

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light pink button-down shirt and dark blue jeans, stands smiling in front of a large, closed red wooden barn door. She is holding a white envelope or folder. A light-colored dog is lying on the grass in front of her. The background shows the side of a white building with a red roofline and some trees with yellowing leaves.

<http://www.dooce.com>

... parents raised me Mormon, and I grew up believing that the Mormon Church was true. In fact, I never had a cup of coffee until I was 23 years old.

I had premarital sex for the first time at age 22, but BY GOD I waited an extra year for the coffee. There had better be a special place in heaven for me....

Blogger: Heather Armstrong, 30, Salt Lake City

WOMEN WHO BLOG

ARE THEY SELF-ABSORBED EXHIBITIONISTS?
GROOVY FREE SPIRITS? OR JUST PLAIN BORED? MEET
THEM AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF. BY JULIE KLAM

MY FACE STILL GETS FLUSHED when I think back to the nightmarish August evening a week before I started seventh grade. I was in my room, probably using two mirrors to see how my butt looked in Gloria Vanderbilt jeans, when I heard the conspiratorial cackle of my two brothers from beyond the door. My diary had fallen into enemy hands. What my brothers were finding so amusing was my list of prospective dates for my senior prom, a mere five years away: 1. Matthew Broderick, 2. Sean Penn, 3. Kevin Bacon, 4. Timothy Hutton. You get the idea. Nobody else was supposed to see this list, and having it read was my personal idea of hell.

For thousands of women today, though, it would have been heaven. Thanks to the phenomenon of blogging—that's short for web logs, or online journals—young women are happily revealing their most intimate thoughts to anyone with Internet access. "It's amazing how much blogging has grown and how mainstream it's become," says Meg Hourihan, cofounder of Pyra, the company that created one of the first blogging applications. According to the *Blog Herald* (yes, there's a *Blog Herald*), there are now more than 50 million blogs worldwide, with postings ranging from the mundane (e.g., on Modblog: "I think I'll go to bed now. Or else see what's on TV") to, well, the even more mundane, such as, "I went to Duane Reade to pick up some toilet paper, kitty litter and paper towels" (thanks, BlindCavefish!).

True, some bloggers are devoting their unlimited airspace to serious discussions about, say, the latest Supreme Court nominee, but most set their sights on more domestic matters—bad sitcom-like husbands, boring jobs, breast-enlargement plans. "There is something going on where we must be always on display—it's the rise of the look-at-me culture," says Mark Crispin Miller, professor of culture and communication at New York University in New York City. Blogging, it seems, is the reality TV for the deskbound crowd.

Now, I'm not immune to this need for validation: I call my mother every morning to relay details of my life. But I do this to save my husband from nodding off when I speak to him later—she helps me get it out of my system. A lot of bloggers need to call my mom. (Note: If you hear flipping newspaper pages, you've lost her.)

When I first entered the blogosphere, I felt as though I had walked into a Barnes & Noble roughly the size of Montana. I just couldn't seem to find any personal blogs worth reading more than once. (Hint: Use technorati.com to search.) And then, just before I went blind, I found dooce.com, written by Heather Armstrong. A bit weird, a little high-strung, sometimes heartbreaking but mostly hilarious, Armstrong's writing mirrors the way I think. Suddenly, blogging made sense to me. Not that I'll be launching julesrules.com anytime soon. However, if you're inspired to jump in, blogger.com and livejournal.com can hook you up. Before you decide, turn the page to meet five women who have blogged and lived to tell the story—for better or for worse.

MY SITE HELPED ME OPEN UP

"I started blogging in 2000 because I was missing a sense of community in my life. I was living in Chicago and working as a children's book editor. My colleagues were nice, but they weren't my age or in the same stage as I was. I was also on Weight Watchers at the time, and it suddenly occurred to me that with a blog, I could connect to people in the world who were also struggling with diets and body issues. I started [poundy.com](http://www.poundy.com), and I couldn't believe the response. For example, I got tons of e-mail about my postings about a refrigerator magnet; in Weight Watchers, when you lose 25 pounds, you get a refrigerator magnet. Every week I thought, this will be my week, but I could not get that damn magnet! Through the blog, I discovered that a lot of other people were really upset that they couldn't get the magnet either. I also got very involved with a group of Chicago bloggers—pretty much every social activity I've been to in the past year has been with them. I feel much less alone now, and I'm much more comfortable in my own skin. I gained confidence in the validity of my point of view, and that, in turn, strengthened my sense of identity. It's funny how life changes—I just read a blog by a woman who said she'd recognized me at the supermarket and was apparently too shy to introduce herself. Like a true blogger, though, she reported what I had in my cart!"



<http://www.poundy.com>

Maybe Hollywood stylists never see fat people outside of Renaissance fairs and think we all dress like serving wenches.... So, nothing else to add for now, except that in my boot camp class I do push-ups just like Wendy the Snapple Lady and when she did a set of standard push-ups that one time I felt sort of personally betrayed.

Blogger: Wendy McClure, 34, Chicago



http://livejournal.com/users/simpson_sachs

... hotel in West Maui. '70s tiki decor abounds, so you can rest assured that Mr. Sachs is a happy man tonight. Sorry to report that **all we've done so far is drink**, eat a pupu platter, which consisted mostly of grease (but delicious grease!)...

Blogger: Christine Sachs, 32, New York City

I BLOGGED WHILE ON MY HONEYMOON

"I started blogging when I was trying to get in shape before my wedding. I felt that being public about it would help keep me on target, and it did. Then after the wedding, my husband, Tony, and I wanted to bring our laptops on our honeymoon to Hawaii so we could download our photos to a picture site. Well, very quickly it stopped being about the pictures and turned into a blog that our friends and family and whoever else started reading. I guess we felt that it was an extension of our wedding: We wanted to share the experience with our loved ones without having to tell the same stories over and over. We organized it so that at the end of the day, sunstroked and tired, we'd come back to our air-conditioned room and write. We didn't blog about everything—we left out the sex. I feel that a blog can be as private as I want to make it. But there are plenty of life milestones I would consider blogging about—going through pregnancy, or if I ever had to battle an illness, and most certainly if I ever go through a divorce!"

I TEND TO OVERSHARE

Blogger: Heather Armstrong
url: dooce.com

"When I first started my blog in 2001, I had recently left a strict Mormon upbringing in Utah, moved to L.A. and was sowing my wild oats, to put it mildly—doing drugs, dating soap stars and a lot of other practices that my family opposed. It wasn't terribly mature of me, but I definitely got a thrill from blogging about the most shocking things I could think of. Now I'm married with a little girl, and that's what I write about, even though it sounds so dull you want to stick a fork in your eye. But I'm probably more open than the average stay-at-home mom. I don't talk about anything that would hurt my friends or family, but I have no problem talking about my own constipation or my daughter's, for that matter. And I'm much more able to work through problems by blogging about them. I also live with a very forgiving husband (who has his own blog). And I adore connecting with people. When I admit that I suffer from depression or that motherhood is much harder than anyone will ever tell you, I get tons of e-mail from my readers, mostly young women like me, who tell me that I say all the things that they want to say but can't."

BURNED BY A BLOG

With practically everyone and their dog starting a blog, it's more likely than ever that someone will blog about you. And you may not like what you read. Rebecca Wakefield, 30, was shocked to discover, after she quit her job at the *Miami New Times*, that she had become the target of some toxic typing by managing editor Jean Carey, who called Wakefield "nasty," "mean," "classless." (Carey was suspended for a week.) Natalie Zfat's Boston University instructor Michael Gee gushed that she was "incredibly hot," with "sloe eyes and bitchin' bod" on his blog. (Zfat dropped the class and Gee was fired.) And Washington, D.C., lawyer Robert Steinbuch is now suing former paramour Jessica Cutler for exposing his fondness for talking dirty and spanking on *washingtonienne.com*. Cutler claims she wasn't out to ruin his life, but Steinbuch has since left his high-profile Capitol Hill job and has already gone down in blogging history. —REBECCA WEBBER

I WAS PERFORMING FOR MY AUDIENCE

"When I started my blog two years ago, I was at a real low point in my life. I had graduated from college with a degree in English and dreamed of becoming a writer but was working in Starbucks for minimum wage. I was broke and single, and a huge stack of bills had forced me to move in with my mother. Feeling lousy and a little desperate, I had the idea of starting a blog to talk about my life as a 'broke-ass chick' looking for a rich man, a sugar daddy. I was sort of joking, but on some level I did want somebody to come into my life and support me. What happened was I began pretty much living for that blog, and sometimes I would do things that I probably wouldn't have done ordinarily, like dating someone I didn't really like, just to have something to tell my readers. I began feeling like I was turning into a character to satisfy my audience! I think I was lonely and craved that attention; I needed for the hit counter to go up and up and up. Slowly, I began to realize that the blog was acting as a crutch—it gave me a big audience without having to do any of the scary things that professional writers do, such as contact editors, network, face rejection. So I decided to give up the blog. Later, in January 2004, I met my current boyfriend, a normal guy, certainly not a sugar daddy. And I'm much happier now not blogging. Still broke but getting there!"

<http://brownsugarbabe.blog-city.com>

...I decided to test him, see if he was generous. After all the dates I've had this year, why keep wasting time? Let's cut right to the chase. **I asked him if he'd buy me a little red sweater** that he helped me pick out. It was \$48; not too bad. He bought the sweater...

Blogger: Alecia Lott, 27, Cincinnati



<http://queenofsky.journalspace.com>

...I have heard some people call my pics "Playboy-like." Apparently **these people have never seen a Playboy.** If you think my pics are similar to *Playboy's*, there is something wrong with you. My pictures...

Blogger: Ellen Simonetti, 31, Austin, Texas

I GOT FIRED

"I had been working for Delta Air Lines for almost eight years when I started 'Diary of a Flight Attendant' in 2004. My blog was my therapy—I had recently lost my mother to cancer. Blogging made me feel better, and I wanted feedback about how other people dealt with loss while working in a job where you're always serving and smiling. One day I posted some pictures of myself goofing around on an empty plane. I thought I was just sharing the photos with my friends, and I never used Delta's name. But then I was suspended from my job; my supervisors said it was because of 'some pictures on the web.' (Delta declined to comment.) I quickly took the pictures offline, but a month later, I was officially fired. I tried to appeal my termination, but then I filed a lawsuit in federal court. If I had it to do all over again, not only would I not have posted the pictures, but I never would have started the blog at all. At this point, very little good has come out of it. I've gotten some press, but with that has come stalkers and weirdos, and it has been difficult to pay the bills. Would I like my old life back? The answer is an unequivocal yes."