

## 'I REFUSED TO LET THE TROLLS SILENCE ME'



Dr Emily Grossman, 37, a broadcaster and science educator from London, was targeted by trolls after a television appearance. She says: "Last June, I took part in a debate on Sky News. I argued that Sir Tim Hunt's comments about women in science (that when you criticise them, they cry) were irresponsible in a field where there's a strong gender imbalance - even if they were meant as a joke. A video of it was posted on YouTube and I was subjected to a deluge of disgusting comments.

Some were sexually aggressive, with one man commenting: 'Fantasising about slapping her with my c\*\*k'. Others sided with my on-screen opponent, saying he had 'completely wrecked that feminist bint'. Some were depressingly blunt: 'Women. Know your limits' read one.

Thousands of horrible messages poured in via Twitter and YouTube, and I spent the next two weeks hardly sleeping and unable to work properly. I felt panicky and on edge. It was only after internet organisation End Online Misogyny offered support that I came up for air. They took over and wrote a blog about my experience. They made me see what was happening wasn't my fault.

Even so, I became ill with a nasty flu-like virus, probably triggered by stress, so I limited my online activities. It was tough - as a freelancer, I use the internet to find work and get support. But I knew doing nothing wasn't an option. So last December, I gave a TEDx talk at University College London called: 'Why science needs people who cry'. I was nervous about the reaction after I posted it online, but I knew I'd cope because by then I'd learned how to ignore negative comments. Thankfully, the majority of the comments were very positive.

In some ways, I'm glad I was trolled. It showed me the true scale of the problem and inspired me to speak out about online sexism. It's so important women feel able to voice their opinions and feelings without fear of attack and abuse. The more women do that, the louder their voices will become - and eventually those trolls will be silenced." **F**

