

Facebook spreads emotions among friends

June 06, 2011

San Jose Mercury News:

Next time you feel like broadcasting some gloomy tale of woe on Facebook, you might want to think twice. Your friends could catch your feelings.

Psychologists have long known that emotions, just like germs, are contagious. People exposed to a person experiencing strong emotions may experience similar feelings, catching them through facial expressions, tones of voice or some other means. But now there is a new means of transmission — social media.

Facebook data scientist Adam D.I. Kramer analyzed postings by about 1 million English speakers and their roughly 150 million friends in multiple countries on the social network to show that the words people use in their status updates drive the emotions of their online friends, even days later. Kramer found people who used emotionally loaded words like “happy,” “hug,” “sick,” and “vile” in their status updates sparked similar emotions in later Facebook postings by their friends.

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