online SOS

Thank you for attending the online harassment discussion and presentation with OnlineSOS, an organization that creates resources and guides for journalists facing online harassment. This a short summary of the topics covered, as well as links to the various resources we mentioned in the deck.
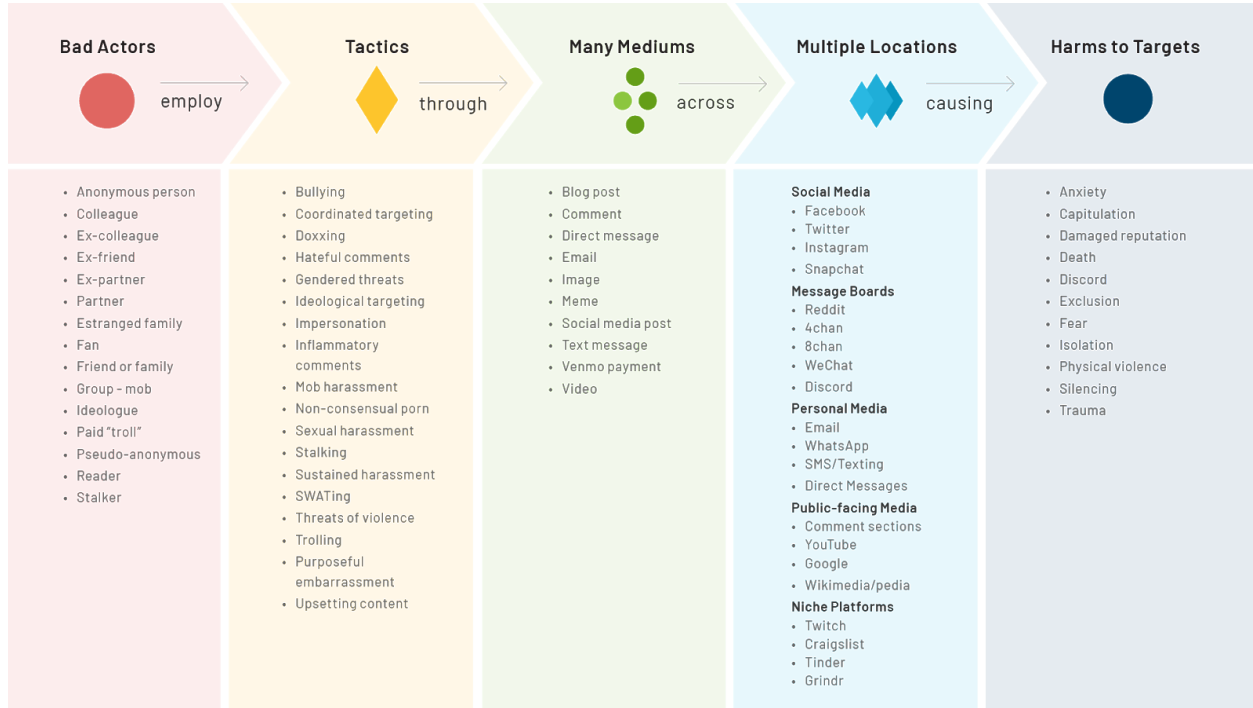
What is happening?!

A quick overview: what is online harassment and why is it happening?

What is Online Harassment?

Online harassment is a set of harmful tactics and behaviors intended to cause harm to an individual or group.

When preparing for or responding to harassment, it can be very helpful to **first identify what tactic is being used against you.** See the chart below for a quick snapshot of a few tactics. You can visit our Action Center at onlinesos.org/action-center/ or use PEN America's fantastic glossary of terms to start.

Bad actors employ particular tactics through many mediums and across many platforms to cause harm to individuals or groups.

online sos

onlinesos.org - Fall 2020

Bad Actors	Tactics	Many Mediums	Multiple Locations	Harms to Targets
employ	through	across	causing	

Bad Actors	Tactics	Many Mediums	Multiple Locations	Harms to Targets
• Anonymous person	• Bullying	• Blog post	**Social Media**	• Anxiety
• Colleague	• Coordinated targeting	• Comment	• Facebook	• Capitulation
• Ex-colleague	• Doxxing	• Direct message	• Twitter	• Damaged reputation
• Ex-friend	• Hateful comments	• Email	• Instagram	• Death
• Ex-partner	• Gendered threats	• Image	• Snapchat	• Discord
• Partner	• Ideological targeting	• Meme	**Message Boards**	• Exclusion
• Estranged family	• Impersonation	• Social media post	• Reddit	• Fear
• Fan	• Inflammatory comments	• Text message	• 4chan	• Isolation
• Friend or family	• Mob harassment	• Venmo payment	• 8chan	• Physical violence
• Group - mob	• Non-consensual porn	• Video	• WeChat	• Silencing
• Ideologue	• Sexual harassment		• Discord	• Trauma
• Paid "troll"	• Stalking		**Personal Media**	
• Pseudo-anonymous	• Sustained harassment		• Email	
• Reader	• SWATing		• WhatsApp	
• Stalker	• Threats of violence		• SMS/Texting	
	• Trolling		• Direct Messages	
	• Purposeful embarrassment		**Public-facing Media**	
	• Upsetting content		• Comment sections	
			• YouTube	
			• Google	
			• Wikimedia/pedia	
			Niche Platforms	
			• Twitch	
			• Craigslist	
			• Tinder	
			• Grindr	

Image description: This describes the components of online harassment — bad actors employ various tactics through many mediums across multiple locations to cause harm(s) to targets. You can read more about this in our report, *[Into 2020: The Current State of Online Harassment](#)*
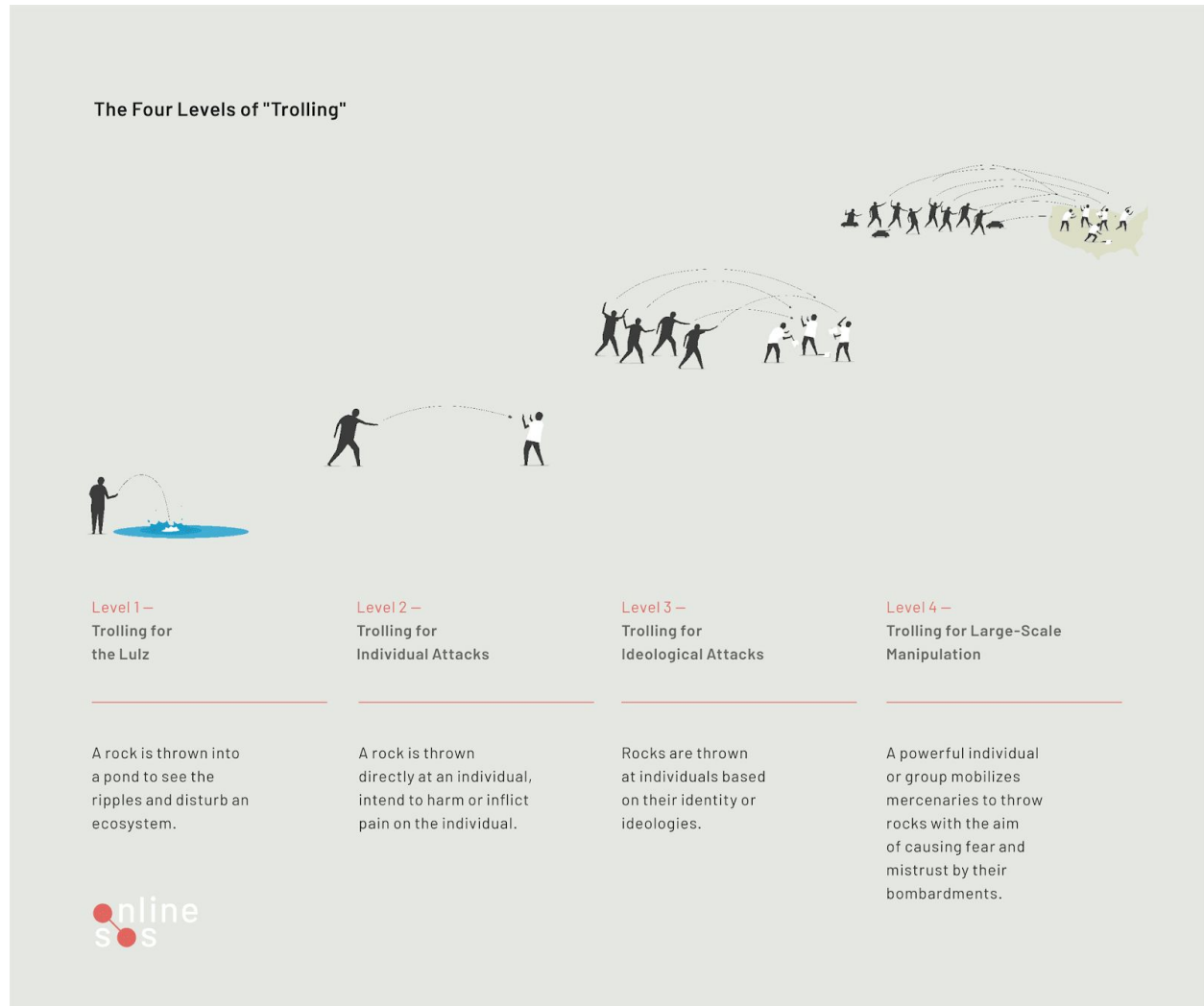
The Four Levels of "Trolling"

Level 1 —
Trolling for
the Lulz

A rock is thrown into
a pond to see the
ripples and disturb an
ecosystem.

Level 2 —
Trolling for
Individual Attacks

A rock is thrown
directly at an individual,
intend to harm or inflict
pain on the individual.

Level 3 —
Trolling for
Ideological Attacks

Rocks are thrown
at individuals based
on their identity or
ideologies.

Level 4 —
Trolling for Large-Scale
Manipulation

A powerful individual
or group mobilizes
mercenaries to throw
rocks with the aim
of causing fear and
mistrust by their
bombardments.

Illustration by Alex Chen for our 2019 report about online harassment. You can read more about the levels, including background and examples, here.

It's helpful to understand a **bit about the evolution of online harassment to get a sense of who bad actors might be, how they act and why they act the way they do.** From an **individual perspective, as someone who may be experiencing harassment**, this history can help put things into perspective, especially that harassment is **not** your fault. Oftentimes, the abusers are coordinated, sophisticated/practiced individuals or groups who happen to have latched on to you to target, but this is in no way a reflection of something you did! It's the **abusers** who should feel ashamed of their behavior—absolutely not the other way around. **Understanding how trolls organize, as well as *where* they organize,** can help you monitor potential threats or track escalation if you're in the midst of an attack.

From a **reporting perspective**, it can be useful to understand the origins of various campaigns. Where do abusers organize? What tactics do they use? What are their goals? What are the individual and societal impacts? Who has been calling out, researching or writing about this abuse in the past (reference and cite the work of Shafiqah Hudson, I'Nasah Crockett, Sydette Harry, Shireen Mitchell, Anita Sarkeesian, Carrie Goldberg, Caroline Sinders, Tracy Chou, Mary Ann Franks, dana boyd, among many others who have worked tirelessly on this topic). This can provide richer and more nuanced analyses when reporting on online harassment and related topics like disinformation.

What happens during and after an online harassment incident?

The timeline of an incident can be generalized as the lead up to the incident, the incident, the initial response, some extended process time and then a recovery period. The Status Quo has been to achieve exactly what abusers want: self-censorship and exclusion. Thankfully, this seems to be changing as there are more efforts to keep people in the public sphere and engaged. "Turn off your computer" or "just put up with it" or "log off" are simply unacceptable outcomes.
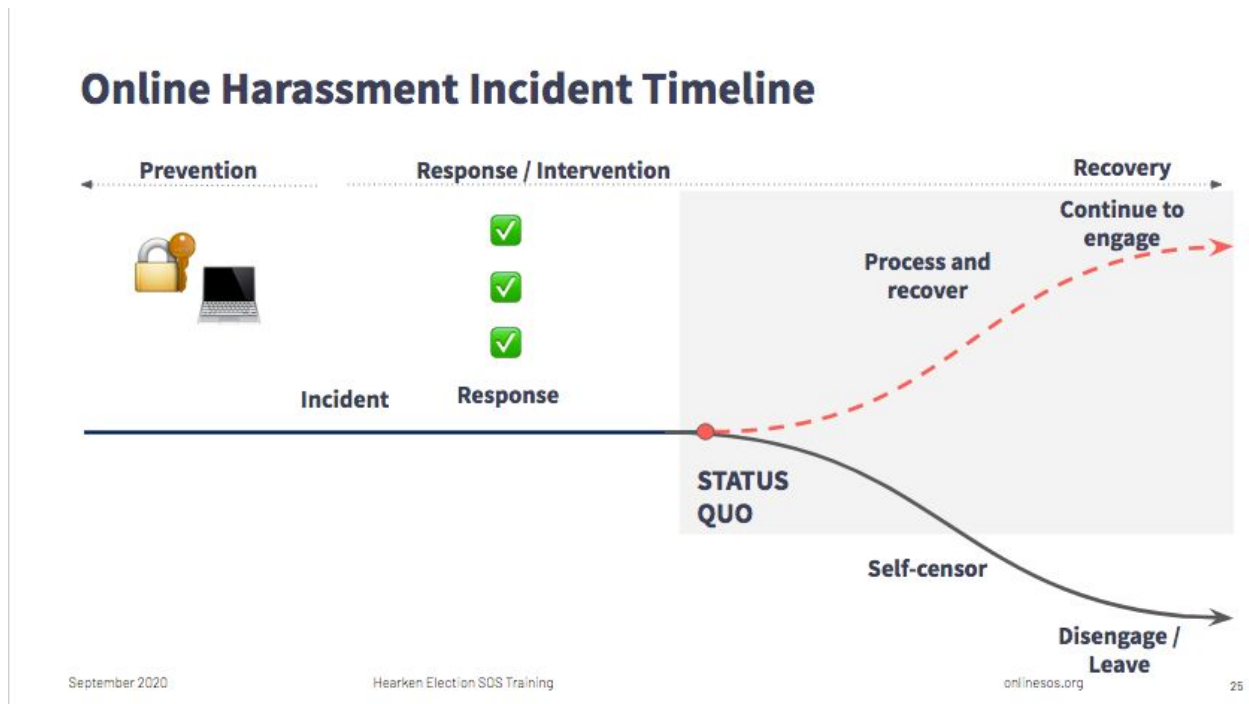

Image description: A general "timeline" of an online harassment incident. You have Prevention or Preparedness (digital security, trainings, a risk assessment before an assignment); the incident itself; then Response. There are two options: Either the response is not successful and people self-censor, disengage or leave spaces (an unacceptable

option that people are, unfortunately, forced into) or—and this is what we hope trainings and resources help achieve—you're able to process, recover and continue to engage. We need your voice!

It's worth noting here that, unfortunately, in some cases an individual may be more-or-less constantly managing online abuse or that there isn't much recourse. That's where support-based strategies can be really helpful: self care, supportive communities and talking to others about what you're going through.

When it comes to online harassment, know that it's **completely normal to feel fear, anxiety, confusion and to be overwhelmed**. These types of situations can literally invoke a "fight or flight" response in our brains, shifting our brain chemistry and sometimes even creating PTSD-like symptoms. That's why there's help out there!

How to Use an Action Plan

In the presentation, we covered the various parts of an Action Plan:

1. **Now -** Take care of these steps before deciding what to do next.
2. **Next** - Options for what you can do to take further action—with flexibility and choice.
3. **Also** - Things you may want to do, but don't necessarily work for everyone.
4. **Consider -** "Go to know" suggestions and things to think about when there's some space between you and the incident.
5. **Future -** Steps to take when you have breathing room.

It's worth noting that the various parts don't offer the same choices in *every* Action Plan. That's because each plan was developed with the specific tactic of harassment in mind, so the recommendations of *when* to consider various options may come earlier or later (if at all), depending on the situation. Also remember that **there is no one *right* response to online harassment.** These are suggestions and options based on cases we've supported, conversations with journalists and experts and our own research. The Action Plans are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather seek to offer you insight and options. **Always choose a path that feels best for you.**

For more, read this short blog post about **why** Action Plans and this short post on **when** and **how** to use these Action Plans.

FAQs

FAQ: How do I know if an online threat is real?

"All genuine threats should be taken seriously. How do you determine if they are genuine? You investigate them, you don't just assume one way or the other."
— Detective with Riverside County Sheriff's Department

FAQ: What legal options do I have?
Unfortunately, legal recourse can be very tricky—and resource intensive. Your options vary widely too, depending on your jurisdiction. For example, in some states you may be able to get a civil restraining order. Some orgs offer pro bono or low-cost legal support to journalists and this can be a place to start exploring options. See below for some legal resources and support services.

FAQ: The police or authoritative figures do nothing—what should I do?
- Think back to your threat assessment
  - What's the tactic?
  - Who is the abuser?
  - What's the context?
- Document, document, document everything
- Be as clear, concise and organized with evidence as possible
- Remember that it can still be helpful to report because you'll develop a trail of evidence
- Develop a support network of peers you can turn to and confide in

Links & Resources from the Presentation

Digital Security

- **DeleteMe discount code** (Employee Level) for a total of $153 / year.
- **DeleteMe discount code** (Executive Level - highest risk or exposure individuals) for a total of $849 / year
- Account Safety Cheat Sheet for Journalists
- Totem Digital Security eCourses
- AccessNow Digital Security Helpline

DIY Resources

- **OnlineSOS Resource and Partner List**
- **OnlineSOS Action Plans**
- **Totem Project Digital Security Training for Journalists**
- **PEN America Online Harassment Field Manual**
- **Tips for Journalists Covering Online Hate**
- **Holistic Security Manual**

- **[DART Center](#)**
- **[Quick Tips for Targeted Writers](#)**
- **[How to Dox Yourself](#)**
- **[Mental Health Resources](#)**

Specific Posts & Topics:

- [How to rally your followers or community to support you](#)
- [Is this online threat real?](#)
- [5 Lesser-Known Social Media Privacy Tips](#)
- [A quick guide to handling online harassment (personal perspective)](#)
- [CPJ: Protecting against online targeted attacks](#)
- [Dealing with harassing emails and direct messages](#)
- [Reporting to platforms](#)
- [Advice from a psychologist](#)
- [Deploying supportive cyber-communities — counterspeech and confronting harassers](#)
- [What to consider when choosing a psychotherapist: a guide for journalists](#)
- [Talking to Family and the Police](#) ** Please note that this resource has not been updated since at least 2016, but I'm linking it because it has gems of helpful info in it. Unfortunately, Crash Override is no longer operational and no longer provides direct service and support.

Direct Support:

- [Troll-Busters](#)
- Hollaback's [Heartmob](#)
- [Access Now (1:1 digital security support)](#)
- [Games & Online Harassment Hotline (NEW)](#)
- Also worth checking journalist member associations for services offered (e.g. NABJ, AAJA, Association of Healthcare writers etc.)

Legal Resources:

- [OnlineSOS Partnership](#)
- [International Women's Media Foundation](#)
- [Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press](#)
- [Carrie Goldberg Law](#): N.Y.-based law firm offering legal services and information for victims of cyberstalking, online extortion, nonconsensual pornography and other forms of online abuse.
- [Cyber Civil Rights Legal Project](#): Offers pro bono legal services to victims of nonconsensual pornography. Contact the Legal Project [here](#).

- [Tyler Clementi Institute for Cyber Safety](#): Law school clinic offering free counsel to victims of cyberharassment, as well as cybereducation in the form of guides and workshops. Contact [here](#).
- [Yale Media Freedom & Information Access Clinic](#): Provides advice on news gathering rights and civil litigation services.
- [CiviliNation](#): Features online resource guides and [list of attorneys by state](#) who specialize in representing victims of online harassment.