

Facebook, Nextdoor and Reddit unpaid moderators struggle to manage divided communities | The Washington Post

By Heather Kelly

August 26, 2020

For four to six hours a day every day, Caitlin Welch busies herself as a volunteer moderator for a number of Facebook groups while her baby sleeps. Much of that time is spent on a collection of evidenced-based parenting support groups including Motherhood Without the Woo, of which she is an administrator. She engages with members, reviews flagged posts, deletes problematic articles and boots troublemakers.

The job has been harder in recent months. Welch, a stay-at-home mother in Amarillo, Tex., says she has been dealing with more users, increased tension and heated debates since the pandemic began.

"Everybody's a little more combative and gets a little more emotional," Welch said. "In the beginning, it was really bad because everyone was freaking out about [the coronavirus] and nobody knew anything."

From Facebook, Reddit and Nextdoor to homes for more niche topics like fan fiction, many online communities and groups are kept afloat by volunteer armies of moderators. The people who moderate these groups often start as founders or enthusiastic members, interested in helping shape and police the communities they're already a part of.

They are both cleaning crew and den parent. Moderators take down spam and misinformation. They mediate petty disagreements and volatile civil wars. They carefully decide between reminding people of the rules, freezing conversations, removing members or letting drama subside on its own.

[...]

[communities - The Washington Post](#)