At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one app of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents Need to Know about TINDER

WHAT IS TINDER?

Tinder is a free online mobile dating app regularly used by more than 60 million people worldwide. Users sign up and are matched with other people based on various preferences, such as location, age and shared interests. The user can swipe right to show interest in a profile (and connect as a match) or swipe left to ignore (decline) the match. If two users both like each other's profile and become a match, they are then able to communicate with each other directly.

AGE RATING 18

USING THE APP ...

FAKE PROFILES

Tinder doesn't require much information for a user to create a profile, which means that there's no verification of people's details. Therefore, you may have very limited information about who you are actually speaking to. This can include not knowing the real age or identity of a person that you're matched with – making it far easier to be taken in by fake profiles.

PRESSURE TO MEET

While people *can* find love through the app, Tinder has become synonymous with casual or short-term relationships. It allows for quick conversations which can put pressure on matches to meet up as soon as possible. This may put young users at risk of meeting individuals they don't know much about or who are only looking for sexual encounters.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Tinder let users share some of their personal details – such as name and age – and link their Tinder account to Facebook. The app allows searches of a specific location, which could lead to a user discovering a young person's exact location. It's also possible that photos uploaded to Tinder could be saved and used in other ways without consent or notification.

EMOTIONAL HARM

The idea of instant feedback and satisfaction can put young people at increased risk of emotional harm. They may feel pressure to look or act a certain way and with begin to measure their self-worth based on how many matches they receive. This can have a negative long-term influence on young people's mood, self-esteem and confidence. It also strongly implies that compliance is a way to fit in and be liked.

Advice for Parents & Carers

COMMUNICATE OPENLY

Be candid with teens about the possibilities of online dating – but also discuss the potential dangers. An honest chat can help them feel more comfortable about coming to you with any future worries or concerns. This can reduce any stress they are feeling and increase their sense of security.

REPORT AND BLOCK

Tinder gives users the option to "unmatch" with someone they have previously connected with, as well as to report any inappropriate interactions they experience. If an account appears to be suspicious, then it's important teens are aware that they can unmatch with a user, block them and report them to the app itself. They can also report any inappropriate or offensive messages.

AVOID OVER-SHARING

Teenagers should seriously consider what they include on a Tinder profile. They should never disclose sensitive details – and be cautious about sharing their phone number, date of birth, email address and location. Using different profile pictures on their various social media accounts makes it tougher for someone to track them down.

MONITOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

With cyber bullying presenting a significant risk, it's important that young people stay aware of their own emotional state. How do they feel before and after they use Tinder? Help them to identify when it might be time to take a break from the app and consider ways they can improve their mood. They should also know who they can speak about how they are feeling or any negative experiences they may have online.

BUILD IN SAFEGUARDS

It's vitally important that young people take precautions if they want to meet up with someone from Tinder. This should include meeting in an extremely public place and telling a friend or family member where they are going in advance. It may be useful to decide on a code word that a young person can include in a text or call to their friend or family member, to signal that they feel unsafe on the date.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Rina Bajaj is a Counselling Psychologist who has worked in mental health since 2004 (for the NHS, statutory organisations, in the corporate world and the voluntary sector). Her areas of specialism include dating and relationships counselling, and she has diverse experience in helping people from a range of backgrounds.

SOURCES: https://tinder.com | https://apps.apple.com/us/app/tinder-dating-new-friends/id547702041

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