Recognising Burnout

Andrew (LinuxJedi) Hutchings

"Physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress."

- Oxford Dictionary

My Story

My Background

- An Open Source database software engineer
    - Currently at MariaDB
- An OpenStack Cloud software engineer
- Developer relations & product manager for a web server software project
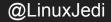
August 2010 - Joined Drizzle project

March 2011 - Drizzle hits GA

Soon After - The phone call

April 2011 - MySQL Conference

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October 2011 ...

Changes Made

About Burnout

- I am not a doctor
- Burnout and depression are pathologically indistinguishable
- Extremely common in tech, rarely talked about
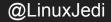- Burnout can cause a person to leave a company / community

Burnout Causes

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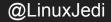
Drowning in Workload

Lack of Autonomy

Feeling Undervalued

Reduced Pride in Work

Isolation

Values Conflict

Recognising Burnout

- Productivity can drop (or quality)
- A person can shy away, lose motivation
- They could start to feel hopeless, pessimistic and/or resentful
- Chronic exhaustion
- Typically that person has no time for simple life joys
- Everyone is different
  - Me? I become irritable and withdrawn

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Recognising Burnout

- Problems could be something else (depression, drugs, etc…)
- No silver bullets
- Cannot ask directly if someone is burnt out
- Family and friends will likely spot it, especially workload / stress

Preventative Measures (Organisation)

- Build automated tools to remove mind-numbing tasks
- Regular check-ins with team / community members (1-to-1s)
- Make sure holidays / vacations are taken
- Give people a buffer when they return
- Communication is key

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Preventative Measures (Self)

- Take time to reflect mental state
  - Meditation (no, seriously)
- Separate your identity from your job
- Take holidays / vacations
  - Non-stressful ones, don't max out credit card
  - Enforce disconnection during holidays
- Communication is key

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Key Takeaways

- Mental health is unfortunately still taboo
  - Especially among men in my country
- The brain and the body are connected
  - Mental health issues can have physical manifestations
  - You can be more vulnerable to illness
- Burnout can spill into everyday life
- Everyone can have different tolerances
  - Personal life can affect these
- Working in tech can be very stressful and mentally taxing
- Communication is key

Thank You!

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