

Online trolling: What is it and how should we handle it?

Online trolling used to be funny, but now the term refers to something far more sinister

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

knee-jerk reaction: a quick reaction that does not allow you time to consider something carefully

newbies: a person who has recently started a particular activity

derogatory: showing a critical or disrespectful attitude

nasty: unpleasant, cruel, spiteful

amid: surrounded by or in the middle of something

embolden: to give someone the confidence or courage to do something

havoc: chaos, confusion, disorder

thrive: to grow, develop or be successful

The Urban Dictionary defines "trolling" as "the deliberate act, by a troll, of making random unsolicited and/or controversial comments on various internet forums with the intent to provoke an emotional **knee jerk reaction** from unsuspecting readers to engage in a fight or argument". For example, someone posts a picture of themselves with their pet cat on Instagram. A troll responds with the following. "Nice cat, when are you planning on cooking it?"

It is believed that trolling began back in the 90's when trolls would look for **newbies** on a forum or in a chatroom and ask naive questions about a topic that had already been overly discussed. Known as "feeding the troll", the new user would take the bait and reply to the troll. Other veteran users on the forum would identify the username and realise what was going on. This was a bit of harmless fun to give those in the know a bit of a laugh.

Nowadays, although not all trolling is bad, it has taken on a more **derogatory** meaning. It often moves beyond being playful and can become **nasty** - so nasty that a troll can be just as unpleasant as a hater. Many people use these two terms interchangeably but a troll is not the same as a hater. They have a different agenda. They want to start a fight, hopefully one that has

a broader application, and brings in more people than just the object of their original trolling.

However, trolling can have a devastating effect on the people being attacked, especially those who are vulnerable and have admitted as much on their social media accounts. For instance, Olivia Penpraze, from Melbourne, Australia, started blogging about her depression in 2010. Over a period of time, **amid** many messages of support, some trolls told her that she ought to kill herself because she was so ugly she was better off dead. She sadly took her own life months later, at the age of 19.

This type of trolling is essentially cyber-bullying. The troll is anonymous and so, feels **emboldened** to say whatever they like and create as much **havoc** with their victim's life as possible without any fear of punishment. For trolls, hurting someone gives them sheer happiness and a strong sense of self-worth; they nourish themselves from your discomfort. They exhibit some dark personality traits such as narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism.

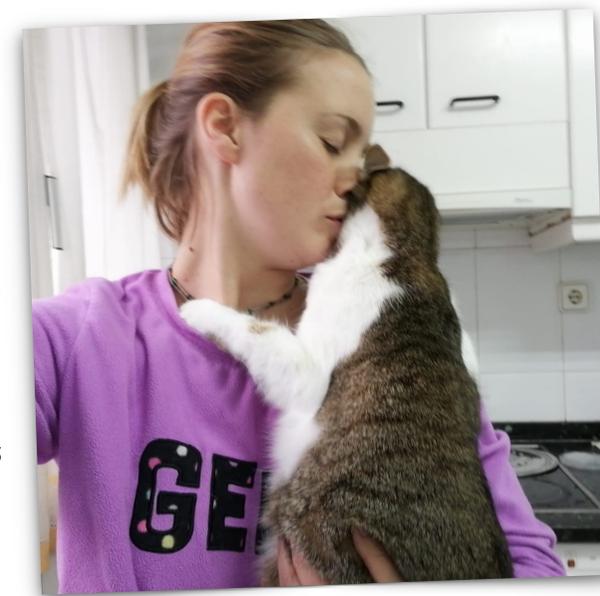
The need to hurt other people is not a product of the internet. It has always existed, but online social media sites have given this behaviour a platform on which it can **thrive**. Scary thought.

Written by ECP coach *Darren Lynch*

Let's chat about that!

Write your opinions in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- How would you describe trolling?
- Do you post on social media sites?
- Have you ever been trolled? Tell your story
- What's the best way to deal with a troll?
- Are you a troll? If so, what type of troll are you?



What is Ali doing with a cat in her kitchen? Perhaps she is going to cook it! Was this the secret ingredient of her pintxo for last week's pintxo competition?



Originally drawn by Carlos Ramirez

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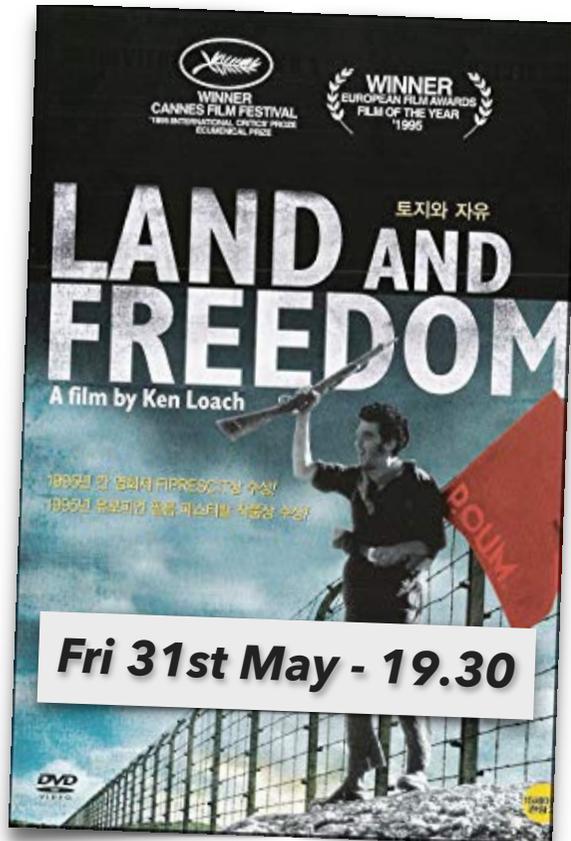
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Thanks to everyone who came to our 6th Annual Pintxo Competition.

There was amazing food (as always) and a cracking atmosphere! Congratulations to Ali (3rd), Karla (2nd) and John (2019 Champion).



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SIX

ways to criticise someone

to **berate** someone
to censure severely or angrily

to **malign** someone
to speak unfavourably about a person

to **blast** someone
to criticise harshly or violently

to **reprimand** someone
to formally disapprove of someone's actions

to **rail against** someone
to criticise a person angrily and severely

to **reproach** someone
to express strong disapproval or disappointment