10 Steps to a More Positive *Tomb Raider* Fandom

Picture the scene: You've had a stressful day at school or work and you decide to unwind by logging onto your social media platform of choice to discuss your favourite video game series with fellow fans. But what do you find cluttering your timeline? Endless arguments about dual pistols, frequent potshots at the game developers, savage wars of words between Core Design purists and the new generation of fans...

Sometimes it feels like the only option is to turn your back on the *Tomb Raider* fan community and walk away from it all.

But all hope is not lost. Here are ten ways you can help turn the tide on "toxic fandom" and spread some much-needed positivity through the community!

1) Share Your Story

No matter how people feel about certain games or the various iterations of Lara Croft, we are all united by our love for this two-decade-old franchise. Sometimes, we need to remind ourselves - and others - what it is that made us fans of that sassy raider of tombs.

Declare what it is you love about *Tomb Raider* and its fanbase. Explain what Lara Croft means to you and how she inspires you. Share your fandom anecdotes and gaming mishaps. Tell them about those ancient sites you visited because you saw them in a *Tomb Raider* game. Everyone loves a good story.

You can write about your history with the *Tomb Raider* franchise for your own blog or website, record a podcast or vlog, or simply share it on social media. Alternatively, you can add your story to the growing collection of fan stories in IndyCroft.Com's "20 Years of the Tomb Raider Community" archive.

2) Find a Creative Outlet For Your Fandom

They say it's easier to destroy than to create. Instead of leaping onto social media or diving into the discussion forums to vent your anger, trying channelling that energy and passion into creating something that celebrates your love for all things Croft.

There are countless ways to express your fandom: Blogging, writing fan fiction, creating custom levels, cosplaying, recording Let's Play videos, crafting jewellery based on *Tomb Raider* artefacts, devising a work-out routine for aspiring adventurers...

And these are just the tip of the iceberg. Check out Pinterest or DeviantArt for other sources of inspiration. The sky's the limit!

3) Promote Fan Art and Other Fan Projects

Spread the love by sharing fan art, fan fiction, and other fan creations on your site and/or social media timelines. Fans pour their heart and soul into their creations and will appreciate the exposure you give them, especially if they write or create art for a living.

If you're an artist or creator yourself, you may feel hesitant about sharing other people's work on your social media accounts or website. Don't be.

Even the most competitive creator needs a support network. And remember what they say: One good turn deserves another. Sharing other people's work will foster goodwill, bring joy to other fans' timelines, and give others a good reason to share your work in return. Everybody wins!
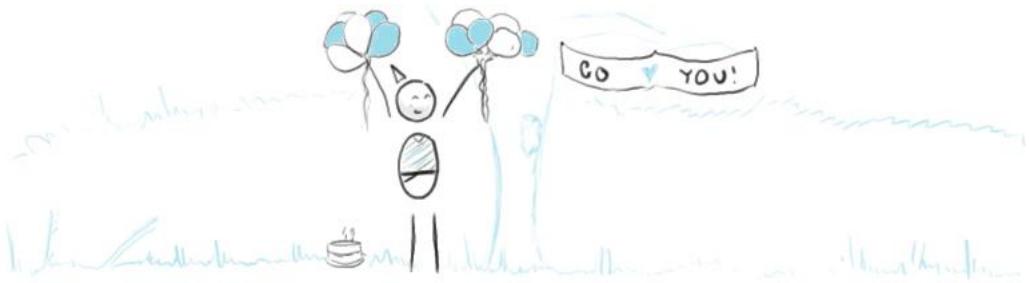
4) Show Creators That They Are Appreciated

Being a creator is tough work. Whether they're a game developer, artist, writer, content creator, fansite owner, or community manager, they will have days where they feel like the whole world is against them, that their hard work has been for naught. On days like this, a kind word or two may be just the thing they need to lift their spirits and keep them going.

There are numerous ways you can show your appreciation for your favourite creators: posting reviews on Amazon or GoodReads, giving them constructive feedback on their latest project, writing an article about their work, supporting them on Patreon (if they have one), complimenting them on a job well done, "liking" their YouTube videos, thanking them personally on social media, creating fan art in their honour…

Everyone loves to feel appreciated, so don't hold back. Give them a reason to wake up with a smile.


5) Compliment Cosplayers

First and foremost: Refrain from body shaming cosplayers; it takes guts to put yourself out there and invite people's attention, especially at conventions and other public events. Mean-spirited comments may be an unfortunate reality of life but you don't need to add to that noise.

Instead, try complimenting cosplayers on their hard work or asking them questions about their costumes. Cosplay is

a form of creative expression and cosplayers generally enjoy sharing their experiences and costume-making tips with fellow fans. Build a rapport with them.

If you're a cosplayer yourself, try to avoid offering unsolicited advice. You may think you're doing them a favour but you could risk offending or upsetting them. Perhaps their costume isn't screen accurate because they cannot afford certain materials or crafting tools. They may be struggling with body image or other personal issues. Or maybe they're simply proud of what they have achieved.

And don't be afraid to call others out if they're openly mocking a cosplayer's weight, looks, gender, skin colour, or costume. It's always good to know that someone has got your back.
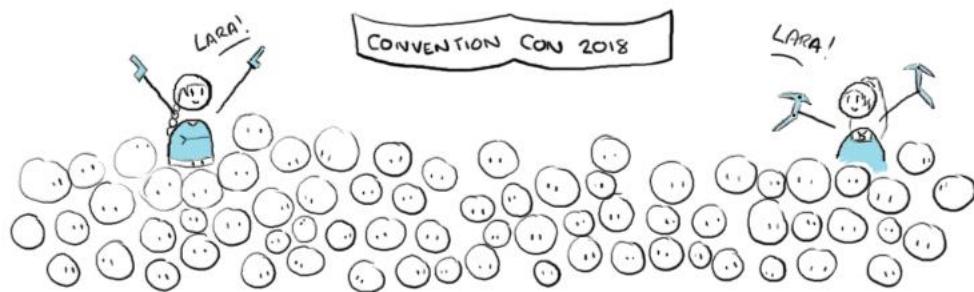
6) Support Fan-Made Merchandise

Despite the long-running success of the *Tomb Raider* franchise, there's precious little in the way of affordable official merchandise these days. Fan-made merchandise is a great alternative that's easy on your wallet, supports community members, and makes for some unique gift ideas for the Tomb Raider fan in your life.

Whether you're looking for *Tomb Raider*-inspired jewellery, stationery for your home office, or badges to pin on your backpack, you'll find a wealth of fan-made gifts over on Etsy, RedBubble, INPRNT, and Society6.

Go on. Treat yourself.

7) Get Involved in Extra Life or Other Charity Gaming Events

Video games and gamers often get a bad rap in the media. Gamers are often portrayed as loners who shun reality and human interaction in favour of losing themselves in virtual worlds or as potential serial killers who eat, live, and breathe first-person shooters. What many don't realise is that gaming can also foster a strong sense of community and be used as a force for good.

Be part of this force for good by signing up for Extra Life and joining Team Tomb Raider Community. Led by community leader and general bad-ass Stellalune, Team Tomb Raider Community has raised over $20,000 for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals since 2012. If you're based in the United Kingdom, you might want to sign up for Special Effect's GameBlast gaming marathon, which takes place every February.

Even if you aren't able to take part in the charity events yourself, there are still other ways you can get involved. You could donate money to any of the participants, spread the word about their fundraising efforts via social media, write blog posts about these charity gaming events, or simply cheer on the participants by leaving encouraging messages in their chat-rooms during their charity live-streams. Every little helps.
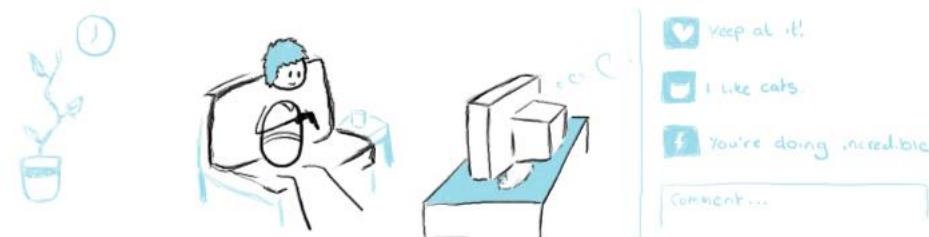
8) Curate Your Social Media Experience

Don't be afraid to mute, unfollow, or even block anyone who is actively dampening your enthusiasm or attacking other fans. Anyone can have a bad day but if they are constantly "shitposting" or resorting to ad hominem attacks, you'd probably be better off without them. Use the tools at your disposal wisely and prune your timelines as YOU see fit. Because, let's face it, social media can be exhausting, even at the best of times.

Surround yourself with people who inspire you and are capable of discussing differences of opinion in a respectful manner. You don't want to create an "echo chamber" - diversity of opinion is essential for healthy discourse - but a constant flow of negativity is not conducive to a fun, productive social media environment.

And, last but not least, choose your battles wisely. Learn to ignore inflammatory comments and avoid engaging with people who are aching for a fight. Your time and energy are precious; don't waste them on trolls and troublemakers.

9) Be The Change You Wish to See in the World

It's easy enough to blame others for creating a toxic environment but could you actually be part of the problem? Think about the language you use in your posts and the emotions you are trying to convey. Are you unknowingly contributing to the negative atmosphere you're trying to fight against?

While it's perfectly fine to voice your concerns about the direction of the franchise or share your thoughts on the current state of fandom, be conscious of how often you do it, when you post it, and how you phrase it. If you're posting negative comments on a daily basis, it may be time to take a short break from social media or, at the very least, take a long, hard look at the image you're putting across. Do you really want to be written off as a killjoy or, worse, a "toxic fan"?

You can avoid this by setting a shining example for others to follow. Become a beacon of positive fandom by focusing your energy and enthusiasm on those segments of the *Tomb Raider* fandom that motivate and inspire you. Reach out to fans who are going through a tough time. Offer to help out fellow fans any way you can. Give something back to the fan community, whether it's creating something for others to enjoy or offering a kind word here and there. In short, be the change you wish to see in the world.

10) Follow Positively Tomb Raider on Twitter

And, last but not least, be sure to follow Positively Tomb Raider on Twitter for a regular dose of uplifting *Tomb Raider* tweets!

(Originally published on Positively Tomb Raider on 2 June 2018. The images used in this article are copyright of Rachel Perkins, site admin for Positively Tomb Raider)