

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I was going to start by saying that social media is the most dangerous invention since the nuclear bomb. But then I realised that it would be an absurd piece of hyperbole. After all, you can easily argue that nuclear weapons help to preserve peace. On social media, by contrast, people do nothing but fight. So really, social media is far worse.

There are two main reasons it is so dreadful. The first is that it's full of people expressing opinions we disagree with.

Before the advent of social media, this wasn't something we had to put up with all that much. That was because we formed friendships with people who thought much the same way as we did; we married people who thought much the same way as we did; and we only read whichever newspaper best reflected the world as we saw it.

Of course, we were at least dimly aware that, in society as a whole, there existed people who held opinions that were different from our own. But we tended not to marry those people, or to read their newspapers. As a result, we were able to live undisturbed in our happy, soundproof little bubbles.

Social media, however, has made that impossible. Because on social media we're perpetually bombarded by opinions different from our own, and links to articles that contradict, or even ridicule, our view of the world. The experience is both confusing and upsetting. Until now, we simply had no idea that other people were so stupid, rude and intolerant. Why can't they just be intelligent, pleasant and generous, like us?

In short: we were a lot better off when we didn't know what other people thought all the time. And, by the same token, we were a lot better off when other people didn't know what we thought all the time, either.

Because this is the second big problem with social media. The opinions we express on it can be held against us – not just now, but for the rest of our lives.

As reported in *The Telegraph* this week, children are now being warned that their future careers could be jeopardised by their old tweets and online comments. A tweet considered "offensive" can be recorded by the police as a "non-crime hate incident", which will show up when prospective employers carry out a background check. It could very easily put those employers off.

Even if the police don't get involved, a childhood tweet can still cost you your job. Take the recent example of Alexi McCammond. Last month she lost her new job as editor of *Teen*