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Love is Not Abuse (LINA)

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APPLICATION REVIEW

Love is Not Abuse (LINA)

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The Love Is Not Abuse application is an educational resource that provides information about teen dating violence and simulates the dangers of digital dating abuse.

KEYWORDS app, applications, dating violence, digital dating abuse, parents, technology

	Poor										Excellent
Performance	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ease of Use	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Error Handling	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Documentation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Efficacy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Value for Money	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

APPLICATION/SOFTWARE PRODUCT

Love Is Not Abuse iPhone Application, Version 1.2

PRODUCT SUMMARY

The Love Is Not Abuse (LINA) iPhone application is a user friendly, educational resource for parents that demonstrates the dangers of digital dating abuse and provides much needed information on the growing problem of teen dating violence and abuse. Digital dating abuse is the use of technologies such as texting and social networking to bully, harass, threaten or intimidate a

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partner. The LINA application provides a demonstration of how technology can be used to commit abuse. It gives parents a clear insight as to what it feels like for their teen to be a victim of digital dating abuse. The application has two components: an informational section and the digital dating abuse simulator section. Both components of the application provide users with important information and insight into the problem of dating abuse.

The LINA application was presented in an easy to understand format that makes it accessible to users interested in learning more about digital dating violence. The information provided in the application is accurate (Liz Claiborne Inc. & Teenage Research Unlimited, 2007; Teenage Research Unlimited, 2009) and concurs with the extensive research the reviewers have conducted in the area of dating and sexual violence over the last 16 years. It also offers users helpful advice on how to intervene effectively and where to seek further support, if needed. The digital dating abuse simulator also provides users with real-life examples of the different types of digital dating abuse teens may be experiencing. Overall, the application provides users with important information that can help increase the dialogue between parents and their teens with the goal of keeping teens safe in their relationships. Evaluation of the application is an important next step.

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Highly recommend.

SOURCE

The Love Is Not Abuse application was created by Liz Claiborne, Inc. as part of their larger Love Is Not Abuse Campaign, which is designed to showcase “digital dating abuse.” Love Is Not Abuse collaborated with the following partners, who guided the creative process and whose resources are highlighted in the app: The National Network to End Domestic Violence, Joyful Heart Foundation, Verizon Foundation, Wired Safety, Break the Cycle, Love Is Respect, MTV, Futures Without Violence, Seventeen Magazine, Mom Central and the American School Counselors Association. In addition, the app was developed by Charles Kliment, Founder and Principal Designer, KAJA Circle and Eric Mansfield and Chris Mollis, Co-Founders and Principal Software Engineers, AppsOnTheSide. To get more information about the app, please visit <http://loveisnotabuse.com>. To the authors’ knowledge, no peer reviewed research was cited in the development of the application.

Liz Claiborne, Inc.
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PRODUCT DETAIL

The app is available free of charge for the iPhone. It is available in the iTunes App Store under “Love Is Not Abuse.” The app is compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad. It requires iOS 4.2 or later. The app was launched in August 2011.

REVIEWER HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

iPhone 4

PURPOSE OF THE LINA APPLICATION

The Love Is Not Abuse (LINA) iPhone application is an educational resource for parents that demonstrates the dangers of digital dating abuse and provides much needed information on the growing problem of teen dating violence and abuse. The LINA application is designed to teach parents about the dangers of teen dating abuse and provides a demonstration of how technology can be used to commit abuse. It provides insight for parents as to what it feels like for their teen to be a victim of digital dating abuse by placing parents in the positions of their teenage children. It simulates for the user the digital relationship abuse that many teens endure in their dating relationships. Teen dating abuse comes in many forms, making it difficult for parents to recognize and effectively respond. Teen dating abuse can be verbal or physical abuse, along with abuse using technology, such as the internet or cell phones. Examples of digital dating abuse are when a partner sends negative, insulting, controlling or even threatening emails, Facebook messages, tweets, or other messages online or when a partner sends unwanted, explicit pictures and demands to be sent some in return. While mobile technology has become more widespread, it has also led to new forms of abuse. Digital abuse is a rapidly growing trend. Nearly 24% of American teens have been a victim of technology abuse from a boyfriend or girlfriend and more than 50% know someone who’s been victimized, according to a Liz Claiborne Inc. and Teenage Research Unlimited Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships study (2007). Dating abuse does not always leave physical evidence, so parents also need to be aware of the subtle signs indicating that their teen may be experiencing abuse through technology, including cell phones and social networking sites.

HOW THE LINA APPLICATION FUNCTIONS

The LINA application is very user friendly and easily accessible for users. The application is presented in an organized manner and has two main components: an informational section and a digital dating abuse simulator section.

INFORMATIONAL COMPONENT OF THE LINA APPLICATION

The informational component of the application provides an array of resources to help parents learn more about digital dating violence in order to help keep their children safe. This part of the application provides parents with basic information about dating abuse in general and then also specific information about digital dating abuse. The application provides parents with information on the warning signs of abuse and how dating abuse manifests itself in teen relationships. The application teaches immediate, concrete steps for parents to take if they are concerned their child may be a victim of dating abuse and/or an abuser. If parents want to get help for their teen, they just need to push a button that says “Get Help” and they are provided with contact numbers, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and more information on how to get assistance. Users are also provided with links to resources for help outside of Love Is Not Abuse, such as loveisrespect.org, National Dating Abuse Helpline, and other partner services. Users have the ability to download different handbooks and toolkits to access additional resources about dating abuse. There are also links to three well regarded dating violence curricula that are evidence based (Break the Cycle, 2009; Foshee & Langwick, 2004; Wolfe, Jaffe, Crooks, Hughes, & Chiodo, 2008), enabling parents to learn more about available curriculums to address teen dating violence. Action steps on how parents can get involved in the effort to educate teens about dating abuse in schools are also provided. Finally, parents are provided with several tangible tips on how to talk to their teens about this issue. For instance, “Let your teen know that they deserve and should expect respect in all of their relationships.”

The information is presented in an easy to understand format. For example, users can learn more about the facts and warning signs of dating violence by pushing the buttons marked “The Facts” or “Warning Signs”. Users can easily move from one informational section to another by tapping a link at the bottom of each page. One does not have to return to the start page each time, thus making it easy for users to move through the application to find the information that is being sought. The facts, warning signs, and tips on how to talk to a teen about digital dating abuse are current and accurate, and provide users with important information on the scope of the issue. For example, users are taught facts such as “Nearly 1 in 3 teens report sexual abuse, physical abuse, or threats of physical abuse” or “Nearly 1 in 4 teens have been victimized by abusers through technology.”

DIGITAL DATING ABUSE SIMULATOR

The digital dating abuse simulator provides parents with the opportunity to experience digital dating abuse in the same way their teen may in his or

her relationships. The types of abuse that the application simulates are checking up, privacy invasion, unauthorized access, deleting friends, threatening, excessive contact, sexting, threatening family and friends, and unwanted photos. To choose the option they would like to simulate, users simply tap on the digital dating abuse simulator button and the application takes them through the process of experiencing digital dating abuse. Once a user runs a particular simulation, they will receive phone calls, text messages, and emails in real-time from a 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' that will simulate the type of abuse they chose to experience. For example, if they choose to simulate excessive contact, they will receive phone calls, emails, and text messages in about 30 second intervals that simulate a girlfriend trying to get in touch with her partner. These fake messages pose situations common in digital abuse, like threatening to remove friends from social networks or to post illicit photos. While the app does not actually access the user's Facebook account, parents get a taste of the controlling nature of a negative teen relationship. Also, videos on such topics as privacy invasion, deleting a partner's friends on social networks, and unauthorized access to a boyfriend or girlfriend's social networks teach parents about the destructive behaviors in digitally abusive relationships. The application also provides users with the ability to send an email with the link for the application to anyone they choose, so they can pass the information along.

The "digital dating abuse simulator" in the application is very user friendly. Users have the option to experience all the various types of abuse at one time, such as checking up on a partner, sexting, excessive contact, etc. or they can choose to experience one type of abuse at a time. As some parents may be overwhelmed by the simulation, being given the option to choose what type of abuse to simulate is a unique and helpful feature of the application. The simulator is also realistic in that it addresses the fact that both males and females can be victims and perpetrators of dating violence. The simulation is geared towards the specific characteristics of abusive males and females. For example, the threatening messages come from a "boyfriend" and the excessive contact is from a "girlfriend." The text messages, emails, and calls that the application sends are fairly realistic also, but they may come as a shock to some parents as they are somewhat explicit. For example, when sexting is simulated, the user will receive a message such as "Hey there. What are you wearing? Why don't you text me a pic of your outfit? Better yet, send me a pic of you wearing nothing at all!" In an application like LINA, the explicit nature of the communications is necessary in order for parents to truly understand the challenges their teen may face in regards to digital dating abuse. It is important that the information is not sugar coated so parents are provided with a realistic picture of what their teen may be experiencing. Even though some of the content is fairly explicit, none of the simulations are offensive in that they should be limited to people of certain ages. For some of the simulations that would be too offensive, such as sending unwanted

photos, an informational video is used to provide parents with information about how teens are experiencing digital dating abuse via unwanted photos instead of actually sending unwanted photos.

USERS OF THE LINA APPLICATION

The application is useful for parents of teen children or anyone who would like more information about dating abuse and digital dating abuse in particular. The primary users of the application are parents of teen children, however, the application may be useful for anyone who works with or interacts with teens, such as helping professionals, social workers, school personnel, teachers, or adult relatives. The LINA application could be a good educational tool for teachers who are unfamiliar with the topic and it could also be an effective teaching tool if the iPhone screen was projected for the class to see and discuss. The application can be helpful for teens to learn more about what types of digital dating violence to be aware of in their relationships. In fact, there is most likely no segment of the population that would not gain useful information and benefit in some manner from being exposed to this application.

TECHNOLOGY

The LINA application was tested using the iPhone 4. The LINA application takes advantage of the capabilities of the iPhone 4 by using many different types of formats such as videos, emails, text messages, and calls to simulate the digital dating abuse. Another way the application uses the capabilities of the iPhone 4 is that the text messages, emails, and calls come directly to your specific phone and email account. No help files or technical support was needed in order to use the application, but the information found in the iPhone store when downloading the application was helpful. The application did not crash while in use, but we were unable to access the documents that the application offers its users to download, such as the handbooks. The application currently does not provide any feedback to users. The provision of some form of feedback to users, perhaps a quiz about teen dating violence, would likely engage the user and help users gauge what they gained or learned from using the application. Users are able to give feedback to the developers of the application through the reviewer feedback section in the iTunes store.

LIMITATIONS

Overall, the application accomplishes its goal of helping users understand what teens may be experiencing when it comes to digital dating abuse.

However there are some limitations to be mentioned. In order to have more of an impact on users, it may be helpful to put the dating abuse simulation in more of a context. For example, in the simulation section of the application, introducing a story line that includes two people in a relationship and have them simulate the abuse within that relationship would add interest and understanding of the dynamics that lead to dating abuse. The application may be most helpful to those that are somewhat familiar with dating violence as an important issue in the lives of adolescents. Someone who is not somewhat aware of or involved in teen dating abuse may not understand the different simulations provided in the application. If a user begins with the simulation prior to reading some of the information provided in the informational section, they may not really understand what the application is trying to accomplish. Some notation suggesting starting at the information section may be important for those new to the issue of dating violence. Another limitation is that there is currently not an Android version of the application, so that limits the access to the application to users with iPhones. The application's most significant limitation at this time is that we have no evidence on its effectiveness. To our knowledge, there has been no research evaluating if the application achieves its stated outcomes. It is important to evaluate if the application is, in fact, educating parents and other users about the dangers of digital dating violence and providing information on how to effectively assist teens with this issue. Examples of research questions for the evaluation of the application could include "Have users' knowledge of digital dating abuse increased?" or "Are parents more aware about how to talk to their teens about digital dating abuse?" or "Do users have a better understanding about how digital dating abuse can affect a teen?" However, there has been research that shows the need for an application such as LINA. Research demonstrates that parents report talking about dating abuse with their 11- to 18-year-olds far less than any other risky behavior, including alcohol and drugs (55 percent compared to 82 percent and 90 percent) (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2009). Maybe this is because nearly 60 percent of parents cannot sufficiently identify the warning signs of abuse (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2009). An application such as LINA could be beneficial to heighten parents' involvement and awareness of digital dating abuse.

CONCLUSION

The Love Is Not Abuse application is a timely, educational resource that helps raise awareness and education about the important topic of teen dating abuse, specifically digital dating abuse. As more teens are beginning to use text messages and social networking sites to communicate with one another, digital dating abuse is becoming a more prevalent issue. The LINA application helps users understand what digital dating abuse looks like and also provides the

opportunity to learn more about how to effectively intervene to keep teens safe within their dating relationships. There are a few limitations with the LINA application, but overall, as one of the first applications of its kind, it appears to achieve its stated goals of helping parents understand digital dating abuse and helping their teens if they are experiencing digital dating abuse.

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