

Summarized [from a post by Professor Professor Daniel J. Solove of teachprivacy.com](#)

10 Reasons Privacy Matters

Many struggle to articulate why privacy is so important. Here are 10 reasons privacy matters.

1. Limit on Power

Those that know about you have power over you. Your data can be used to influence your decisions and shape your behaviour. It can be used to exercise control over you. In the wrong hands, it can be used to cause harm. Protecting your privacy limits that power.

2. Respect for Individuals

If someone has a desire to keep something private, even another might deem that matter trivial, it is disrespectful to ignore that person's wishes, without compelling reason.

3. Reputation Management

How we are judged by others affects our opportunities, our relationships, our entire well-being. We can't have complete control over our reputations, but we must have some ability to protect them. That means not only protecting them against falsehood, but from certain truths. Knowing private details about someone does not necessarily lead to more accurate judgment of them. People judge badly, they judge in haste, they judge out of context, they judge without hearing the whole story, they judge with hypocrisy. Privacy helps people protect their reputation.

4. Maintaining Appropriate Social Boundaries

People naturally establish boundaries from each other, both physical and informational. We need places of solitude to retreat to, free from the gaze of others, in order to relax and feel at ease. Boundaries differ from relationship to relationship. Breaches of boundaries can damage relationships. Privacy helps protect these boundaries.

5. Trust

In any relationship, whether personal, professional, governmental or commercial, from lawyer to lover, from doctor to friend, trust is key. Breaches of confidentiality are breaches of that trust. When trust is breached in one relationship, it could make us more reluctant to trust in other relationships.

6. Control Over One's Destiny

Personal data is essential to so many decisions made about us - whether we get a job, a loan or a licence; where we can travel; what messages we receive and what content we see. With little knowledge of nor any say in what data is being used and how, with no power to object nor ability to amend that data, we are virtually helpless. It is a betrayal of basic freedom, if so many decisions about us are being made without our awareness or participation.

7. Freedom of Thought and Speech

Privacy is key to freedom of thought. A watchful eye over what we read or watch can deter us from exploring new ideas outside the mainstream, ideas that family, friends, colleagues or even society may dislike. We may want to criticize people we know to others, yet not share that criticism with the world; we may want to express thoughts to some, but not to all.

8. Freedom of Social and Political Activities

We protect privacy at the ballot so that people can vote with their true conscience. Privacy prior to the vote is as important, because that is when we discuss and form our political beliefs. The watchful eye can disrupt and unduly influence these activities. Privacy helps protect our ability to associate with others and engage in political activity. It is a key component of freedom of political association.

9. Ability to Change and Have Second Chances

People develop; they change. There is a great value in the ability to have a second chance, to be able to move beyond a mistake, to be able to reinvent oneself. Privacy allows people to grow and mature without being shackled by the foolish things they might have said or done in the past. Certainly, not all misdeeds should be shielded, but some should be, otherwise we discourage growth and improvement.

10. Not Having to Explain or Justify Oneself

We may do a lot of things, which, if judged from afar by others who lack complete knowledge or understanding, may seem odd or embarrassing or worse. Privacy protects against having to worry about how actions are perceived and against constantly having to justify them.

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