

How to deal with toxic people

Lessons from the trenches of Open Source Development

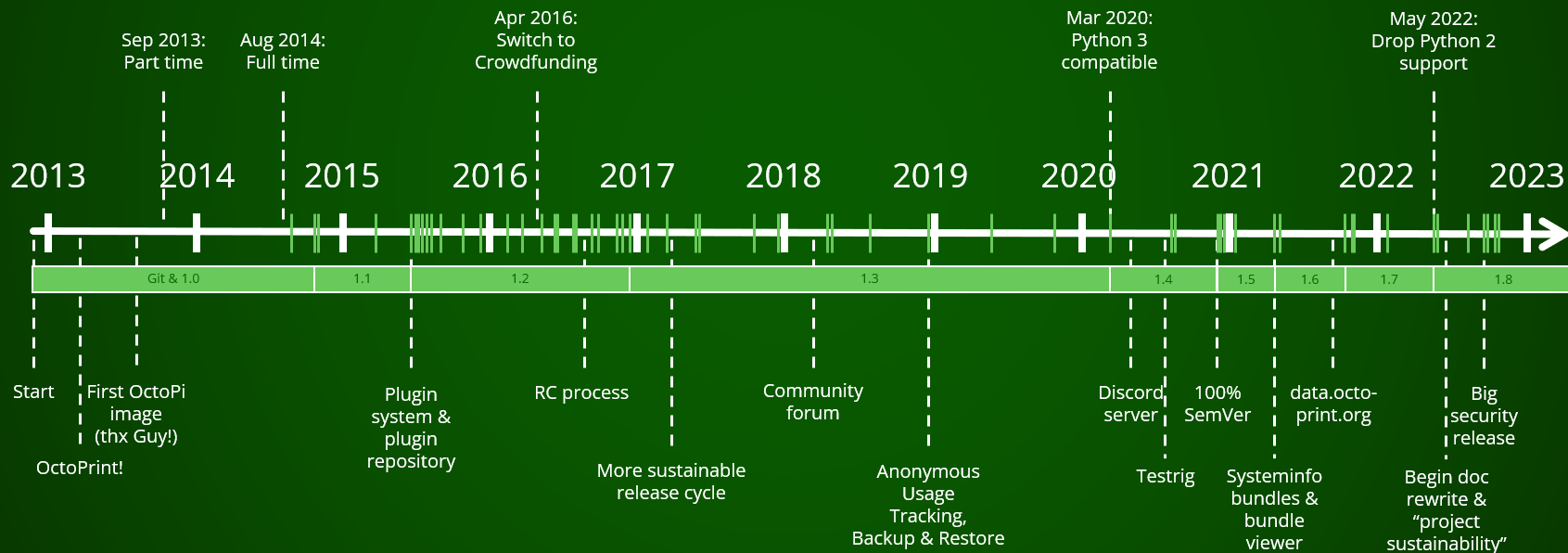
Gina Häußge // foosel.net
OOP2023

Gina Häußge

- 39 years old
- Software engineer
- Maker & hobby baker
- GitHub Star
- 100% Nerd
- Creator & maintainer of **OctoPrint**



A decade of maintaining OctoPrint




Bad Behaviour



Entitlement

Why isn't this obscure feature implemented already that I need for my work?

How rude of you to refuse to implement something I require!

Wow, this bug is still open, six months later? Get off your lazy  and fix it already!


Frustration

This crap just cost me
thousands of dollars,
shame on you for
ever releasing this!

WELL THANKS FOR NOTHING!

I just updated and
nothing works anymore,
THIS IS THE LAST TIME I UPDATE!

Attacks

Whoever designed this
steaming pile of 
should be shot!

Stop writing software, you 

LOL, you clearly SUCK as a dev!

 YOU!!!

Coping strategies

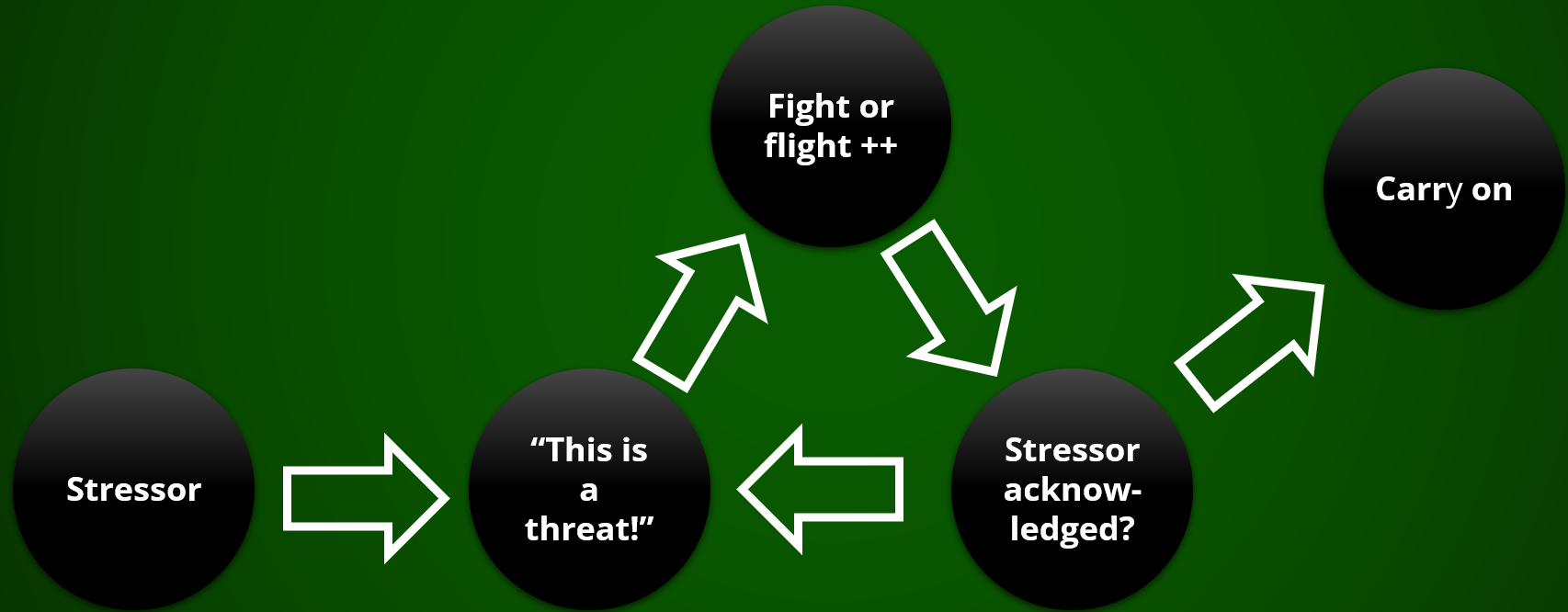


First: Disengage & cool down

- Don't answer hot-headed
- Let off steam **offline**
 - Heavy bag
 - Jumping jacks
 - Brisk walk
 - Count to 100 and back down
- Initial **stress response cycle** needs to run through
- Only then respond



Stress response cycle?



Remind of realities

- Open Source = no demands but **collaboration & cooperation**
- Not just code, everything helps!
- “Patches welcome” 👎



Remind of boundaries

- Open Source Maintainers are people and deserve **respect & decency**
- Make overstepping clear
- Enforce community rules (CoC)
- Refer to snarky.ca/the-social-contract-of-open-source/



Additional measures

- Don't work on the issue (if it only affects the abuser)
- Point the abuser to the door
- Ban hammer (last resort!)
- You don't have to accept abuse - and for the sake of the project you actually **shouldn't**



How the community can help

- “This is just like it is in Open Source!” 🙄
- Call out bad behaviour
- Always remember **yourself** that there is a human on the other end



How companies can help

- Understand that Open Source is a two way street
- Don't just take, give back – on company time!
- Don't expect to implement your business workflows for you
- Sponsor the projects you use



Thank you for your attention!

Mastodon: [@foosel@chaos.social](https://chaos.social/@foosel)

GitHub: [@foosel](https://github.com/foosel)

Web: foosel.net



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