

# You ARE NOT AN IDIOT

Or maybe we're just **all** idiots?

ANGE ALBERTINI

21/05/2021

NORTHSEC

nsec

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Reverse engineering since 1989, Author of Corkami, file format expert
- PoC or GTFO, Pwnie Award of Crypto 2017

*My own views  
and opinions.*

Professionally

- 13 years of malware analysis
- 3 years of Infosec Engineer at Google



my license plate is a CPU architecture  
my phone case is a PDF doc  
my resume is a Super NES/Megadrive rom

# THIS TALK

- You might see me as successful (Google, Pwnie...)
- I kept seeing myself as an idiot - until **very** recently
- Yet I'm still the same

Why until now? Why not now?

Choose your flavour:

the slides are generic

the recording is very personal

THE CURRENT SLIDE IS AN

HONEST TALK TRAILER

A CORKAMI ORIGINAL PRODUCTION



# YET ANOTHER “SUCCESS” SPEECH ?

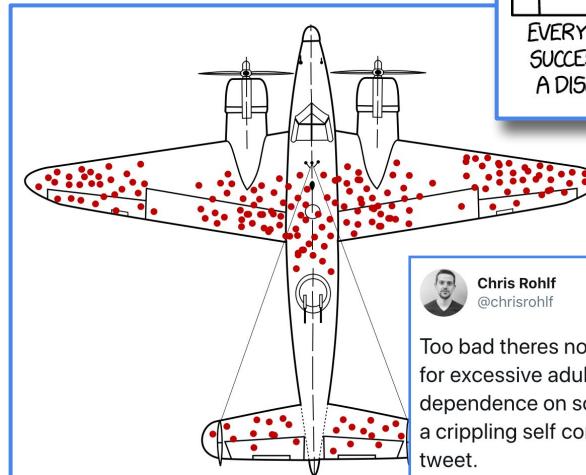
This talk is **not** about showing off my *success*

Focusing on the basics

Not necessarily limited to Infosec

Totally experimental  
Unpopular opinions?

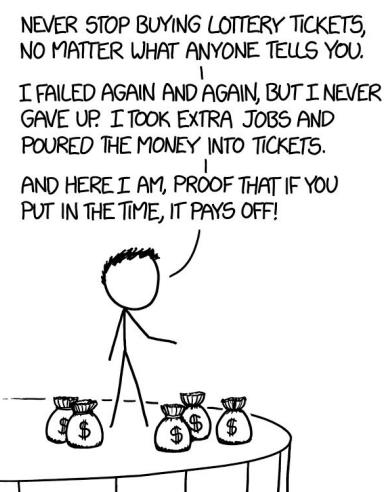
I'm obviously biased  
I'm here to share & learn



Chris Rohlf  
@chrisrohlf

Too bad theres no 'This tweet is a made up story designed for excessive adulation from peers because of the authors dependence on social media induced dopamine hits to cure a crippling self confidence problem' option when reporting a tweet.

2:06 PM · Apr 20, 2018



NEVER STOP BUYING LOTTERY TICKETS,  
NO MATTER WHAT ANYONE TELLS YOU.

I FAILED AGAIN AND AGAIN, BUT I NEVER  
GAVE UP. I TOOK EXTRA JOBS AND  
POURED THE MONEY INTO TICKETS.

AND HERE I AM, PROOF THAT IF YOU  
PUT IN THE TIME, IT PAYS OFF!



EVERY INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH BY SOMEONE  
SUCCESSFUL SHOULD HAVE TO START WITH  
A DISCLAIMER ABOUT SURVIVORSHIP BIAS.

# Infosec...

## So MANY REASONS TO OVER-WORRY...

...and forget about yourself

...or your friends



# INFOSEC IS ~~BORING~~ EXHAUSTING/HARMFUL!

- very repetitive tasks
- uncertainty is exhausting
- profiteers, abusers

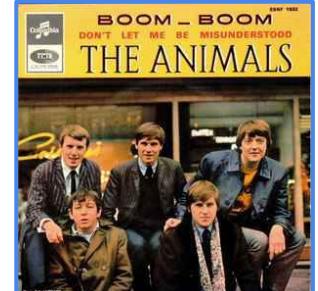


# INFOSEC PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS WRONG

- We're the ones preventing projects to launch
- We're easily misunderstood

We're supposed to just have to "follow the manual"  
like any other engineers

- We discuss hypothetical attacks that never happened yet
- We publish research that helps to create more attacks



# EARLIER THIS WEEK...



## Our cybersecurity 'industry best practices' keep allowing breaches

BY ALLEN GWENN, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR — 05/17/21 04:30 PM EDT

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY CONTRIBUTORS ARE THEIR OWN AND NOT THE VIEW OF THE HILL

So with all of these impressively credentialed experts, we should be getting better at this "information security" business, right? So, what is wrong?

The core problem is that "industry best practices" are not.

Implement a "one strike and you are out" hiring policy for information security employees. When they fail, do not let it happen twice.

Also, never hire an information security employee who has ever worked for a firm that has had a security incident. Their "industry best practices" did not work for the previous employer, why would they work better for the next victim? These former employees bring disaster.

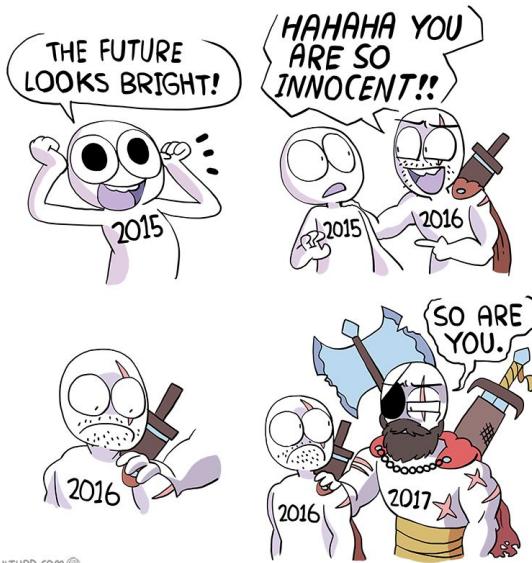
# INFOSEC AND METRICS

Security doesn't have easy metrics,  
so defense is very political

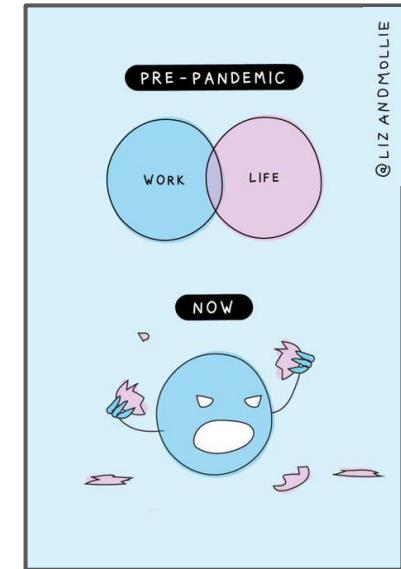


# Hackers don't give a shit:

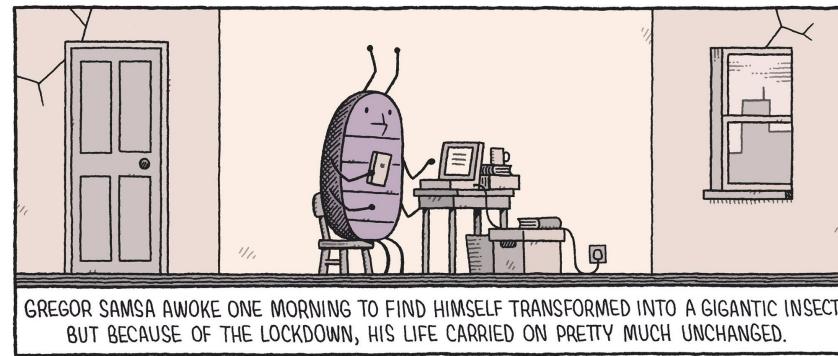
- About your project's scope
- It's managed by a third party
- It's a legacy system
- It's "too critical to patch"
- About your outage Windows
- About your budget
- You've always done it that way
- About your Go-Live Date
- It's only a pilot/proof of concept
- About Non-Disclosure Agreements
- It wasn't a requirement in the contract
- It's an internal system
- It's really hard to change
- It's due for replacement
- You're not sure how to fix it
- It's handled in the Cloud
- About your Risk Register entry
- The vendor doesn't support that configuration
- It's an interim solution
- It's [insert standard here] compliant
- It's encrypted on disk
- The cost benefit doesn't stack up
- "Nobody else could figure that out"
- You can't explain the risk to "The Business"
- You've got other priorities
- About your faith in the competence  
of your internal users
- You don't have a business justification
- You can't show Return on Investment
- You contracted out that risk



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@ LIZ AND MOLLIE

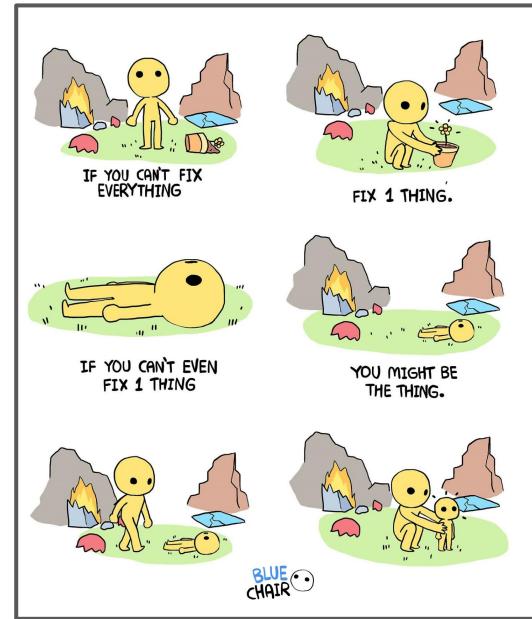
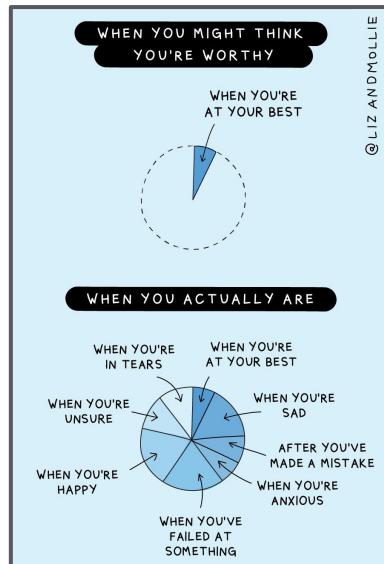
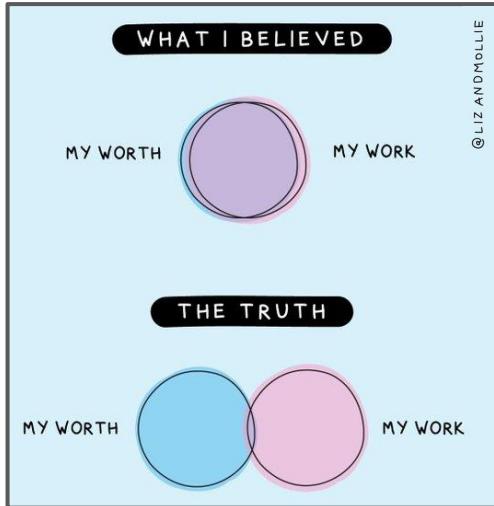


TOM GAULD

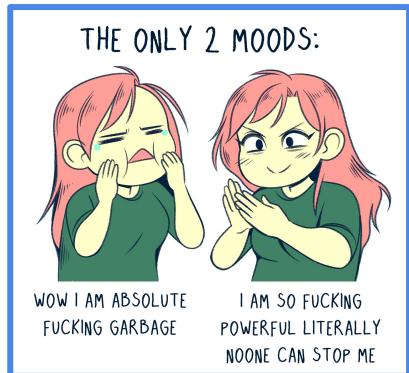
THE PANDEMIC CERTAINLY DIDN'T HELP...

# BUT WE'RE A LOT MORE THAN OUR WORK

All your efforts in infosec are not worth it  
if you burn out or commit suicide



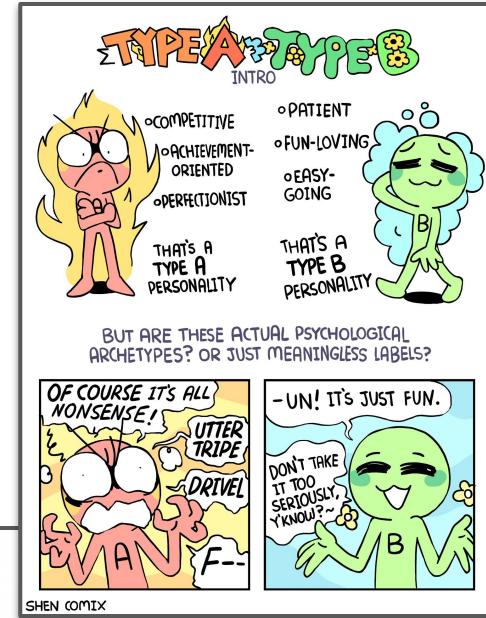
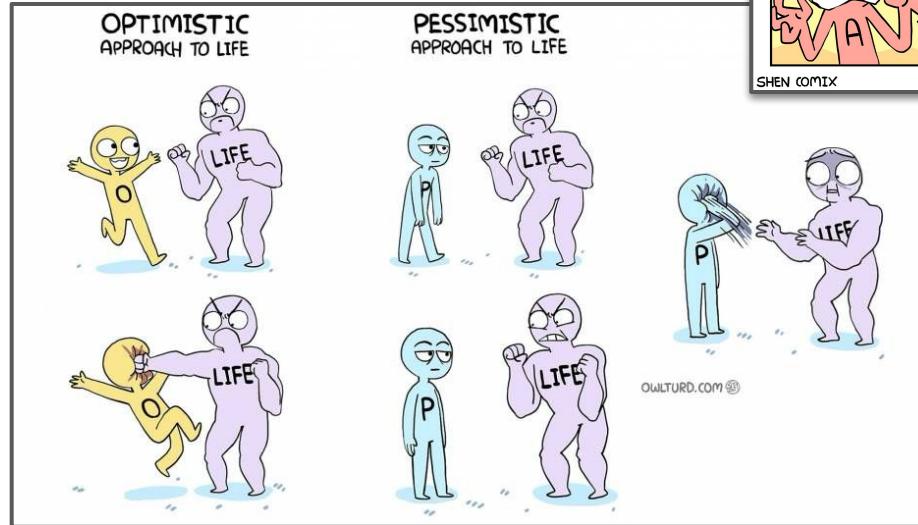
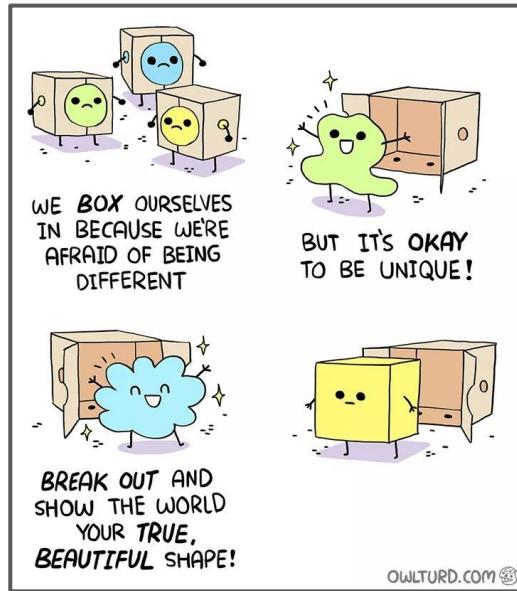
# FIRST MISTAKES...



You are not an idiot if... = yanaii  
It is normal and ok to... = iinaot

# THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PERSONALITY

It is normal and ok to be different!



YANAI!!

# You JUST CAN'T LEARN THINGS MAGICALLY

Some people can't learn without practice,  
or without a genuine motivation

GO! TEAM PRODUCTIVE DAY!



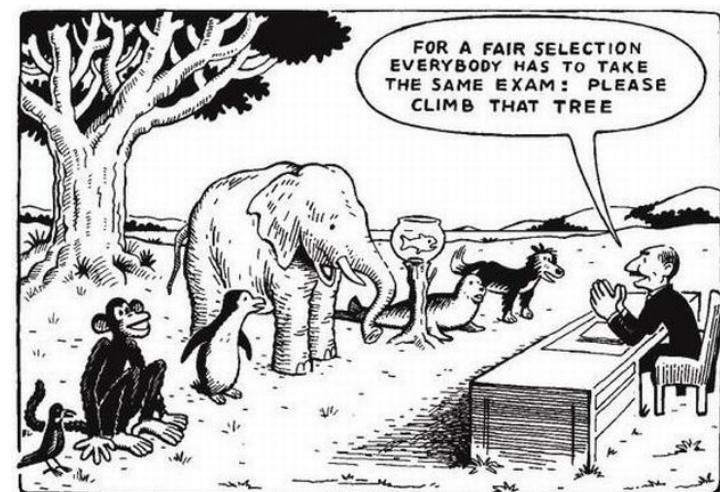
GOALS!



ORGANIZATION!



FOCUS!

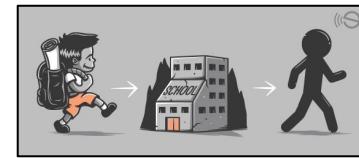
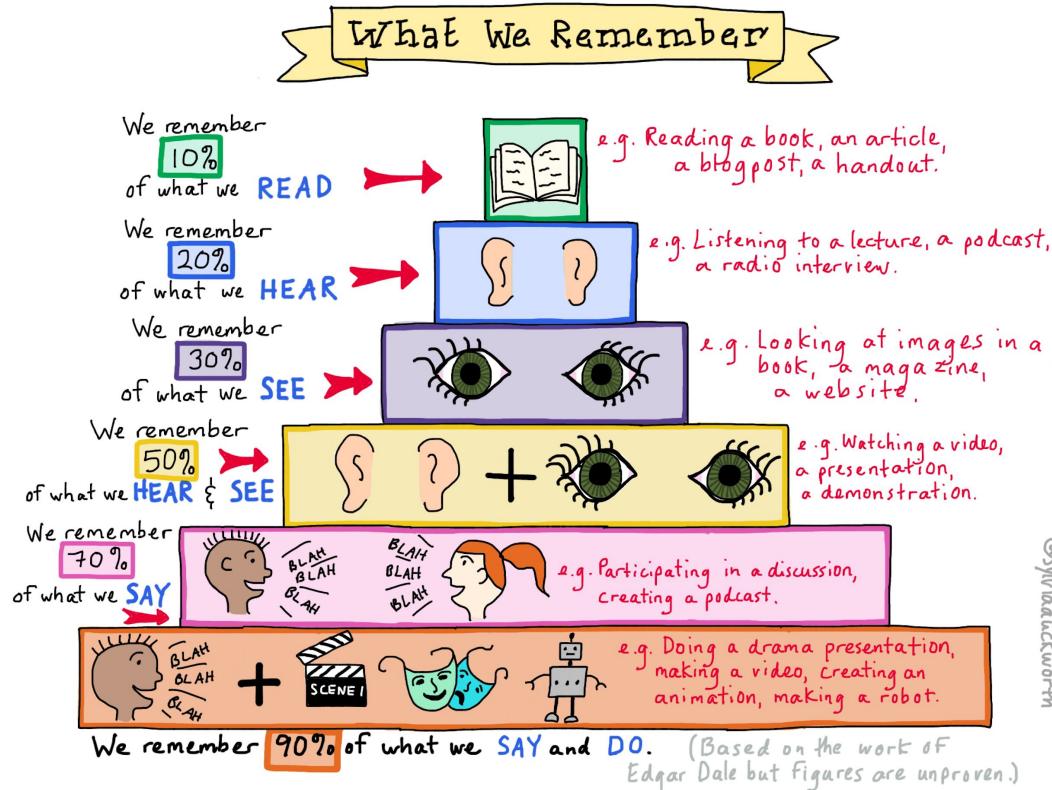


Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.  
- Albert Einstein

Fake  
Quote

# SCHOOL USUALLY PROVIDES A UNIQUE FORM OF LEARNING

Find your own!



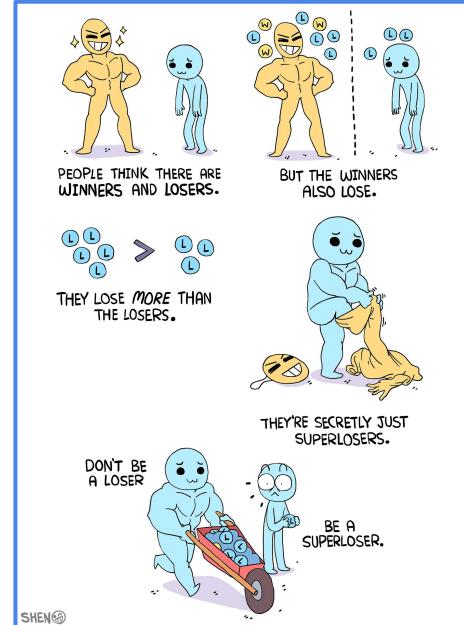
@sylviaduckworth

# SCHOOL TAUGHT US THAT FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

We were all born “hackers”...

...then rules are enforced

And now our work is full  
of experimental failure



ONCE STUDIES ARE OVER...

YANAI...

# You THINK YOUR DIPLOMA WAS MOSTLY USELESS

# DIPLOMA

(basically job #0)

A privilege  
An illusion  
An international standard  
Meaningless school & grades ?  
Private social network

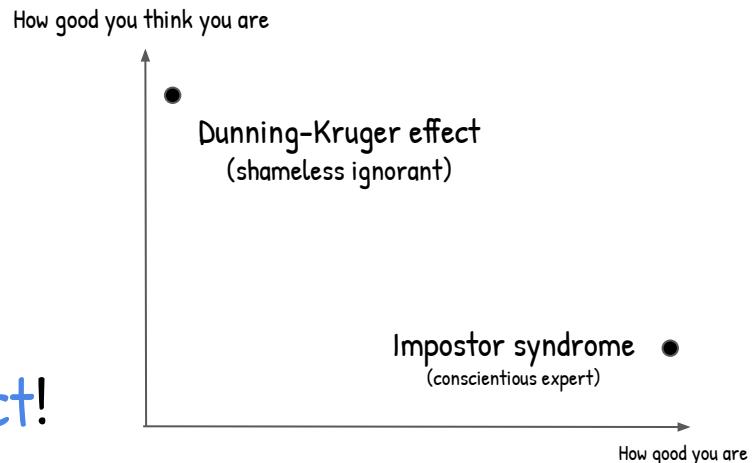
# THE IMPOSTOR SYNDROME...

...is here to stay

...just means that you are self conscious!

...is better than the Dunning-Kruger effect!

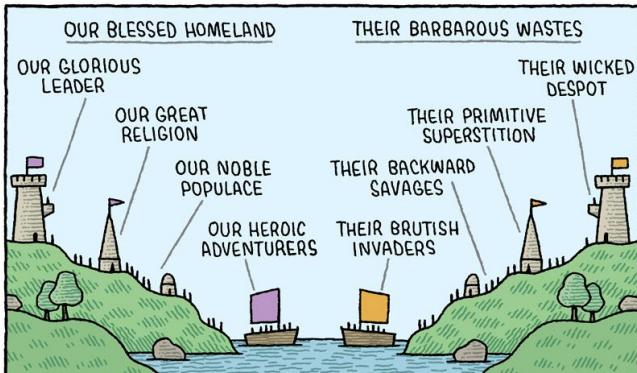
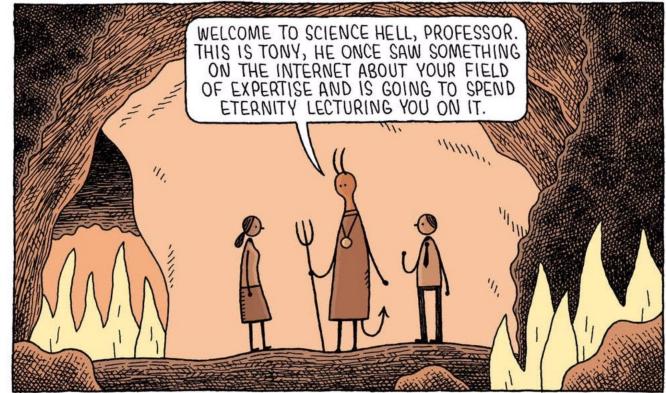
...can be bypassed: just help someone!



YANAI...

# SOME PEOPLE ARE NEVER SATISFIED...

- Arrogance
- Dunning-Kruger effect
- Gatekeeping



# No NEED TO "REINVENT THE WHEEL"?

Why not ?

Just be honest and don't present the idea as new

We still use cars, bikes, tools and bread



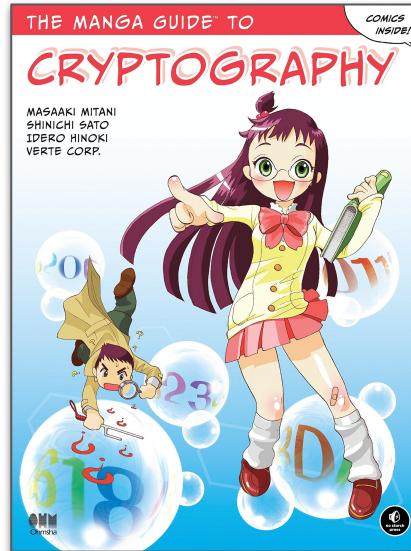
# WE OFTEN FORGET THAT...

## JUST A DIFFERENT STYLE CAN MAKE THINGS CLICK

And a different style can reach different users!

We all had a bad teacher about something we love,  
or a great teacher for a topic we usually hate

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Manga\\_Guides](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Manga_Guides)



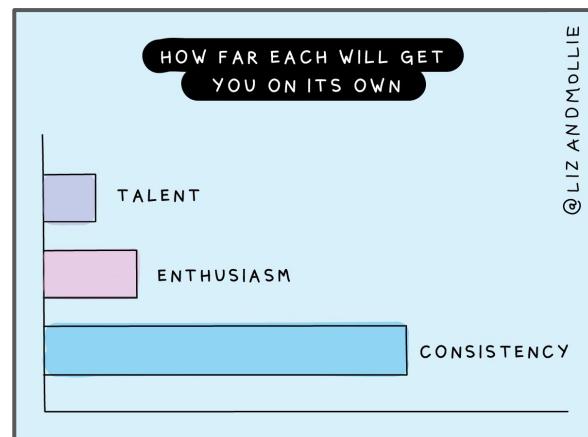
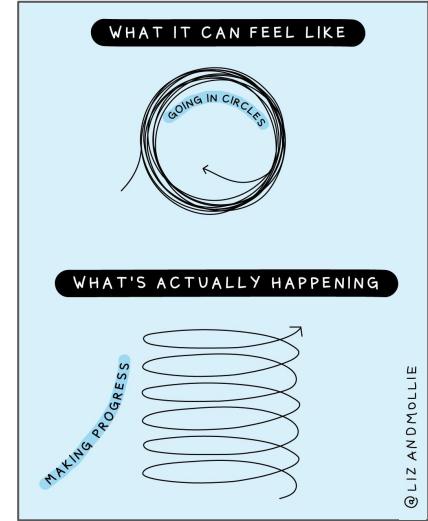
<https://www.getdigital.de/Hacken-Open-Air-Shirt.html?her=BB>

# IINAOT FEEL STUCK IN A LOOP

As opposed to school which was creating differences every year

Consistency is actually a good thing

Take one small step after another...

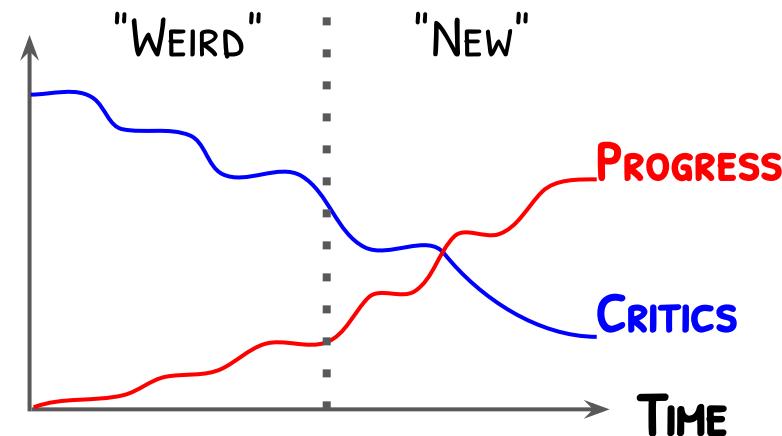
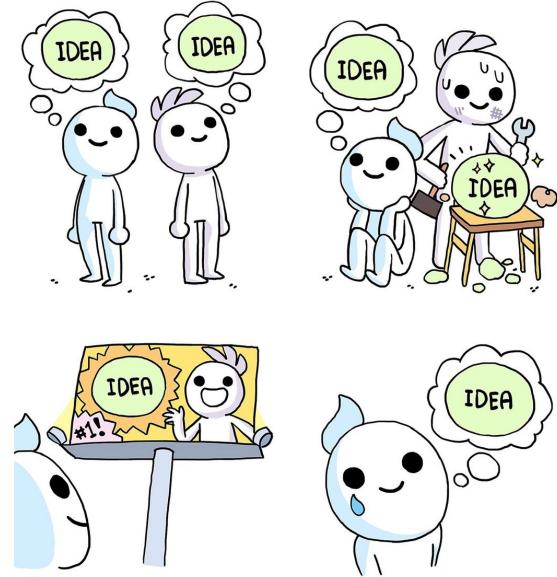


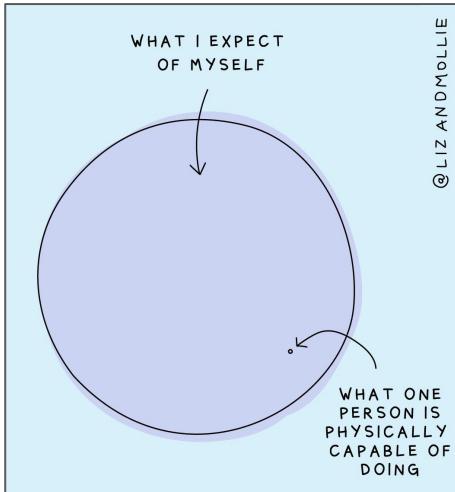
YANAI...

# YOU WANT TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Others can't always share your perspective

No, not even your closest friends/colleagues!



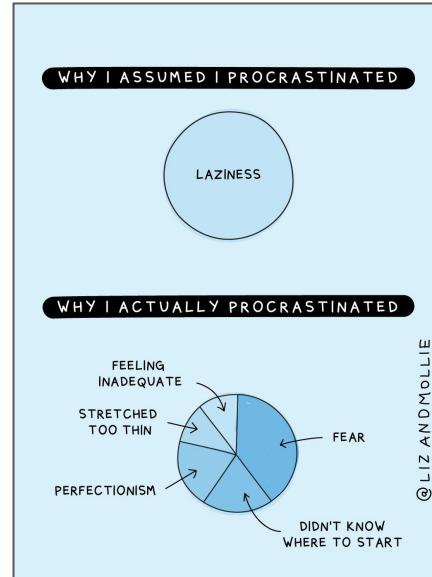


DON'T BURN YOURSELF TRYING TO BE PERFECT!

GRANT SNIDER x JON ACUFF

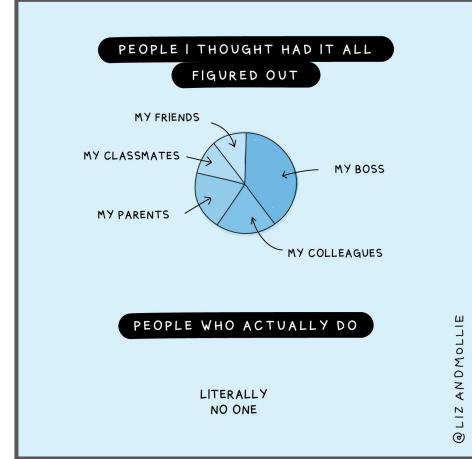
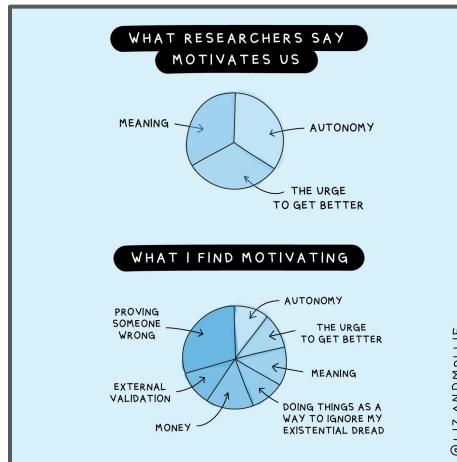
# FOCUS ON YOURSELF FIRST!

Take breaks too!



YANAI!!

# You GOT IT WRONG SO FAR!

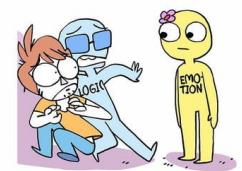
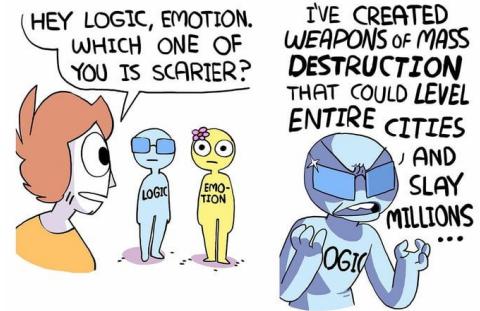


# SOME PEOPLE WILL TAKE THE WORST DECISIONS...

Even against their own interests or their friends'/family's

Fears/traditions/ideologies are sadly taken into account

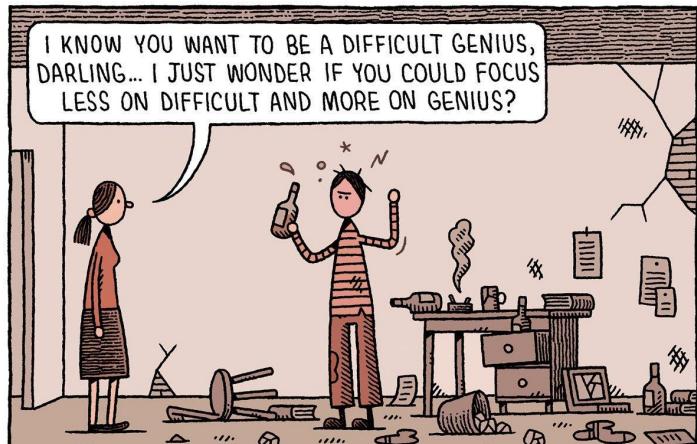
No matter how stupid they are:  
sexism, racism, religion...



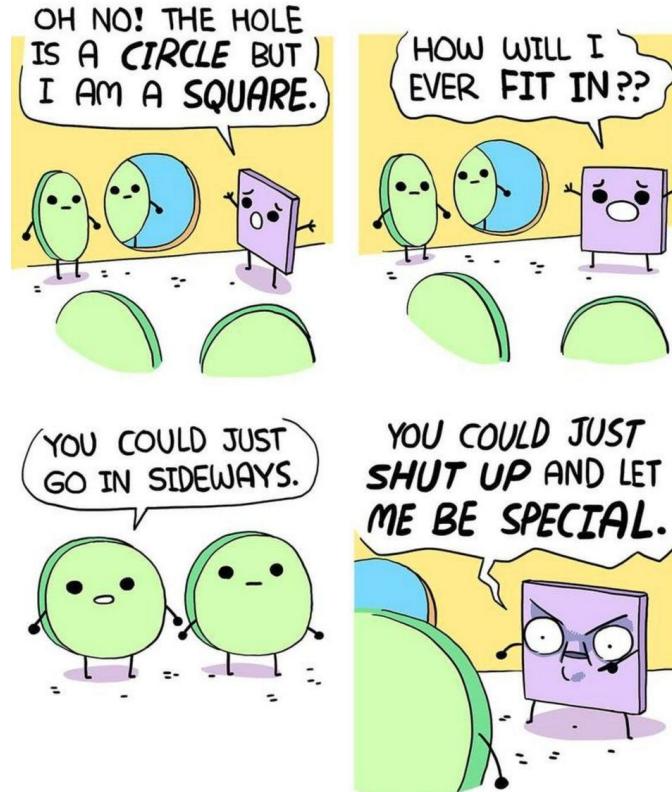
THIS IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO...

# ATTITUDE

IT'S OK TO BE DIFFERENT,  
BUT EVERYONE HAS THEIR LIMIT

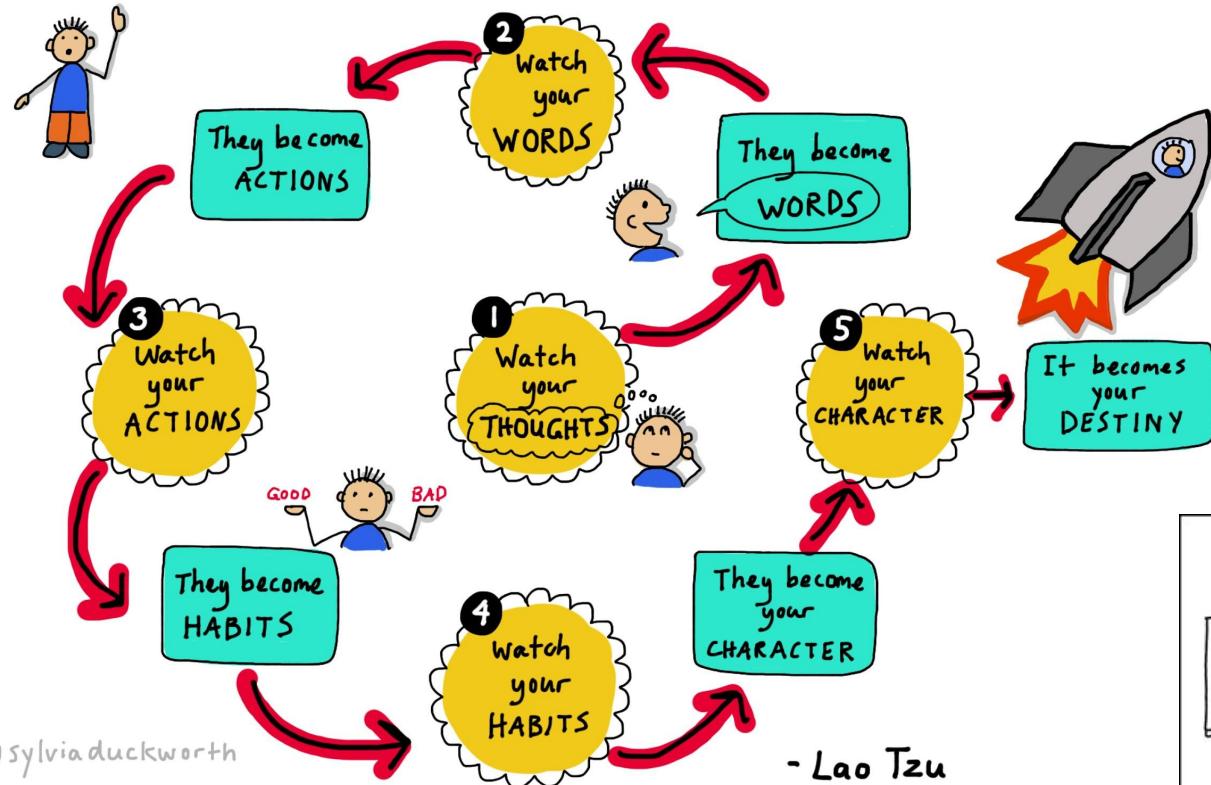


TOM GAULD



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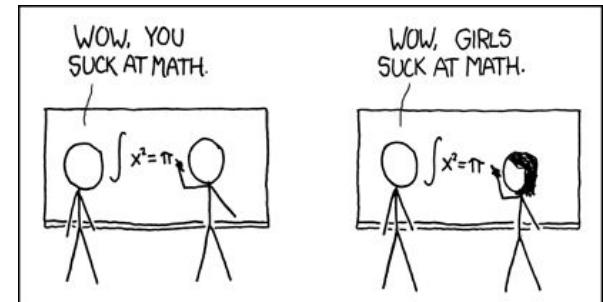
"Respect" is not "authority"  
Try swapping roles!



- Lao Tzu

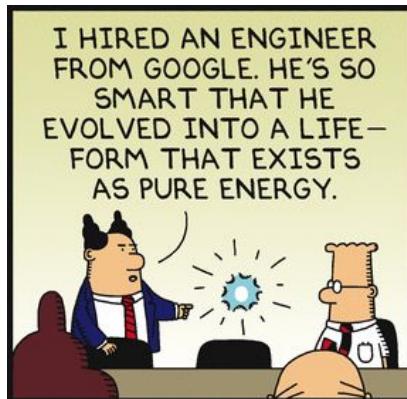
@sylviaduckworth

BE WARY OF BAD HABITS



# YOUR PAST IS NO EXCUSE!

It's ok to be insecure, not to be a jerk



Follow

Go to Google, they said. Just for the CV entry, they said. It'll open doors, they said.

"Has potential, however we've had very bad luck w/ ex GOOG types over the years"

1:30 AM - 20 Mar 2018

# NOTHING COMES EASY

Anything takes a long time to master

If you can still count how much you've tried,  
it's probably not much



"The art of like twirling or doing tricks with a pen in a very appealing nice looking way.  
Make it look like it's easy even though it takes like hours and hours and hours of practice."  
- LiveOverflow

right now.

fuck checking facebook again,  
fuck that pic you just saw on instagram,  
fuck worrying about how many people liked your last post,  
fuck the news,  
fuck that person you really should email back,  
fuck your self-doubt,  
fuck whatever happened yesterday,  
fuck starting tomorrow,  
fuck will people like this,  
fuck will this be good enough...

fuck all of your excuses.

**sit the fuck down  
and do your work.**

# "How CAN I..."

Face it: if after [long enough], you never tried,  
then you were probably never actually interested ;)

And if you still hate it after X tries,  
then be honest and move on ;)



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What if...

You'RE ALWAYS DOING IT WRONG?

No matter what, that person is never satisfied...

What if...you actually did nothing wrong?  
And you're just being manipulated...?

# EVER HEARD OF GASLIGHTING?

Based on a play from 1938 - and a [classic movie](#), now freely [available](#)





Asserting power



Killer face



Honey moon



Faking



Silence

# ANY OF THESE RINGS A BELL ?

30 characteristics of manipulators  
by Isabelle Nazare-Aga

They make other people feel **guilty**, in the name of professional **conscience**, family ties, friendship, love, etc.

They unload their **responsibilities** onto others or dismiss their own responsibilities. / They do not *clearly* communicate their requests, needs, feelings or opinions.

They often respond **vaguely**. / They **lie** / They are **self-centred**. / They cite all kinds of logical reasons to **disguise** their requests.

They **change** their opinions, behaviours, or feelings **depending** on the person or situation. / They make **veiled threats** or openly resort to blackmail.

They make others **believe** that they must be **perfect**, never change their minds, **always** know everything, and **immediately** respond to requests and questions.

They **cast into doubt** the qualities, skills and personalities of other people—they criticize without appearing to do so, devalue and judge.

They have their messages communicated by other people or via intermediaries (telephone instead of face-to-face, written notes).

They create **suspicion** and stir up ill feeling; they **divide to conquer**, driving a wedge between people, which can lead to relationship break-ups.

They know how to make themselves into **victims** to gain sympathy (e.g. exaggerated illness, « difficult » surroundings, overloaded at work).

They ignore requests (even if they **claim** to be taking care of them). / They use **flattery** to seduce us, give gifts or suddenly start waiting on us hand and foot.

They use the moral principles of others (e.g. notions of humanity, charity, racism, « good » or « bad » mother) to satisfy their needs.

They abruptly **change topic** in mid-conversation. / They avoid or get out of discussions and meetings. / They cannot take **criticism**, and **deny facts**.

They make **false statements** to discover the truth, **twist** and interpret facts to suit themselves. / They can be **jealous**, even if they are parents or spouses.

They do **not take into account the rights**, needs and desires of others. / They **make us do things** that we would probably not have done of our own free will.

They often wait until the **last minute** to ask, order or have others do something. / They rely on the ignorance of others while vaunting their own superiority.

Their words appear **logical** and **consistent**, while their attitudes, actions or lifestyle are totally **opposite**.

They generate a state of **discomfort** or of not being **free** (trap). / They are excellent at meeting their **own goals**, but at the **expense of others**.

They are constantly the **focus of conversation** among people who know them, **even** if they are **not present**.

# MANIPULATORS...

...can be anyone

...can change over time (very nice before, slowly worsening)

...may be painful to acknowledge as such

(huge denial to overcome the sadness)



# WHAT CAN YOU DO AGAINST A MANIPULATOR?

Keep your distance! Preserve yourself!

A therapy may be impossible to undergo but:

- authorities can easily be fooled
- proofs may be hard to find



# BEWARE OF THOSE EAGER TO “HELP”

- to “help”, but only according to their own terms (nodding, speaking...)
- ignoring your needs, but satisfy their expectations



"...BUT I WANT TO FIGHT BACK!"

You might lose yourself in an unfair and endless fight  
Better be free than burning yourself out in vain

Your second life begins when you realize you have only one

*"Never argue with an idiot. They will drag you down to their level and beat you with experience."*

- *Mark Twain*

# So maybe, we're still somehow idiots...

## BUT WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

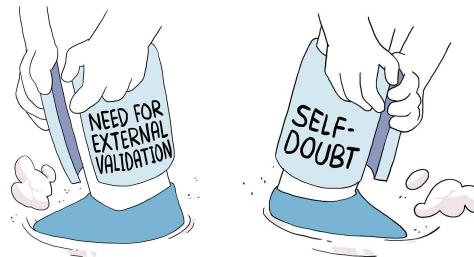
We all worry about these... only because we can  
A question of time and priority



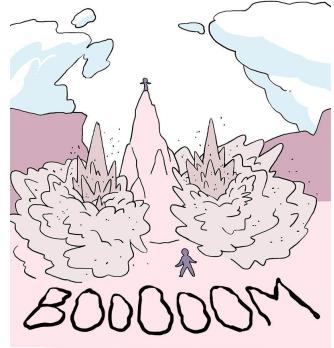
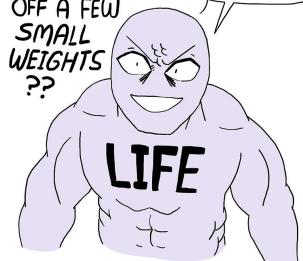
# STOP GIVING A FxCK

There's no end to your tunnel

You're the light

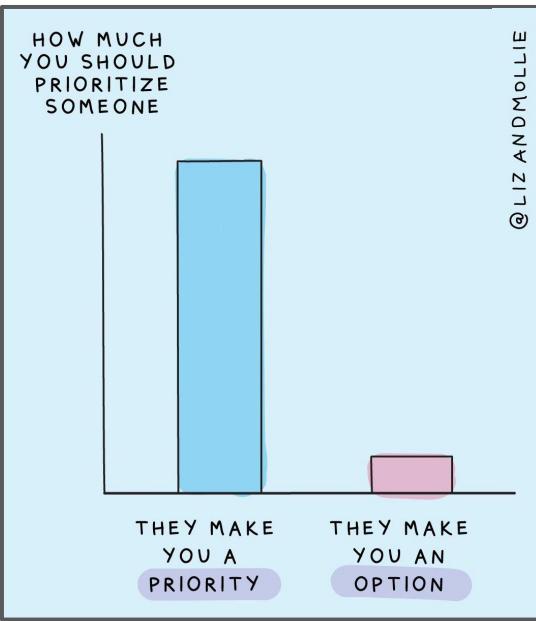
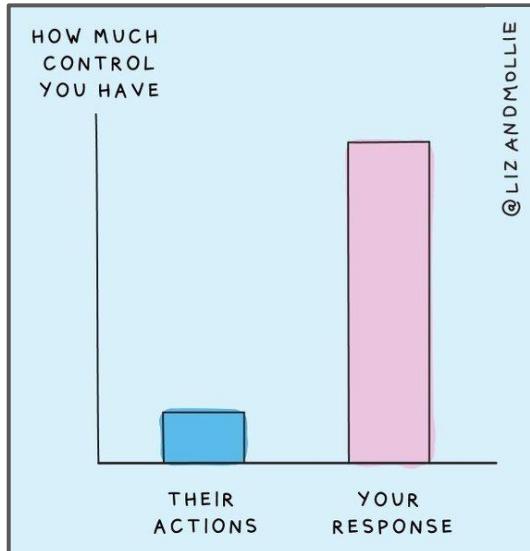


YOU REALLY THINK YOU  
STAND A CHANCE AGAINST  
ME, JUST BECAUSE YOU TOOK  
OFF A FEW  
SMALL  
WEIGHTS  
??



SHENCOMIX.COM

# LEARN TO DE-PRIORITIZE!

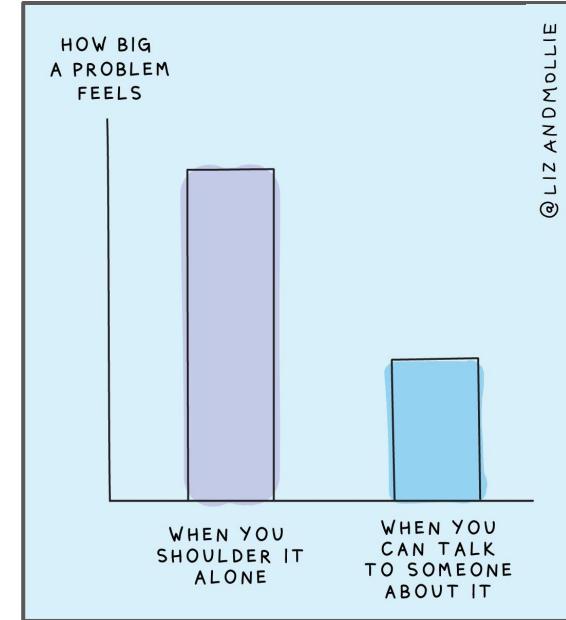


YANAI!!

# YOU'RE CONSIDERING TO COMMIT SUICIDE

But maybe (and more than you think):

- people care about you
- they will be in pain



# CONCLUSION

YES, MAYBE WE'RE ALL IDIOTS

But why should you care ?

**HOPEFULLY YOU WENT  
THROUGH SIMILAR EXPERIENCES**

You may not be the only idiot



*Thank you!*  
*Take care of yourself*

*Special thanks to:*  
*Doegox, Barbie Auglend, Sally.*