

Cyber Safety: Tips for Families about social media and the internet

What is Cyber-Bullying?

Cyber-bullying occurs when individuals use social technology such as computers or smartphones to harass, torment, humiliate or threaten other people. Cyber-bullying most commonly occurs among teenagers.

- 1 in 3 adolescents in Canada report recent bullying. That is the 9th highest rate in the developed world.
- 47% of Canadian parents report their child experienced bullying.
- An Ontario study reported that 31% of grade 9 -12 students were bullied at school.
- Non-heterosexual students have a three-times higher bullying rate.
- Girls are more likely to be bullied on the Internet than boys.
- Cyber-bullying: threatening through aggressive e-mails or instant messages (73%) is the most common form.

How many of these Apps can you identify?



In the ever-changing landscape of social media some Apps can be hot one day, and then tossed into your device's recycle bin the next. It's important that you take the time to understand what Apps are popular with your child(ren), and that you monitor which Apps or websites they are accessing on their devices (i.e. laptop, home computer, tablet, smartphone, phablet, etc.)

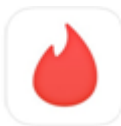
Most people are aware of the two largest social media sites out there: Facebook and Twitter. Many use them on a daily basis to stay in touch with friends, family and loved ones; however, do you know what other Apps are most utilized by children and youth?



Understand Apps and what they allow your child(ren) to access:



YIK YAK: This app lets people post anonymously to a social “wall” on any topic. Posts are called “Yaks” and show up in a live feed for other users based on their geographic area. The content is moderated by users (by an up or down vote), and after two “down” votes a Yak disappears.



TINDER: Users can “like” people who are as close as 1km from their location. If the other person “likes” the user back then they will be able to chat, and provide their physical location. This app is known for its ability to coordinate for sexual encounters.



ASK.FM: A social site that allows people to ask and answer questions anonymously. This often creates the perfect environment for cyber-bullies.



KIK Messenger: Kik is a mobile app that people can use to text with friends or strangers at high speed, and with more features than regular texting. It allows users to connect with others using just a username (rather than their phone number), and is often used for “sexting” or cyber-bullying.



SNAPCHAT: Very popular with youth this App allows users to send photos and videos that “disappear” from view within 10 to 30 seconds after they are received. Unfortunately, that leaves enough time for the receiver to take a screenshot, and store it on their device for later use or sharing with others.



VINE: Vine is Twitter's mobile App that allows users to shoot and share short videos (6-7 seconds) in a continuous loop. Content on Vine can range from innocent and silly to extreme and explicit (i.e. nudity, sex, drug use, offensive language, and hardcore sexuality, etc.).



WHISPER: This website allows users to post secrets, confessions, and photos anonymously. It also allows “whispering to other users” anonymously as well. Although the App is geared toward older teens and adults, younger children are now finding their way to it.



TUMBLR: Many youth are active on this photo-sharing App. It can be used for sharing videos and chatting, but users can easily access pornographic, violent, and inappropriate content. Mental health experts say that Tumblr can be damaging to adolescents' mental health because it tends to glorify self-harm and eating disorders.



INSTAGRAM: A hugely popular photo-sharing site owned by Facebook. The App may be slightly tamer than Tumblr, but users can still find mature or inappropriate content. Users can change the settings to block their

location or followers, but many are casual with their settings, often connecting with people they don't know at all.



VOXER: This walkie-talkie PTT (push-to-talk) App allows users to quickly exchange short voice messages. They can have chats with multiple people at a time, and just tap the play button to hear any messages. Hurtful messages from cyber-bullies can be played repeatedly, and it's becoming popular among teens who enjoy this style of texting/talking.

How to keep your child(ren) safe in the age of social media:

It can feel overwhelming to keep up with your child(ren) and their online habits, but some simple tips can help you to manage the ever-changing world of social media:

- Check their phones often, and even more importantly have real life conversations with them. Discuss the dangers of certain Apps, and make sure they understand the need to keep personal information private.
- Be present and aware of what they are doing online. Don't let children under 12 use a mobile device (even a laptop) in their room for the night if you don't plan on supervising them. Know what Apps they have, and the passwords to their devices. If you don't give them space they may never learn to make good decisions, and if you are unaware of their online activities you may be making it too easy for them to potentially make an permanent mistake.
- Make a rule that they must ask for permission before downloading any Apps (even free ones) so that you are aware of them. When they want to join a new social media platform, go through the security settings together to choose the ones you are most comfortable with. Remind them not to share passwords with anyone, including best friends, or romantic partners.
- Set up age limits on their device. A 2013 survey found that nearly 40-percent of teens say that they have lied about their age to gain access to a site or create an account, so restrict your child(ren)'s access to Apps by age rating.
- Make sure they turn off their location services, or GPS, on their smartphone by going into the device settings. This will keep the Apps and photos from posting the exact location or whereabouts of the user. Review the privacy settings of each App with them, and help them create a more secure profile.
- Talk about respect; not just for others, but for themselves. Stopping them from being on Twitter or Facebook will only push them to one of the other sites mentioned previously. Give them the skills to make good decisions.
- Help them understand that whatever they put online is forever (this includes texting.) Any photo posted to social media is no longer owned by the individual but by the site (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc), and they can do whatever they want with it.
- Explain to them that communicating verbally is completely different than communicating through social media. Verbal comments that you later regret can be fixed over time, but posting something online may never disappear and may never be able to be fixed.

- Warn them to never take seductive photos, and send them to a romantic partner. Once the photo leaves their device they have lost all control over who can see it. In many jurisdictions this can even lead to various charges of child pornography. "Sexting" should also be discussed before any smartphone is purchased. This also applies to pictures of under-age drinking, or any other illegal activity. Remember a simple phrase, "If you wouldn't share it with your family, don't share it online."
- In the future, when they apply to a College or University, or a job opportunity they will most likely be researched online. Many employers now run social media background checks. What will their impression of them be when they do? Teach them to share their accomplishments (i.e. awards, sports, volunteering, community events, etc.) rather than their bodies or negative behaviours.
- Finally, lead by example. How can we expect our children to navigate their digital life safely if we are not modeling the same behaviour?

Online Resources:

For more information on cyber safety and cyber-bullying please visit the following websites:

- www.mediasmarts.ca
- www.getcybersafe.gc.ca
- www.cybertip.ca
- www.safeinternet.org
- www.needhelpnow.ca
- www.deletecyberbullying.org

**If you are being cyber-bullied
and need someone to talk to you can call:**

**Kids Help Phone
1-800-668-6868**

©Hotel Dieu Hospital
PS# 5209 – 2015-12-1