

**FRIEND REQUEST**

**BY**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dear Reader	v
<b>OFFLINE: IN THE BEGINNING (1996-2004)</b>	<b>1</b>
Note	3
Age Six	5
Age Seven	9
Age Eight	11
Age Nine	13
Age Ten	15
Age Eleven	17
Age Twelve	19
Age Thirteen	21
Age Fourteen (part one)	23
<b>CONNECTING THE LOST INTROVERT (2004-2010)</b>	<b>29</b>
Age Fourteen (part two)	31
Age Fifteen	39
Age Sixteen	45
Age Seventeen	49
Age Eighteen	53
Age Nineteen	57
<b>CONNECTED FOR LIFE (2010+)</b>	<b>63</b>
Age Twenty	65
Age Twenty-One	69
Age Twenty-Two	73



Dear Reader,

Would you say that the first thing you do in the morning is pee? Perhaps you do more than pee, that's neither here nor there. Nevertheless I would like you to think about it; going to the bathroom. Just for a second. Think about waking up and dragging yourself to the office for your first business transaction of the day. And you don't have to share any of this information (nobody wants to picture that), but just keep it in your head for now. Standard morning procedure, right? Unless somebody else is using the bathroom at that moment, chances are you don't think about what you're doing, you just do it because the first thought in the morning is "I need to pee". You get it over with so you can start your day. Right?

Why am I asking you all of this? What kind of sick person asks you to think about using the bathroom for no good reason? Hold that thought! Let me see if I can justify my bizarre curiosity by using my own morning routine as an example.

When I first wake up in the morning (and sometimes my "morning" is well into the afternoon, but that's okay, right?) I don't pee! Nope, no pee. Chances are that I do, in fact, have to pee like a son of a gun. I like to think that I keep myself healthy; I try to get my eight glasses of water like every other red-blooded American who knows they're supposed to drink on a daily basis. But, the bathroom (and all of its glory) takes a backseat to my own current morning procedure: I open my eyes, reach out my arm, and pick up my iPhone. I'll know exactly where it is when I wake up because it's always the last thing I look at the night before. I'll lie there on my side, holding my phone in one hand (as if it were my only source of life) and flick my thumb over my Facebook newsfeed. I'll take in

the most trivial information about people I've connected with; such as how many "likes" did my latest picture of Duggie (my cat) get? – The one where he's sitting on top of Cassie's (my girlfriend) homework. What photo has George Takei shared to make me laugh? Why does my friend, Nick, take so many selfies? I'll ponder all of this while rubbing the crust from my eyes with the other hand.

I mentioned that my phone is the last thing I look at before going to sleep, but to say I look at Facebook would be more precise. The thing is, nothing really changes in the six or seven hours that I sleep. I can usually scroll through all the new stories in my feed until I come across things that I'd already seen the night prior. Once that happens, I'll know that it's time (and usually it's been about ten minutes since I first woke up) to relieve my bladder. Then I'll figure out whether or not I should make bacon for breakfast.

Just why is Facebook so important to me? Everybody (okay, almost everybody) uses Facebook. Who cares that I use it too?

Let me just say that social networking in general is important to me. Heck, it's important to anyone who uses it. It's a way to keep in contact with people without having to be in their presence. It doesn't ask for the attention that a phone call requires. But for me, there's precious sentimentality in being connected online; it goes beyond the simple ability of keeping in touch with people. And although Facebook has taken over as my main connectivity tool, it hasn't always been there. I've only been using Facebook since 2008. My story begins in the mid nineties then picks up again in the mid aughts – before college students even had "TheFaceBook".

Where does the precious sentimentality come into play? Well, that will all make sense in due time.

What follows is not just “why I enjoy using the Internet” or “I like Facebook, here’s why,” What follows is an autobiographical telling of how a socially awkward and lonely boy overcame the great loss of his best friend (no, he didn’t die!) and learned how to regain his ability to talk to people. You don’t get a brochure when you’re a teenager entitled “So, You Feel Completely Alone: Here’s What to Do.” I had to figure out what to do on my own.

Hopefully, this will be insightful to some, and perhaps even inspiring for others. Growing up isn’t easy. I’ve learned that it’s okay to feel weak sometimes. I only hope that more people become aware of that.

And I hope this gets plenty of “likes”.

Yours online and off,

Alex