

New app gives early warning of mean messages

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A woman uses her BlackBerry phone. Computer scientists have developed a mobile phone app that can predict the tone of incoming messages before a user reads them so that they are not caught off guard by angry or hostile words.

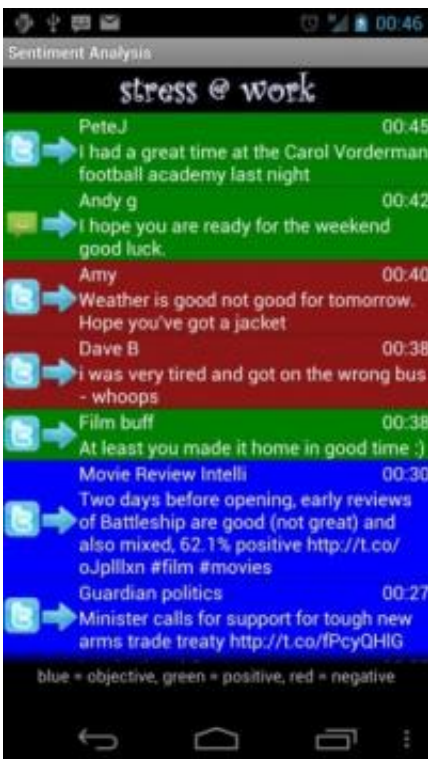
Computer scientists have developed a mobile phone app that can predict the tone of incoming messages before a user reads them so that they are not caught off guard by angry or hostile words.

The Android phone app "Stress @ Work", created at the University of Portsmouth, colour codes messages so people have time to prepare themselves, avoiding the shock of suddenly reading a nasty message sent via Facebook, [Twitter](#) or text.

Nice messages are colour-coded green, while negative messages are

designated red, and neutral messages blue.

Senior lecturer Mohamed Gaber said the "ultimate objective" of the app was to ensure that people are made aware of when they will receive negative content "so they are able to manage their stress in the best possible way."



An image showing the Android app "Stress @ Work", developed by the University of Portsmouth. The mobile phone app can predict the tone of incoming messages before a user reads them, colour coding them so that users are not caught off guard by angry or hostile words.

"Whether we are reading a worrying social media news story or a warning email from our manager, messages can upset mood and increase [stress level](#), just as good news and encouraging emails can cheer you up,"

he said.

Some days users may receive more negative content than others, he said, adding: "It is important that the user attempts to take an action in order to not get stressed, especially if this may affect the individual's performance at work and/or their behaviour at home."

The ability of people to handle stress does vary, so users can further tailor the app to their own personal specifications by designating [messages](#) positive or negative, an extra feature that allows the app to "learn" about how each individual user's perception, Dr Gaber said.

The developers hope to make the [app](#) available for free downloading from the Android marketplace by the end of June, and on other platforms within the next academic year.

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