How to deal with toxic people

Lessons from the trenches of Open Source Development

Gina Häußge // @foosel
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Gina Häußge

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

Bad Behaviour

Entitlement

Why isn’t this obscure feature implemented already that I need for my personal workflow?

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

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

Frustration

This crap has cost me a 12h print job, 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!

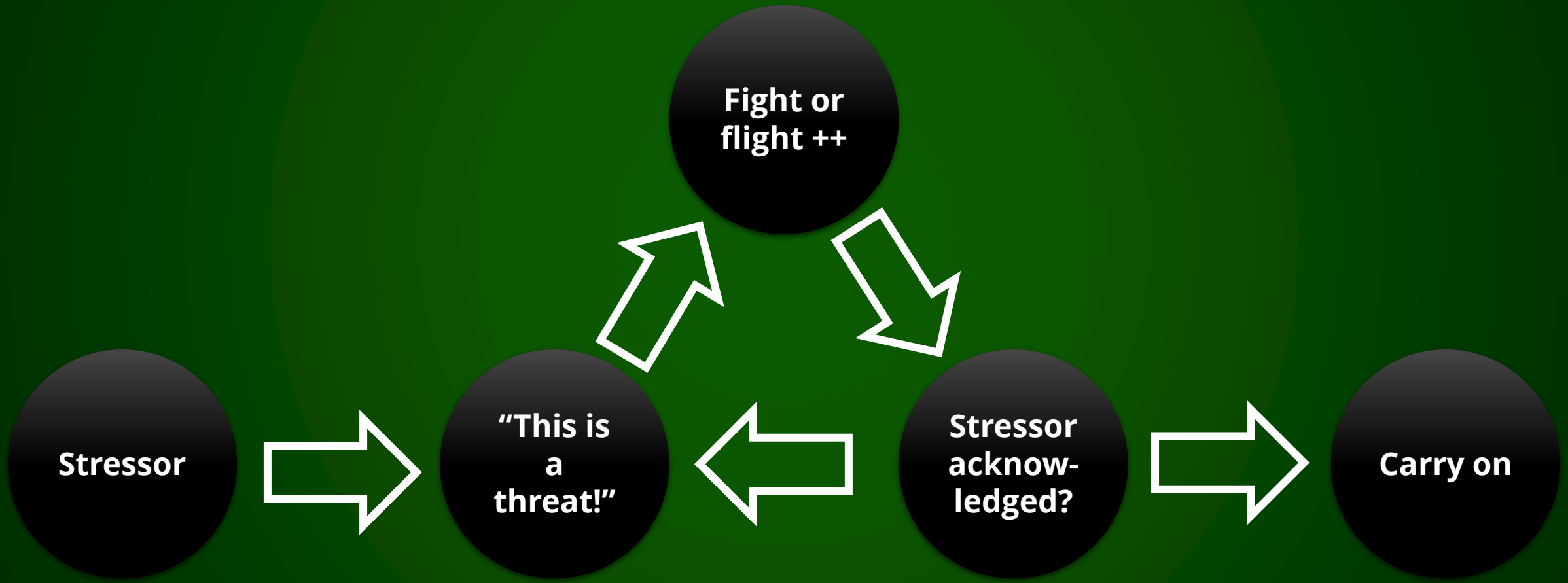
🤬 YOU!!!

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

Thank you for your attention!

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Slides: foosel.net/slides/pyconde2022.pdf

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