

Why Yik Yak is the Most Dangerous App You Have Never Heard Of

By Tim Woda



The mobile smartphones and the internet have changed the way we interact in unprecedented ways. While there is no denying the many benefits of this, the drawbacks are also clear. This has especially become apparent in the world of teenagers and younger children.

Cyberbullying is one of the worst culprits, and has spread through the country's cities and schools at an alarming rate.

Social media has taken the age-old problem of bullying and turned it into something even worse than it already was. No child is immune from this problem, and although it seems to be at its most prevalent in high schools, middle-school and even elementary school kids are impacted.

Sites like Facebook and Youtube have seen their fair share of problems when it comes to teens and inappropriate internet behavior, but a whole new slew of messaging apps have taken things to a different level.

One app in particular is Yik Yak. On the surface it seems harmless enough, just another messaging app. The problem with this particular app is that it is an "anonymous" messaging app that allows its users to send text and photos to others without using their name. Another feature of this app is that it is location enabled. You can choose to view and contribute to the feed of other users in a 5, 10 or 15 mile radius. This feature can potentially leave the door open for predators to make contact with minors in their local area.

The "anonymous" nature of this app tends to lull teens into thinking that what they say and share won't be connected to them, which makes them more likely to behave inappropriately. Kids have used this app to spread rumors and harass their peers, thinking that they are anonymous. Of course, this isn't entirely the case, and authorities do have the ability to track users. Other worrisome issues include the prevalence of graphic nudity and sexual content. The app encourages users to share just about anything, and because they think it's private, they often do.

When signing up for the app, users are asked to confirm that they are over 17, however there is no way to verify this, so it isn't any kind of a safeguard.

How could your child be affected?

As with other social media and messaging platforms, cyberbullying is a risk. Unlike Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, however, it can be much more difficult to track and stop the source of the bullying. Another messaging app, Snapchat has a similar anonymous setup, but the message disappears within seconds of being opened. Of course, this makes it incredibly difficult to report bullying. With Yik Yak, the message stays, and can be posted anywhere on

the internet, which lends itself to even more trouble such as inappropriate photos being spread around the internet and increased reach abusive or inflammatory messages.

Of course no parent wants to see their child bullied, and no parent wants to believe that their child could be the bully, but as a parent you must face the reality that even "good" kids can get swept away with peer pressure and the desire to be accepted. When you add technology that buffers kids from the face to face reality of their actions, and apps like Yik Yak, which allows them to do it "anonymously" it's easy to see how a teenager can end up participating in this behavior.

What can parents do?

As a parent of a tween or teen, you may feel hesitant to monitor your child's texts, social media accounts and computer activity. It may feel like a violation of privacy, but it should simply be an understanding that access to technology comes with responsibility and supervision.

Checking your teenager's Facebook or texts is not the same as reading their diary, which is a common argument. A diary truly is private, a social media or messaging feed is anything but. Don't wait for a serious issue to arise before monitoring their activity.

Of course, this should be done with sensitivity and tact, and the lines of communication should be open at all times. You know your child as an individual, so you can tailor a plan that is comfortable for the both of you. Using technology to monitor your child's activity in a non-invasive way can offer your child security and freedom, as well as peace of mind for you.

As always, it is important to educate your child about appropriate and safe internet behavior, and to keep informed of the latest tactics that are being used to harass or endanger children.

Source; <http://resources.uknowkids.com/blog/why-yik-yak-is-the-most-dangerous-app-you-have-never-heard-of>