

DANGERS OF TECHNOLOGY: APPS TO BE ON LOOKOUT FOR



Whisper - This application allows you to post secrets anonymously and also allows you to chat with other users in your geographic area. Many children are drawn to communicating with strangers, feeling that their secrets are safer with them than with their friends. This application is a perfect tool for ill-intentioned strangers looking to connect with young people because it allows you to exchange messages with people nearest to you (so anonymity can be easily lost).



kik- This is a free application-based alternative texting service that allows texts/pictures to be sent without being logged in the phone history. This application makes it easier for your child to talk to strangers without your knowledge since it bypasses the wireless providers' short message services (SMS.) Children also think they can "sext" without parents finding out. In addition, strangers can send your child a "friend request."



Snapchat- Allows you to capture an image or video and make it available to a recipient for a specific time. After that time limit is up, the picture/video automatically disappears forever...or so Snapchat claims. Kids can receive (or send) sexually inappropriate photos. This application also makes kids feel like they can "sext" or send inappropriate pictures without consequences because the image will self-destruct automatically. The truth is that nothing sent over the internet disappears. There are always ways to retrieve and capture those images.



ChatRoulette and Omegle – These applications allow you to video chat with strangers. Not only are users chatting with strangers, they could be chatting with a fake stranger. "Chat sites like Chatroulette and Omegle have done their best to produce systems that warns users when the people they are chatting to are potentially using fake webcam software, however developers still manage to slip under their radars with frequent updates." So a fifty-year-old man could set up a fake webcam and use images from a 15-year-old boy that looks like a teen celebrity to convince your child to send inappropriate pictures or get information about your child's location. Did you know that Omegle actually advertises on their website this way: "Omegle: Talk to strangers! The Internet is full of cool people; Omegle lets you meet them. When you use Omegle, we pick someone else at random so you can have a one-on-one chat."



Tinder – Users post pictures and scroll through the images of other users. When they think someone is attractive they can "flag" the image. If that person has also "flagged" them in return, the app allows you to contact them. This application is primarily used for "hooking up."



poof- Hides other applications on your phone. You select which applications you would like to hide and their icons will no longer show up on your smartphone screen. If children have applications that they want to keep hidden from their parents, all they have to do is download this app and "poof," their screen is clear of any questionable apps. So, if you see the Poof app on their phone, you may want to ask them what they are hiding.



Askfm- This is a social networking site in question and answer format. Seemingly innocuous, Askfm is being used by teens to abuse and bully others, made easier by the fact that there is no third party moderation of the content posted. Without adequate privacy settings, the absence of content moderations, and the ability to be used anonymously, Askfm has been linked to teen suicides around the globe.



Blendr – This application allows kids to message, exchange photos and videos, and rate the "hotness" of other users, based upon GPS location - this, alone, poses an obvious issue with teens and tweens who are basing their identity and self-esteem on the feedback they receive from their peers. There is no age restriction, so your children can potentially be having exchanges with adults through this application.

Conversation Starter Ideas for Parents and Teens:

What kind of things would a person want to post anonymously? How would you personally use this app?

Why do you want to send pictures that disappear? Would you be okay with anyone seeing that pic?

Why would you tell your secrets to strangers? If you are struggling with something, will a stranger care or be able to help you?

Conversation starter for any app – Are you being safe with that app? Are you encouraging others or tearing them down? Are you being bullied? Are you putting out too much information about yourself?

* Additional Information *

www.common sense media.org

www.cyberbullying.org

www.kidsinthehouse.com/teenager