

# Five Dangerous Apps Parents Don't Know Teens Use

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One decade ago, high school senior, Jessica Logan **sent** a nude photo of herself to her boyfriend. When they later broke up, he forwarded the photo to everyone else at her school. This launched her tragic attempt to hide from those who teased her about being a slut. Jessica ended up losing the battle for her reputation. After attending a funeral, she returned home and committed suicide in her own closet.

Jessica is just one story of hundreds I've reviewed of teens in middle school, high school and college who've been blackmailed, bullied, scorned or threatened on social media—and eventually they ended their lives for it. This is a true scenario for kids from all over the world and from all 50 states. After ten years of social media apps—we can see the damage students do to each other on such sites. One **report** says, one in three students are bullied today.

Parenting a teen has never been an easy feat, but in today's digital age, tracking a teen's behavior has become almost impossible. With an increase of social media apps and the option of anonymity, teens are communicating in a digital world that has no

boundaries...leaving parents with no idea on how to monitor their teen's smart phone activity.

## **Five Apps You May Not Know Teens Are Using**

Common Sense Media **reveals** that teenagers use an average of nine hours of media entertainment per day. That's at least half of their waking hours is spent on various sites. But what are those apps that appear to be most dangerous and can cause the most trouble?

### **Yubo (formerly Yellow)– It has been called: “Tinder for Teens”**

The video chat app, Yubo, known as “Tinder for Teens” allows users to create video group chats with friends and strangers. Teens can swipe “left” on a video to talk to any user they find and share whatever video content they want. An adolescent brain can quickly spot the potential benefits of this app, but they do not see the likely consequences.

### **Calculator% – Fake calculator and secret storage app**

This app looks like a calculator on the phone screen but actually it's a secret vault for users to store private content. Parents—if you're monitoring your teen's browser history you should be aware of this app-in-disguise. The calculator icon appears to be a utility on a smartphone, but once a user types a password combination into the app, it opens up a location for secret photos and a private Internet browser.

### **Marco Polo – Video instant messaging app “walkie talkie”**

Marco Polo markets itself as “a face-to-face messaging app for bringing family and friends closer than ever.” My family uses it. However, many teens use this app to send videos—while they are under the impression the video content will be erased after it is viewed. Like Snapchat, what users don't know is how long the server is holding onto the private content and capturing personal data once teens use it.

### ***Wishbone*** – A survey app to compare anything and everything

This app can allow teen users to compare and rate each other side-by-side on a scale. Where most posts might concern pop culture, locations or preferences—Wishbone can be a harmful tool to encourage cyber-bullying amongst teens. It simply invites an adolescent (who's brain is still forming) into all kinds of unhealthy comparisons.

### ***Whisper*** – An anonymous photo and video messenger app

Teens are using this app to share photo and video messages or “whispers” anonymously. Though users have no personal identity or contact information in the app, they do have a username and can be messaged privately by anyone within the app. Since the app is anonymous, teen users are at risk to being contacted by predators.

## **What You Can Do as a Caring Adult**

Parents, teachers, coaches, youth workers and employers can enable kids to break free from the traps and temptations these apps represent. Let me offer three common sense steps you can take:

### **1. Get your own tracking app to see what they are up to.**

We all want to believe the best about our kids, but even the best, most respectful teens can fall prey to these tantalizing apps on their portable device. [CyberSafetyCop.com](http://CyberSafetyCop.com) suggests some others that help you guide and guard teens:

- ***Bark***: Bark's affordable, award-winning service proactively monitors text messages, emails, and 24 different social networks for potential safety concerns, so busy parents can save time and gain peace of mind.
- ***Forcefield***: Sleep apps on your kids' mobile devices, see all websites visited and photos posted on social media, lock in YouTube Restricted Mode & SafeSearch—all from your own phone.
- ***Smart Social – Parent University***: They write on their site: “Our positive social media training videos show parents and students how to shine online. We make digital safety fun while getting kids to protect their online image.”

## **2. Host a discussion about this subject.**

Sometimes, adults are forced to take a smart phone away from a young person, feeling they've lost the privilege due to their irresponsible decisions. Far better than taking a phone away, however, is starting a conversation about this topic. For example, if you obtain a tracking app, watch it for a week or so, then ask your teen about what apps they use, allowing them to be honest with you before you reveal what you've seen. The conversation can be cautionary (if they're not using any of these dangerous apps), or it can be corrective (if they are). Consider using the same logic I used with my kids after they got their driver's license: "It's not that I don't trust you on the road, I am just concerned about the thousands of other drivers who may not be as trustworthy."

## **3. Create an agreement.**

Years ago, I began hearing about parent/child phone contracts, that allow a caring adult to put in print the terms of use for a teen's smartphone. This is a perfect way to define how you want them to use the phone that you purchased, before they ever get it in their hands. I believe you can craft an **agreement** even after they have a phone. This one can clarify your expectations about dangerous or damaging apps, and how you expect them to navigate them wisely. They get to keep the phone as long as they stay within your boundaries.

Here's to you leading your kids wisely as you launch a new year.

<https://growingleaders.com/blog/five-dangerous-apps-parents-dont-know-teens-use>