



## The WCPA News

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### Parents and Schools Beware -

#### *10 Risky Sites and Apps Adults Should Know*

Written by Jennifer Webbe Van Luven, LCSW and Tony Tramelli, M.A.



Cell phones are an integral part of youths' lives today. According to the latest market research, approximately 20 percent of young children own a cell phone (ages 6-9), as do 60 percent of tweens (ages 10-14) and about 85 percent of teens (ages 15-18). To be sure, cell phone companies are now marketing to younger children with colorful, kid-friendly phones and easy-to-use features. Studies have shown that children and youth spend about 80% of the time on their phones "in apps". These statistics reinforce that parents and schools need to stay aware of what their children are actually exposed to while using smart phones. It's true, our phones provide us with a world of information at our fingertips. But they can also create a world of risk for our children and adolescents, who are not yet developmentally able to weigh risk and anticipate consequences. Below are ten sites (*in no particular order*) about which every parent and educator should know in 2014:

**#1. Vine:** Vine is a mobile app that one can think of as an online video diary. The video clips can be viewed by anyone with a Vine account, and can also be shared via Twitter, Facebook, and other social media apps. Shortly after the Vine app debuted, pornographic videos started appearing on the service. Pornography, as well as other inappropriate and dangerous content, is now common on Vine. Because the service allows video postings to remain anonymous, there have been allegations of underage pornographic videos being shared.

**#2. ask.fm:** This is a question-and-answer site that thrives on anonymity. Participants create profiles (real or not) so that anyone, not just site members, can ask them questions. These questions are frequently sexual and/or aimed at humiliation. The questions and their answers can be screen shot and sent to friends for embarrassment. Today, ask.fm has ballooned into a parent-free digital space where kids go to escape the built-in accountability of Facebook.

**#3. Poof:** With one touch, "poof" makes chosen apps disappear before parents' inquisitive eyes can see them. It allows youth to have apps from which they are sending messages or pictures that they do not want their parents to see. When supervising parents look on their children's phones to investigate apps, the parents will see no evidence of the questionable apps their children wish to hide.

**#4. Secret Phone:** Secret phone is a phone within a phone, completely hidden in every way. There will be no icon in the application list, and no trace of the app ever being opened. Secret phone provides users with a private phone book and allows users to make and receive phone calls and texts as if they never took place. It provides an internet browser, which allows the user to search the internet without any trace of what they have viewed. The app has a feature called "The Vault," which is a security password protected safe in which the user can store notes, pictures, videos, etc. Secret Phone allows users to delete all data on the app by sending a text code from any cell phone.

**#5. ihookup:** A "casual" hookup site for "hot guys and girls." This app is being used by teens to find "singles" who are geographically close. The app uses global positioning software and allows users to find other members on the app who are looking for a "quick hookup." The site's capabilities appear to encourage casual sex with strangers.

**#6. KiK Messenger:** A relatively new text messaging app similar to iChat or Google Chat. KiK uses a smartphone's data plan or a Wi-Fi connection to transmit and receive messages, which allows the user to avoid text messaging rates. Although this app may appear to be a great way for people to keep in touch without the cost of text messaging, it has become very popular among teenagers for the purposes of flirting and sexting. The app allows users to talk to multiple people and also allows the user to upload pictures and files. Because it is impossible to verify someone's identity on KiK, it has the potential to attract online predators.

**#7. snapchat:** Often called "the sexting app," snapchat allows users to send a photo or short video that is viewed by the recipient for a maximum 10 seconds, after which it self-destructs. No evidence remains that the photo or video was ever sent. This app is often used for self-portraits ("selfies,") or pictures of others. Teens and tweens use this app with a false sense of security for pictures they believe cannot be saved. However, the recipient can capture the images using a screenshot or by taking a picture using another device, making copying and sharing easy.

**#8. textspooof:** This app allows users to send a text message that appears to come from another person's cell number. Users can program in anyone's number to appear, allowing the true originating party to remain anonymous. Youth are using this app to trick and/or bully the individuals who receive the messages. The app also makes it easy to convince parents that another parent has sent them a message, as the text does not appear to come from their child's cell number.

**#9. Omegle:** The website's tagline is "Talk to Strangers." The website and app allow users to communicate with total strangers without any sort of registration. The service randomly pairs users with one-on-one chat sessions where they can chat anonymously. There is an option for video chat sessions as well. Omegle has been widely criticized as a service that has the potential to harbor sexual predators. In 2013, the transmission of nude photos and videos via Omegle from a teenage girl to a school teacher resulted in child pornography charges.

**#10. Tumblr:** Tumblr is a microblogging and social media app owned by Yahoo. It allows users to post multimedia and other types of content in a short-form blog, which other users can follow. Although there is a setting available to make blogs private, the majority remain public. Tumblr is noted by technology journalists as having an especially large amount of pornographic material. Some bloggers even earn money on the app by referring users to adult websites.

**And one more...** With the widespread availability of such potentially dangerous and sophisticated apps, it has become more and more challenging for adults to monitor what young people do on their devices. There are a number of apps available to assist adults in this seemingly insurmountable task. MMGuardian is one such parental control app; it provides a wide range of services to help ensure that minors are using their devices safely and responsibly. It allows parents to pre-configure the times when their child's phone will be locked down, except for emergency calls and texts to the parent's phone. The app allows parents to block selected apps or allow only selected apps to be used. MMGuardian also allows parents to prevent children from using their phone while driving; if the phone is moving above 10mph, it is disabled except for emergency 911 calls. In addition, the app allows parents to instantly see where their child is and to monitor their child's calls and texts, as well as block certain individuals from contacting their child.

MMGuardian is just one good example of the type of software that is available for parents as they strive to supervise their children in the age of the internet. Considering the ten website and applications described earlier, and the countless others like them that have been or will soon be developed, parents and other responsible adults are urged to take every opportunity to help children make wise, safe, and moral choices online.

*Jennifer Webbe VanLuven, MSW, LCSW, DM provides private therapy for adults and adolescents. She has extensive experience in family law and court room testifying. Jennifer is also a certified Divorce Mediator and Parenting Coordinator.*

*Tony Tramelli, M.A. Tony provides private therapy for children and adolescents from Kindergarten through high school, as well as adults, families, and seniors. Tony takes a systems approach to counseling and works closely with family members, educators and other professionals to effectively assist clients.*



## ***FROM THE DIRECTOR***

### **Attachment:**

### **The Connection from Birth to Death**

This is a relatively new theory in psychological circles. Forty years ago, John Bowlby described attachment as the affective bond developing between an infant and a primary caregiver. This process evolves over the first two years of life, which has great significance because, during this time, the neurological growth of the infant's brain is at its greatest. Secure attachment is associated with a positive developmental outcome for children in many areas, including social, emotional and cognitive domains. It is the securely attached child, and eventual adult, who can regulate his/her emotions in a healthy way.

There are two behaviors critical to the development of the secure attachment process. The first is called "attunement." This process occurs when an alignment is created between the child and the caregiver. It is an alignment that is created in which the two individuals experience a sense of joining. In becoming attuned to the child, as the caregiver or parent, we become empathic, open and receptive to the child's emotions. For example, in the case of the infant, we will mimic the sounds and tones of the baby's cooing and attempts at talking. The parent becomes responsive to the verbal and non-verbal cues of the baby creating a sense for the child that he/she is being "felt" or "joined."

The second behavior is called "mirroring." In infancy, when a baby smiles and makes soft wordless sounds, a nurturing parent responds in like manner by smiling back at the baby. An interaction has begun whereby the parent is giving the child a reflection of himself that says that the infant is valued. In so doing, the infant feels valued for himself. These two behaviors form a connection which leads to the attachment process.

This connection between the adult and child gives the child a sense of meaning to his/her life. This feeling of being connected gives children a sense of security. Children achieve and develop meaningful relationships only when they have this sense of security. Without becoming well-attached in infancy, it is very difficult to become an adult who is able to form connections with others. A child's emotional well-being is built on this intimate dance of communication. When this happens, the child feels valued and understood, knowing that he is not alone in the world. The child develops a sense of grounding and empowerment in a social world of connection. These kinds of connections create a strong, internal coherence of the self. In order to thrive, we all need this kind of relationship with significant others.

It is becoming obvious that this need for connection or secure attachment doesn't end in early childhood. It is evident that other adults can create and/or replicate this process in a child's life. The most obvious relationship where this can occur is in the teacher/student connection. Educators have a tremendous influence in creating a secure base for children. They have the ability to nurture, mirror and attune. For

many children, this may be the only source of nurturing that they experience. Not only does attachment speak to the emotional development but the cognitive development of the child. More recently, advances in brain science and imaging demonstrate that there is a physiological component to the concept of secure attachment. Studies show that these social-emotional attributes are closely linked to later academic achievement. These approaches to the world are the building blocks for the skill sets students need to succeed academically, including problem solving, focused attention and on-task behavior and participatory learning.

Further down the road, most of us seek a nurturing relationship with another individual. In couples' counseling, we talk about an emotionally intimate connection as being critical in developing a mature relationship between two people. Unfortunately, not many people understand what constitutes an emotional connection. We are told that we are neurologically wired for connection, yet few understand the process to attain it. What is this emotional connection and how does it come about? After years of doing couples' counseling, I believe it is the nurturing process that comes about through the same attachment behaviors that we experience in early childhood.

Most couples are perplexed when we talk about nurturing each other. Does it not mean that we become attuned to the other person? This means that we are "in sync" with them. We want to understand them. We listen to the other without judgment. Our partner feels heard by us and we feel heard by them. In this attachment process, we also mirror what we see in the other. In looking at us they see the goodness and value we see in them. We feel that we have worth. This is achieved by spending time with each other and, most importantly, sharing our feelings, and again, without the fear of being judged. When we become empathic and open, this creates a connection between two people and gives each a sense of meaning in life. It is an alignment that is created in which the two individuals experience a sense of joining.

While there may be more examples of attachment as we go through life, the last occurs in the final transition of our life. As we age, some of us begin to have more difficulty in communicating. Too many become depressed or bored because of the change in productivity and the growing sense of isolation. Unfortunately, we often experience a loss of importance, self-worth and a sense of belonging in the world and a continuous loss of friendships. Yet our need for connection and nurturing still exists, even though we may seem to be demanding and challenging. Too often, as we age, we present as angry or resistant. However, underlying those emotions is fear and anxiety. Our world is changing and we don't know how to control it.

This anxiety presents challenges for the caregiver. Caregivers may try to reason the resistance away, but that is generally ineffective. In order to deal with resistance, one doesn't confront the resistance but rather leans into it. This means that we reach the elder through nurturing tones. We attune (listen) to what is being said to us. In order to alleviate the anxiety, we have to enter into their world. When we observe and match the elder's emotions, we are mirroring their behavior. Done with empathy, mirroring can be effective in helping to create trust. It allows the caregiver to enter the emotional world of the other and build a verbal and nonverbal relationship. The critical emotion that we must model is empathy, which builds trust, reduces anxiety and restores dignity.

There is never a time in our lives when the attachment process is not essential to us. We are meant for connection --- from birth to death.

# The Mother/Daughter Dressing Debate:

*A mother/daughter session on how to navigate this difficult issue*

**Mothers will leave EMPOWERED and Daughters will leave ENLIGHTENED!**

Moms, isn't this what we face? A daughter comes down the stairs in an outfit we know we are not letting her leave the house in... We say, "No way!" and all chaos breaks loose! Or, we say nothing at all and regret letting her leave the house that way, wishing we knew the right words to say. We are not alone! This is a HOT topic that many families struggle with today. In this session, mothers and daughters learn ways to help navigate this difficult time with break out groups lead by Paula Collins from Your Closet's Best Friend and Tina Murphy, M.A., LPC, therapist at West County Psychological Associates. Join us for an evening of fashion, fun and facts.

**Paula** will help guide the teens make the best fashion choices that fit their own personal style through:

- Group brainstorm on struggles, thoughts and pressure on how you're expected to look.
- Tips and techniques for dressing with focus on good choices for your body and image.
- Smart basics to have in your wardrobe, fun pieces to play with while respecting your values, body, budget and lifestyle.

**Tina** will discuss with the moms the science behind "why" teens want to dress the way they do:

- Common developmental issues, fashion and the brain at this age.
- Typical pushbacks and power struggles that happen while dressing.
- What to say and how to discuss the issue without taking things personally.
- Leave with real solutions!

*Together, we bridge the gap between what works for you and her!*

## **Who Should Attend:**

- Mothers and daughters
- School and counseling professionals
- Anyone who struggles with these topics

**Cost:** \$40 per attendee (payment due at time of registration)

**Date:** Wednesday, February 5, 2014

6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

**Location:** West County Psychological Associates  
12125 Woodcrest Executive Dr., Suite 150

## **Presenters:**

*Paula Collins, the stylist from Your Closet's Best Friend has over 26 years in the fashion industry. Paula has monthly featured style segments on KMOV Great Day St. Louis, a fashion blog, and does many speaking engagements. She has an extensive and diverse client base throughout the St. Louis and Illinois area. Her honest and effective approach has helped countless women and girls have wardrobes that not only reflect their best self, it respects their budget, lifestyle, and body type.*

*Tina Murphy, MA LPC is a professional and school counselor with over 15 years' experience of working with children, adolescents and families in the metro area. Tina specializes in helping children, adolescents and their parents through developmental milestones, social skill issues, building self-confidence and strengthening family and peer relationships. She consults with many area schools and has given numerous parent presentations in the area on relevant issues pertaining to our youth today.*

**Register today –  
space is limited!**

You may register for the program at:

<http://conta.cc/1dtJ3oC>

**Questions?** Contact Tina Murphy  
at the West County Psychological  
Associates office: 314.275.8599



## **Private Psychoeducational Testing Available Year-Round**

When students require purely educational testing for an academic concern, many families understandably choose to utilize the free services available through their local public school districts. However, there are many circumstances under which it is appropriate or even necessary to obtain private psychological or psychoeducational testing. These circumstances can include:

- Preferring a private office setting with confidential results
- Desiring testing for possible Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Wanting testing for emotional functioning, including depression and/or anxiety
- Electing to get a second opinion
- Having been declined for testing services through the public district
- Choosing to obtain psychological or psychoeducational testing for an adult
- Wishing to acquire psychological testing as an aid for progress in counseling/therapy
- Wanting to account for continuing difficulties, when previous testing did not determine the cause of the problems

West County Psychological Associates offers high-quality, private psychological and psychoeducational testing at our therapy offices. Wait times are usually brief and reports are available soon following the test date(s). When a minor is tested, parents can choose whether or not to give permission for our evaluator to send a copy of the report to the school or the child's doctor or counselor.

Many families in our community choose to utilize high-quality, private testing services. If you would like to learn more about this option, please feel free to contact our office at (314) 275-8599.

## Winter/Spring Seminars through WCPA

### COMPASSION FATIGUE:

#### How to Take Care of *Yourself* in a Giving Profession

Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 9:00 a.m. – Noon \$50 Presented by Mary Saggau, MSW, LCSW

In a profession as “other directed” as education, it is challenging to maintain a healthy balance between nurturing one’s students and appropriate self-care. The result is often *Compassion Fatigue*. Learn about this newly identified phenomenon and what you can do to increase your emotional health and satisfaction in the work place. Participants are asked to bring examples of challenges and successful strategies, as they will be invited to share these with one another in addition to learning the presenter’s suggestions.

### THE NEW DSM AND YOU:

#### A Seminar for School Professionals on School-Relevant Changes in the New DSM

Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014 9:00 a.m. – Noon \$50 Presented by Amy V. Maus, MSW, LCSW

The new Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5) became available for purchase in 2013. While matters of controversy in the new DSM are highlighted in the news media, such as changes to the Autism Spectrum Disorders, most changes are less provocative but just as important to understand. School professionals will soon be seeing new and changed diagnostic categories in the letters and evaluation reports that they receive from community doctors and mental health professionals. This seminar presents highlights of the changes in the new DSM with which school professionals will particularly want to be familiar.

## Families in Transition

West County Psychological Associates recognizes the difficulties that families experience during times of transition. The mission of our program *Families in Transition* is to promote the healing and enrichment of family relationships. We offer a wide range of services to assist the whole family, as well as the professionals involved with the family, to make transitions smoother.



- **Individual Counseling for Parents:** Counselors can assist in managing conflict with the ex-partner, grieving the marriage and understanding one’s role as a newly single parent.
- **Individual Counseling for Children:** Separation and divorce can be an extremely stressful, sad and confusing time for children. Counselors can help children process their feelings, find their voices and proactively problem-solve.
- **Co-Parenting Counseling:** Learning how to co-parent with an ex-spouse can be a difficult process. Co-parent counseling works with parents on communication, flexibility, abiding by parenting plans and staying focused on raising healthy and happy children together yet separately.
- **Step-Parent Counseling:** A new partner or spouse creates a fresh set of rules, relationships and roles. Counselors can assist the new couple in establishing a positive transition for their family.
- **Parent Support Group:** With a support group, parents heal alongside others who have the same issues, questions and challenges.
- **Children’s Support Group:** This support group provides a safe place for children to express their feelings, peer to peer, with a trained mental health professional as facilitator.
- **Parent Coordinator Services:** Trained and Certified Counselors act as a neutral third party, who assists high conflict parents resolve child-related disagreements outside of the court room, tailoring a plan that is agreeable to both parents and taking into account what’s best for the children.
- **Mediation Services:** Supreme Court Certified Mediators are able to assist couples in taking control of their divorce. Mediators act as a neutral third party, assisting in the division of property, parenting plans, child support and any other relevant issues in the divorce. Financially, it is better to mediate than litigate.