

WIRED TO WORRY

Stopping Trolls Before They Start



**Christine
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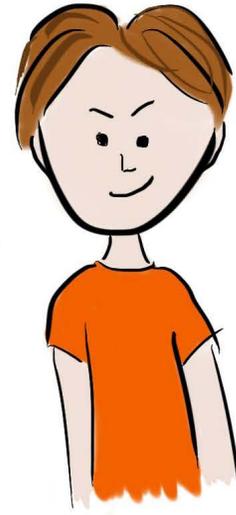
**DO NOT FEED
THE TROLLS!**
It's hard to
miss the

warnings not to respond to those who post inflammatory comments in an attempt to wreak havoc in online forums, YouTube comments and, unbelievably, memorial sites. In the most extreme cases, some trolls have been identified and faced criminal charges for their reprehensible and threatening remarks. However, there are times when someone is simply expressing a strong, dissenting opinion, only to face inappropriate accusations of trolling.

Most of us who create online content struggle

with how to encourage discussion while shutting down those who are posting comments that are abusive or offensive. This is where an ounce of prevention is important. Comment sections are subject to the broken windows theory of vandalism in neighborhoods. Social scientists studying vandalism found that neighborhoods that were well-maintained and cleaned up graffiti and vandalism promptly were more likely to prevent more serious crime and further destruction of property. Similarly, a solid policy on how you plan to moderate comments is likely to encourage serious and thoughtful comments

Simon occasionally thought about being a nicer person but it was so much more fun being a troll.



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because you are creating a community that makes it safe to participate in the discussion.

Most online community comment policies outline what will and will not be tolerated. It is important to let everyone know that while respectful disagreement is encouraged, profanity or personal attacks will be removed and could lead to the individual being banned from your site. Many sites also require that those who

post comments identify themselves by their name and email address as anonymity similarly leads to disinhibition when it comes to how people decide to comment.

If you do decide to let a strongly worded comment stand, it is important that you do take steps to respond in a friendly but firm manner when required. Easier said than done, but with practice you can achieve an assertive

tone in your responses that will feel right for you and steer the conversation in a healthy and respectful direction.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR:

Christine Korol, Ph.D. is a cartoonist, psychologist in private practice in Calgary, Canada and the host/producer of a podcast on WiredToWorry.com that provides free online anxiety and stress reduction education videos.