

Star Wars Actor: Ignoring Trolls Is a Sign of Mental Strength

Star Wars actor John Boyega is apologizing for comments he made in a recent interview in which he [suggested](#) it takes mental strength to brush off the comments of social media trolls.

The controversy began when, in an interview with [Variety](#), the Star Wars actor responded to a question about the dark side of fan engagement, something that his Last Jedi co-star, [Kelly Marie Tran](#), experienced last year when she was reportedly the target of racist remarks from fans of the franchise. She ended up [quitting social media](#) as a result.

‘Being in this position, you just understand the masses, how the masses think, you know. Through social media, we get to engage, we get to have fun,’ he told Variety. ‘But at the same time, for those who are not mentally strong, you are weak to believe in every single thing that you read. That’s, you know, it is what it is.’

“I don’t know, for me anyway, when I see that [backlash], I’m like, well, that’s actually not true. But no, it is actually not true. So it’s kind of like [shrugs] it is what it is,” Boyega continued. ‘But to engage, to connect with the fans who otherwise wouldn’t get a day to day experience, especially during things like the press tour, and behind the scenes stuff, is always good.’

In a tweet early Thursday, Boyega walked back his comment and

said he was in no way referring to his *Last Jedi* co-star.

In no way was I referring to Kelly when I made my comments although the interviewer mentioned her given the topic. I was really speaking from my own perspective throughout this franchise. Sometimes I've felt strong and sometimes I've felt weak. Badly worded though. I apologize.

– John Boyega (@JohnBoyega) [December 12, 2019](#)

It's a shame that Boyega backed down so quickly because he shares an important lesson. Brushing aside trolls and haters is a sign of maturity and mental strength.

As my colleague Tyler Brandt [recently observed](#), data show that young people today are suffering. Generation Z is the most likely to report poor or fair mental health and the least likely to report good or excellent mental health. Suicide rates for teens and young adults are soaring.

Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt and legal scholar Greg Lukianoff offer a hypothesis on why this is happening. They conclude, Brandt explains, that many young people are succumbing to three great “untruths.”

1. The Untruth of Fragility: What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Weaker
2. The Untruth of Emotional Reasoning: Always Trust Your Feelings
3. The Untruth of Us Versus Them: Life Is a Battle Between Good People and Evil People

It's not hard to see that people who cower before the criticisms of social media trolls fall victim to at least one of these untruths: fragility. Mental strength is discovered not by hiding from haters but by realizing their words cannot harm you.

Victimhood may be, as [some suggest](#), a status symbol today. Just don't confuse it with strength. By hiding from threats and harm and confrontation, we weaken ourselves, [explains](#) *Antifragile* author Nassim Nicholas Taleb.

This is not to condone the behavior of the trolls and haters or their slurs and harassment. Bullying is wrong, and ad hominem attacks are stupid (and [unwise](#)).

It's simply to say that true empowerment comes from shrugging at haters and simply saying, as Boyega explained, "Well, that's actually not true."

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This article was originally published on FEE.org. Read the [original article](#).

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