**riley** *Today at 5:09 PM*

i'm riley and i'm a 20 year old university student

**svvord** *Today at 5:10 PM*

about since when have you existed on the internet?

**riley** *Today at 5:13 PM*

from probably around 2006 i have memories of the internet but no accounts of my own. following that had restricted internet access from the ages of 8 to 14 (2008-2014) and have had unlimited internet access from then onward. i can remember creating my first account on a website in 2008 and have had many since then.

**svvord** *Today at 5:13 PM*

what kinds of sites did you make accounts on at first?

**riley***Today at 5:16 PM*

my first account i made was on webkinz and i remember it vividly because i still use the same password! following that i was very active on neopets and particularly the discussion forums on neopets. twitter and youtube were also introduced early, along with email and social music sharing sites (grooveshark) that no longer exist. i briefly remember being active on livejournal as well as a few other forums but i quickly moved on from that to more mainstream social media.

**svvord** *Today at 5:17 PM*

what was neopets like?

**riley** *Today at 5:21 PM*

it's interesting to look back as an adult because neopets was literally just a heavily modded forum. i was the youngest person i knew there and lied about my age (to the tune of adding ten entire years) because everyone i knew there was in uni and my middle school in response felt weird. there were two separate boards i frequented. one when i was younger which was more so a "whatever you want" type board where you could start a chat thread about pretty much anything (child appropriate) and just kind of pray that people would reply. a lot of this was early fandom and general media stuff and fanbase scragglers at the time who didn't find homes elsewhere, i suppose. the other board was more geared towards the actual game and trading/bartering pets which i assume is irrelevant.

**svvord** *Today at 5:22 PM*

Lying about being older online is definitely common lol

**riley** *Today at 5:23 PM*

yeah it's concerning in retrospect but i don't know how to make it seem concerning from jump. that's the question isn't it.

for people currently engaging in it that is

**svvord** *Today at 5:24 PM*

yeah, it's interesting! did you have specific ways you tried to pretend to be older, or only when ages were brought up?

**riley** *Today at 5:26 PM*

oh absolutely! i actually recently got back into my old account and i had a fake major listed as well as constant chatter all over my page about the girlfriend i had had at the time (my 8th grade girlfriend) where i exaggerated the length and closeness of our relationship (cus it wasn't that long or close because we were in 8TH GRADE) as well as using catfish pictures to represent myself. at some point i also started making secondary accounts to be my friends which was really going too far but. honesty is honesty and it's been years and that's true lol. i think that was after neopets though.

**svvord** *Today at 5:27 PM*

Wow that's so elaborate, though kind of genius for selling it?

**riley** *Today at 5:27 PM*

thanks i'm naturally a very committed person. i think it's the adhd lol. i wanted to fit in soooo bad.

**svvord** *Today at 5:28 PM*

You say making the extra accounts was after neopets, was that on more mainstream social media then?

**riley** *Today at 5:30 PM*

no thank god. i don't think that ever reached twitter that was on whatever sites i was flitting around on in the interim between them.

grooveshark i guess but literally no one knows what that is anymore

**svvord** *Today at 5:30 PM*

Tell me about grooveshark!

Because you're right, I have no idea what that is lol.

**riley** *Today at 5:32 PM*

sorry if all this info isn't helpful i still lied on twitter if that helps and is more important but grooveshark was basically a music streaming site that allowed you to broadcast what you were listening to to others and chat in the broadcasts

**svvord** *Today at 5:35 PM*

oh no everything is good!

what kind of things did you chat about in broadcasts?

**riley** *Today at 5:36 PM*

in that case i have this screenshot cus i think it's a hilarious relic and alsooo

that's a great question i guess we talked about anything and everything. school, anime, whatever music we were listening to, dating. i still have friends from there which is surreal and they're the only cishet men i've ever befriended on the internet. it was a shitty site and it was basically the wild west (unmodded and completely illegal which is why it doesn't exist anymore) but it was like my big start in trying to have a persona bc i was fairly popular

**svvord** *Today at 5:38 PM*

what would you say that persona was like?

**riley** *Today at 5:44 PM*

i've always gone by r names so my first persona went by rei and was very much the antithesis of everything i am now (but this is also pre a huge trauma so i don't know how much this might play into it). i was very much an extrovert, the mom friend, very quirky xD. i got into a fair amount of arguments over stupid shit i can't remember (notable only because i am so incredibly non confrontational now) i definitely made drama to be interesting and like heavily leaned into being LOUD and popular (in a way that was mostly affected) it's so stupid how kids are on the internet i feel like everyone starts out screaming into the void as loudly as they can

quirky xD as a phrase i did not genuinely use that emoji

**svvord** *Today at 5:45 PM*

it really do be like that! a lot of the time it felt like you had to be loud to exist online

what kind of friends did you make with that persona?

**riley** *Today at 5:51 PM*

cishet ones and people who i would Never interact with if i met them today. one of them is now in the marines and the other one is a pretty severe meth addict. which you know some judgement to the first guy but otherwise it's just not the kind of people you meet in my current communities. it was very much a different space and it's weird to think about.

**svvord** *Today at 5:52 PM*

do you still keep up with them? and how have you tailored your online experience today?

**riley** *Today at 5:56 PM*

i do keep up with both of them! we talk on snapchat at least monthly and i talk to one of them like bi weekly which is such a strange thought. i have very much tailored my online experience to be an echo chamber (in a good way?). i don't seek out any discomfort because i dislike my day to day life and have for years so twitter is kind of a safe haven. i have toooons of words and people muted and i fully refuse to argue with anyone and people like that get straight up hard blocked - fyi this is not about just politics actually it's mostly not about politics but i also really dislike hearing repugnant political opinions and filter that shit out as best i can as i get older. my closest friends are people who are extremely similar to me which i guess is the difference im now seeing while thinking about it.

i had a very unsafe 2 year long twitter friendship and since then i am just so quick to hardblock when i'm not feeling it. everything is safe space for me when i'm in control and i mean that unironically

**svvord** *Today at 5:59 PM*

honestly that's probably really healthy in practice!

**riley** *Today at 6:00 PM*

it can be but it also is an avoidant behavior and is sort of like when you're overly sanitary and never build up an immunity to germs and become so healthy you're unhealthy . it's a time bomb.

**svvord** *Today at 6:02 PM*

that's an interesting way to put it do you feel like that's how others might perceive it, or are you worried about how it'll affect you?

**riley** *Today at 6:04 PM*

well it's definitely how i think my therapist would look at it if she comprehended it. i haven't ever really thought about it hard enough to perceive it at all so i guess it's how i think others perceive it but subconsciously i feel the danger. when i see people acting up irl it just becomes worse and worse and harder to handle with the passing time lol...i think lol safe space people also don't think about it hard enough to see it that way though ngl

**svvord** *Today at 6:06 PM*

that's very fair! its so easy to see when people have Too Online Disease

**riley** *Today at 6:07 PM*

HAHA the clinical term...

it's terminal :cry:

**svvord** *Today at 6:07 PM*

:pensive:

at the same time, do you feel like you're better able to be more "genuine" to yourself online now that you've made a safe space for yourself?

**riley** *Today at 6:08 PM*

it's difficult because i feel like...not to go too far but it's like

since i've been crafting myself personas since i was so young i can't tell the difference anymore and i have no way of telling who i would genuinely be online and who is crafted. there is such a major disconnect between my closeted irl self and my long time male online self that even if my behavior is genuine they're two people in my mind?? if that makes sense

even in my dreams i hear two separate names and know of two separate selves that they imply???

like if my girlfriend is there i'll be called riley and know how to respond and if my mother is there i'll be called emma and know how to respond.

**svvord** *Today at 6:13 PM*

that isn't too far at all!

do you consider a "genuine" version of yourself different from something you can be either in person, and thus attached to your physical self, or one where you decide all the variables as your online self?

**riley** *Today at 6:18 PM*

i feel like it truly exists only in my mind because both social selves are affected but if i had to choose i would say my online self is closer. but only Just barely and only fairly recently ... this is interesting to think about. i think controlling the variables gives the power to be the true genuine self but the willpower required for that is a huge hurdle .....

did i answer that right?

**svvord** *Today at 6:18 PM*

oh yeah totally!

what kind of hurdles do you consider there to be online?

**riley** *Today at 6:22 PM*

i guess that i think that when given the opportunity to present yourself in any way you choose because you're starting from blank it is harder to do it genuinely than it is to lie or exaggerate or purposefully paint a picture. especially if you're trying to make friends or build a following aka attract attention. it's hard to paint yourself unobjectively in general but it's even harder under this circumstance i think