

Trolling

Once, the only time you'd hear mention of trolls would be in fairy tales such as the Billy Goats Gruff.

"Troll (in folklore) an ugly cave-dwelling creature depicted as either a giant or a dwarf..."

Trolls today are no longer restricted to being found in caves or under bridges; they can be found almost everywhere on the internet.

"In Internet slang, a **troll** is a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people..."

-Wikipedia

From Facebook and Twitter, to practically any website used for information sharing and discussion, the troll's habitat is vast and varied.

These trolls take full advantage of the perceived anonymity given to them by the internet. Hiding behind user names gives them the ability to act in a way they'd be unable to in person.

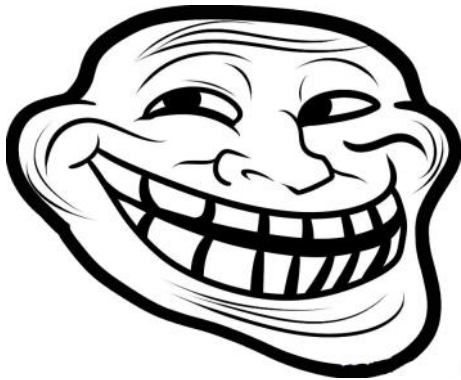
Not all trolling is necessarily committed with the same degree of malice; it can be argued that some of it is done out of a misguided sense of fun.

Some however push this too far.

Their behaviour can range from mischievous to downright criminal. From causing anger or embarrassment, to having tragic repercussions for those on the receiving end of their attention.

Trolling could happen to anyone, although celebrity figures can be the most obvious targets.

Anyone who spends time on Facebook or using many other internet services is a possible victim.



Indeed, to be guaranteed immunity to trolling, you'd have to cut yourself off from

the internet altogether. This is something that most people would be highly reluctant to do.

Really, there's no need to take so drastic a step to help defend yourself from trolls. There are a number of simple ways you can keep yourself safe.

First and foremost, as written in many places on the internet, "Don't feed the trolls." Trolls thrive on attention and getting a reaction out of people, so if you simply ignore them it's likely that they'll move on to a different target.

If possible, it's also a good idea to block the troll from your social media feed; this can be more effective than just ignoring their posts. They may set up other

accounts to harass you with, but you can block these as well.

It's important to know that you're not alone if you're being trolled. You can usually report such behaviour to the administrators of the site or service you are using, and they will often take action against the individual who is trolling you.

Sharing your experience with your friends and family can also be helpful, as people who know you will be able to reinforce how untrue the troll's messages are.

Being there for other people who are experiencing trolling is important. Let them know you're on their side and support them in taking action against the perpetrators of this behaviour.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember is that as long as the internet exists, you will always be able to find trolls. One could argue that such behaviour is a part of human nature, although it is one that should not be encouraged or endorsed.

The more popular you are on the internet, the higher your profile, the more likely it is that you'll attract the attention of people who don't like you. Don't take their comments to heart; indeed, it's important not to take anything that happens on the Internet too seriously.

Take care of yourself out there in cyberspace and remember, Don't feed the trolls...

Tony Spencer

This month's "*Korero Mai*" and "*What's On*" are edited by Stephanie Mapley and "*Whakaaro Pai*" by Tony Spencer—all from Like Minds Taranaki. Your news and views are eagerly sought. Like Minds Taranaki, PO Box 5015, New Plymouth, 3rd Floor, Brougham House, Devon Street West, NP, ph. 06-759-0966 mental.health@xtra.co.nz. www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz

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