How to deal with toxic people

Lessons from the trenches of Open Source Development

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- 39 years old
- Software engineer
- Maker & hobby baker
- GitHub Star
- 100% Nerd
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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?

Stressor ➔ "This is a threat!" ➔ Fight or flight ++ ➔ Stressor acknowledged? ➔ Carry on
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!

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