

# Be careful what you APP for....

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## Behind the applications our children are using and implications of chronic social media usage....

The social media has allowed us to keep in touch with extended family and friends, our community members, kids in college, friends or people that may be traveling. I know that many of the baby boomers have re-connected to college, high school and even grammar school and kindergarten classmates and colleagues.

This is not meant as an attack on social media but a heads up and a wake up to parents and the community. On all of the medias just like TV, the news needs to put disclaimers about social media. Similar to alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs, there should be warning labels and possible risks for parents or those young minds to be alerted.

However the younger developing brains of our elementary, middle school and high school kids are more susceptible to difficulties with decision making, problem solving and pressure from peers and friends. They constantly worry about how to “keep up with” and the fear of being left out of rapidly changing social roles as they go through adolescent and teenage years. They may fall prey to the obsessive behaviors to lift their self-esteem and avoid their internal, parental controls or school designed warnings on the hazards and potential danger of contributing to these social media sites. The invasion of selfies has morphed into our youngsters’ bill boarding their every move which can easily develop into self obsession, narcissism and body image problems.

These sites are designed to immediately fulfill some of the basic needs that our children are seeking. Acceptance, “likes” may not come without a consequence: social media seems to be contributing to self obsession, self recognition and judging others based on “looks” and quotes and not developing healthy relationships. The emotions of children are underdeveloped; lacking the judgment needed to avoid the risks of social media. Furthermore, children enjoy their privacy and keep the sites, apps and other forms of media from their parents and counselors until it’s too late or they get caught up in a consequence of bullying or worse.

**10 dangerous Apps that parents, teachers and counselors need to know about....**A look into some of the scariest Apps for your kids.

To keep your children safe, it's best that you monitor their phone. Look through their apps, texts and pictures. They may feel that you're invading their privacy, but let's be honest... You're paying the phone bill, so you can do whatever you want! So, as you monitor your kid's phone, keep an eye out for these 7 apps you may not be aware of, that in my opinion are very dangerous:



**Yik Yak** – This App is one of the newest and one of the most dangerous. It allows users to post text-only Yaks of up to 200 characters. The messages can be viewed by the 500 Yakkers who are closest to the person who wrote the Yak, as determined by GPS tracking. Users are exposed to – and contributing -sexually explicit content, abusive language and personal attacks so severe that schools are starting to block the App on their Wi-Fi. Although the posts are anonymous, kids start revealing personal information as they get more comfortable with other users.

**SnapChat** – This App allows users to send photos that will disappear after 10 seconds. Once the recipient opens the picture, the timer starts. Then it's gone. From both the sender's phone and the recipient's phone. However, the recipient can take a screen shot of the photo and have it to share with others. This App enables kids to feel more comfortable "sexting" with peers.



**Phhphoto** - the animated photo-sharing app that first appeared has now made its way to the android. Its proprietary technology facilitates a short burst of four frames, and then loops them back and forth endlessly for sharing both on social networks and its own feed. Kids are now using this app to share selfies that may be XXX rated to friends, acquaintances or the web world.

**KiK Messenger** – This is a private messenger app and is coveted by those under 18 for a number of reasons. The App allows kids to send private messages that their parents can't see. There is very little you can do to verify the identity of someone on KiK, which obviously poses the risk of sexual predators chatting with your child. And again, this is an easy tool for sexting.





**Poof** –The Poof App allows users to make Apps disappear on their phone with one touch. Kids can hide every app they don't want you to see on their phone. All they have to do is open the App and select the ones they don't want you to see. Very scary! The good news about this App is it is no longer available, which isn't uncommon for these types of Apps. But, if it was downloaded before it was deleted from the App store, your child may still have it. Keep in mind that Apps like this are created and then terminated pretty quickly by Android and Apple stores, but there are similar ones being created constantly. Some other names include: *Hidden Apps, App Lock* and *Hide It Pro*.

**Omegle** – This App has been around since 2008, with video chat added in 2009. When you use Omegle you do not identify yourself through the service – chat participants are only identified as “You” and “Stranger”. You don't have to register for the App. However, you can connect Omegle to your Facebook account to find chat partners with similar interests. When choosing this feature, an Omegle Facebook App will receive your Facebook “likes” and try to match you with a stranger with similar likes. This is not okay for children. There is a high risk of sexual predators and you don't want your kids giving out their personal information, much less even talking to strangers.



**Whisper** – This is a meeting App that encourages users to post secrets. You post anonymously, but it displays the area you are posting from. You can search for users posting within a mile from you. A quick look at the App and you can see that online relationships are forming constantly on this App, but you never know the person behind the computer or phone. One man in Washington was convicted of raping a 12-year-old girl he met on this App just last year.

**Down** – This application, which used to be called “Bang with Friends,” is connected to Facebook. Users can categorize their Facebook friends in one of two ways: they can indicate whether or not a friend is someone they'd like to hang with or someone they are "down" to hook up with. The slogan for the App: “The anonymous, simple, fun way to find friends who are down for the night.” If that alone doesn't scare you, I don't know what will! I know it's overwhelming to keep up with your kids and their online habits. But just remember to check their phones often, and even more importantly have real life conversations with them. Discuss the dangers of the Apps and make sure they understand the need to keep personal information private.





**Tinder** - This is an app that is used for dating and hooking-up. Users can rate others and find ways to connect via GPS location services. When both users “flag” each other, then they are able to connect with each other. This app is primarily used for hooking-up with strangers based on their appearances.

**Vine** - This social media app allows users to record and post six-second videos. The biggest danger is that short porn videos pop up in the news feed, and porn can also be found through the search function as well. Predators can also look for kids and teens based on their location.



**Please be aware what Apps your kids are using.**