

Content Moderators Pay a Psychological Toll to Keep Social Media Clean. We Should Be Helping Them

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Content moderators are the unsung heroes of the internet. They work in a growing field which upholds the social media infrastructure of today. But keeping us safer, by constantly seeing and filtering the worst content online, takes its toll. Can people really cope with this constant barrage of horror?

One of the main handbooks for psychologists, the *DSM-5*, includes ‘indirect exposure to aversive details’ in the category of post-traumatic stress disorder. In extreme circumstances this can result in what is often called ‘secondary trauma’.

Secondary trauma can happen when people, such as first responders, deal with victims in distress. It can also occur after seeing or reading distressing content. Among others, those who work in content moderation for social media companies, in medicine or psychology, and in social work, can all relate to how unhelpfully memorable horrible cases can be.

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