

Adulting



DebConf 23

Kochi • India

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Adulting

Realising that we need to learn to take care of each other,
because we cannot rely anymore on someone else taking
care of us

We're doing serious stuff

- lots of people, lots of systems, lots of derivatives, lots of communities...
- schools, climate research, seriously critical infrastructure, aerospace, space, governments, nuclear research, disaster response, ...

We'll be doing even more serious stuff



We're going to become even more relevant in mission critical infrastructure

Sustainability

We celebrated 30 years of Debian

Can we do another 30?

The way we do things now?



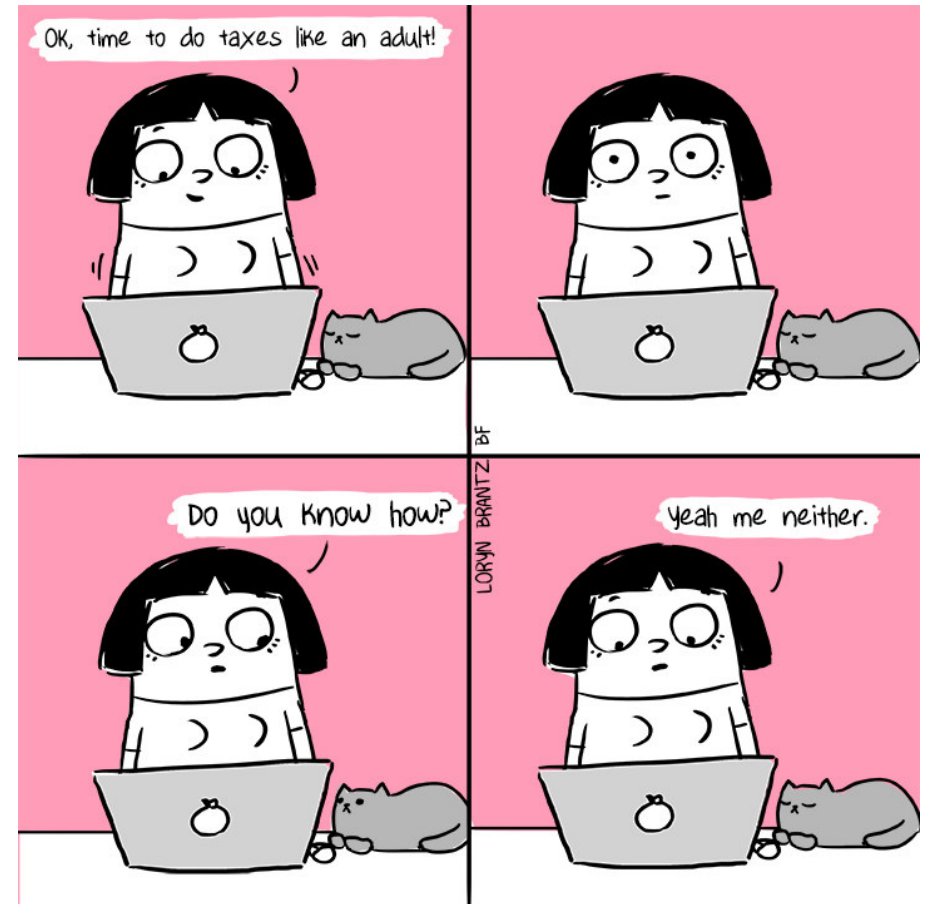
We can't rely on others to take care of us

That horrifying moment when you're looking for an adult for help but then realize you're an adult



Getting serious stuff done

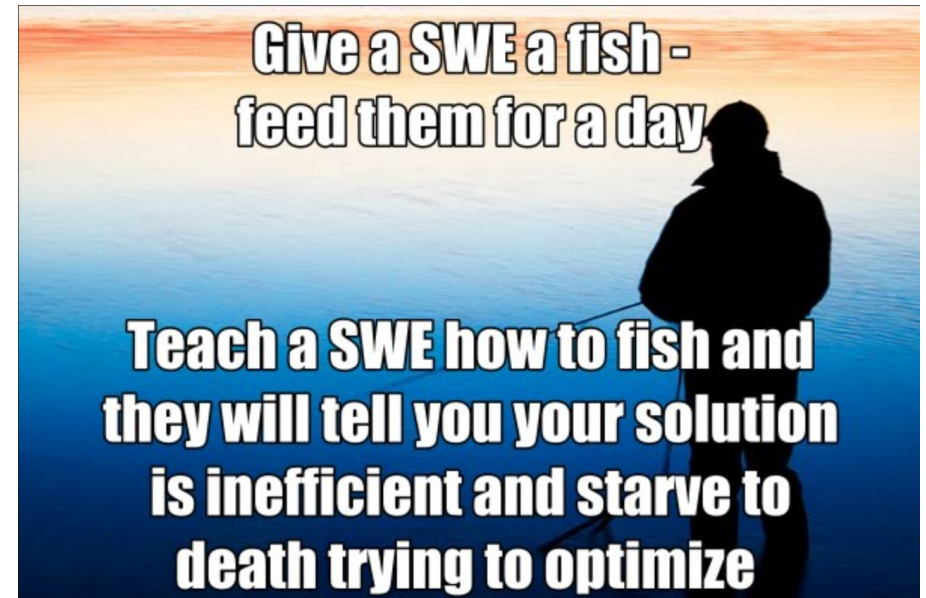
- meeting deadlines
- tracking progress
- keeping documents safely stored
- talking to other communities
- tracking team health
- staying on top of trademarks
- gathering consensus
- approving budgets [...]



We can try to *look* serious

Pedantry mistaken for quality:

Furthermore, we would like to point out that the more comments and questions you have, [...] the higher our fees and invoices will be.



Pedantry is easy. Technical excellence requires looking at big pictures, deciding strategies and committing to them

We can try to look for *replacement adults*

- A hero/martyr (remember to thank them regularly to guilt-trip them into staying)
- A narcissist (will pretend to take care of you as long as you offer worship)

THAT HORRIFYING MOMENT WHEN
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN ADULT AND
YOU REALIZE THAT YOU ARE AN ADULT.
**SO YOU START LOOKING FOR AN
ADULTIER ADULT.**

We can try *denial*

Just like in the good old days:

1. Drop the ball
2. Pretend everything is fine and move on
3. Someone else will step in, find the mess, and take a day off-work to tidy up

Leave your problem be until it becomes somebody else's emergency!

But then shit gets real

Suddenly you get to deal with a *Debian* emergency, a *personal* emergency and a *professional* emergency: which one goes first?

I observed that I would prioritise Debian first.

So I became the person in my Debian teams who responded to emergencies.

So my personal and professional lives suffered.

So I have now resigned from all positions of responsibility in Debian.

Realising that we need to learn to take care of each other

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The means are the end

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The end justifies the means only when the story stops at the end.

We need to improve process, community, mutual care, growth, sustainability, to have tools to travel the road we're traveling for the forever it will take us to reach utopia.

We are the means, not the end.

We are what we did today and how we did it, every single day.

Sustainable discussion culture

I guess I've become enough of a weasel to not be targeted (anymore), but having people you care about insult other people you care about still feels bad.

- We have dealt with assholes by thickening our skin
- We need more empathy, compassion, validation of hurt
- To encourage and protect clear and vulnerable communication
- To disentangle the personal from the technical from the political, and address them independently
- We might need a different communication technology

Sustainable community practices

We could offer more value in the *community*:

- package, packager, bug of the month
- positive feedback
- a sense of direction and purpose
- a concrete hope for help and cooperation
- knowing one is not being left alone

Investing in people

- Care about those who care
- Help those who help
- Support people through hard times
- When people are stuck, help them find ways of using their energy

Fail like a pro

It's ok to *can't*. Please *can't* responsibly.

If you're holding back a team, a blocker, a feature: own it, process the grief, let go, free that energy, make space for others.

Acknowledge errors/mistakes, accept them without judgement and self-judgement, build on that to improve.

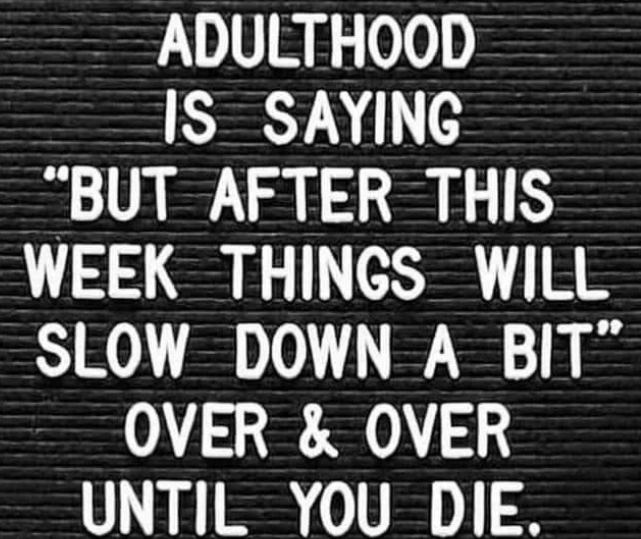


Don't be afraid to let go

Being able to endure something does not equal an obligation to withstand it. (social reposts, source unknown)

How to gain street cred as an adult:

- Let people know you're struggling
- Document what you tried, what worked, what didn't
- Document what you would have tried next
- Accept the grief and let go



ADULTHOOD
IS SAYING
"BUT AFTER THIS
WEEK THINGS WILL
SLOW DOWN A BIT"
OVER & OVER
UNTIL YOU DIE.

Be in touch with ourselves

In some environments there is the warning against entering a situation *emotionally dirty*: how bringing in anger or frustration from the outside risks making delicate interactions more dangerous.

We can learn to be mindful of our emotional states when we come to shared project spaces like lists and bug reports.

What kind of energy am I bringing in? Is it negative energy? Stop energy? Is it needed? Is it the energy I want to bring?

We may need help as a project

Doing it mainly for fun is a perfectly valid motivation to be here.

We may need help with housekeeping or community practices.

We need to acknowledge where we need help and find it, pay for it.

We need to have fun knowing that the bills are being paid, the contracts are being renewed, the important emails are being answered.



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