DrupalEurope
Darmstadt, Germany
Sep 10 - 14, 2018
www.drupaleurope.org

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The Challenge of Emotional Labor in Open Source Communities

Ken Rickard

https://www.drupaleurope.org/session-by-industry/drupal-community

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Ken Rickard

Director of Innovation | Palantir.net

@agentrickard

Drupal since 2005
25th DrupalCon*

Today's agenda

Why does emotional labor matter to Drupal?

- Define the concept of "emotional labor"
- Examine its common usage and criticisms of that usage
- Explore the value of emotional labor in our work
- Discuss challenges with regard to emotional labor in open source
- Recognize emotional labor as a form of contribution
- Summarize critical tasks for the Drupal community

Content warnings

These are sensitive issues that we need to discuss

The presentation condenses some complex issues

We're going to discuss our work in the context of gender roles, racial and ethnic identity, and other sensitive topics

The presentation uses Creative Commons licensed photography to illustrate some points

Use of individuals in images is not intended to imply behaviors or agreement

What is emotional labor?

Emotional Labor

Dr. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (1983)

Emotional labor is “the process by which workers are expected to manage their feelings in accordance with organizationally defined rules and guidelines.”

By Paul572 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=62203578

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“Emotional labor is simply the management of feelings (your own or someone else’s) to accomplish some goal.”

Haley Swenson, Slate
“Please Stop Calling Everything That Frustrates You Emotional Labor”

http://www.slate.com/blogs/better_life_lab/2017/10/20/please_stop_calling_everything_that_frustrates_you_emotional_labor_instead.html

An analogy

Dr. Alicia Grandey, Penn State University

"It's kind of like when you get a gift and you don't really like it, and you have to still smile and act nice because otherwise your Aunt Bernadette would be offended. But you have to do that all day long. Not only that, but it's explicitly part of your job. It's tied to your wages and outcomes, and if you don't do it, there are consequences.... And it's with strangers, for the most part."

https://www.flickr.com/photos/peterlozano/3880383015/

https://qz.com/work/1286996/an-extremely-clear-definition-of-emotional-labor-from-adam-grants-podcast/

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“The feeling of frustration felt over a task does not make that task emotion work.”

Haley Swenson, Slate
“Please Stop Calling Everything That Frustrates You Emotional Labor”

http://www.slate.com/blogs/better_life_lab/2017/10/20/please_stop_calling_everything_that_frustrates_you_emotional_labor_instead.html

Labor v. emotional labor

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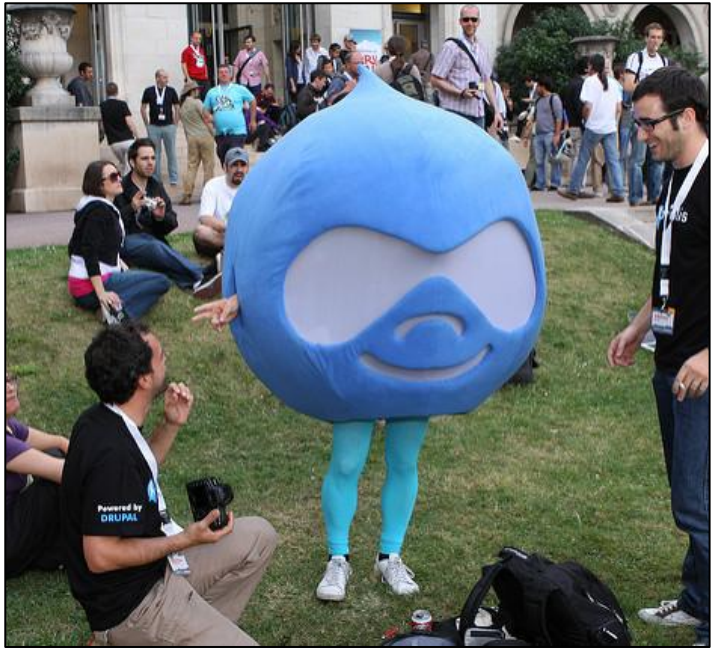
Some jobs are social

- Event planning and coordination
- Formal mentoring
- Volunteer coordination
- Project management
- Product management



https://www.flickr.com/photos/29978062@N04/3881421022/

Criticisms

Is everything emotional labor?

Definitions of emotional labor capture everything ranging from organizing Secret Santa events, taking notes during meetings, maintaining a smiling disposition at all times, and mentoring colleagues.

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“The term’s expansiveness provided a convenient “out” of the conversation. After all, if everything is emotional labor, then nothing is, right?”

Khe Hy, Quartz At Work

“The men’s guide to understanding emotional labor”

Related Concepts

Components of emotional labor

Display rules

The attempt to manage the display of one's emotions to conform to cultural norms.

e.g. being happy at a party

Surface acting

When someone changes their verbal, facial, and bodily expression of emotions without modifying his or her underlying feelings

Surface acting

The cost of performing

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Research shows that the tendency to engage in [...] surface acting, in which there is a high level of incongruity between what people feel and what they show, either through faking or suppressing their emotions — comes with real costs to the person and the organization.

https://hbr.org/2016/09/managing-the-hidden-stress-of-emotional-labor

https://www.flickr.com/photos/christophedelsol/7021857321/

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“When people habitually evoke the stress of surface acting, they’ll be more prone to depression and anxiety, decreased job performance, and burnout.”

Susan David, Harvard Medical School

“Managing the Hidden Stress of Emotional Labor”

Hidden stresses

Surface acting has common causes

- Mismatch between your personality (for example, level of introversion or extroversion) and what is expected from you in your role
- Misalignment of values, when what you're being asked to do doesn't accord with what you believe in
- Workplace culture in which particular ways of expressing emotion (what psychologists call "display rules") are endorsed — or not

By definition, no one enjoys performing emotional labor

Why does emotional labor matter?

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“Software development has been traditionally sterotyped as a nerdy ‘lone wolf’ job less likely to induce emotional labor.”

Alexander Serebrenik, Eindhoven University of Technology

“Emotional Labor of Software Engineers”

There are no “lone wolves”

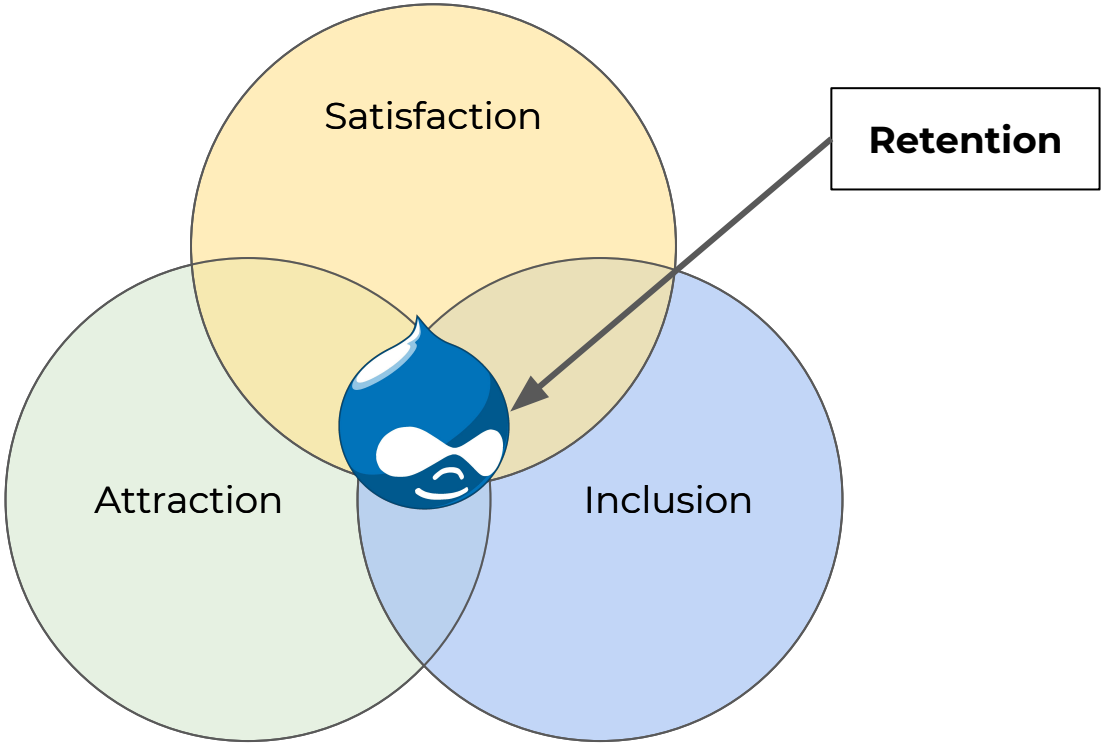
Drupal is critical infrastructure

"Many open source projects are experiencing a difficult transition from selfless creative pursuit to critical public infrastructure.
These increasing dependencies mean we have a shared responsibility to ensure that these projects find the support they need."

Nadia Eghbal, *Roads and Bridges: The Unseen Labor Behind Our Digital Infrastructure*

Why emotional labor matters

The project needs contributors



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“As an open source maintainer, I usually don't hear from my users when things are going well.”

Forrest Norvell, NPM

https://vimeopro.com/andyet/andyet-conf/video/175353917

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“Negativity is contagious. Even if you have good intentions, and the person you're talking to has good intentions, disparaging remarks will quickly take your discussion off track.”

xjm, Drupal core maintainer

“That thing you're complaining about? Someone worked really hard on it.”
http://xjmdrupal.org/blog/someone-worked-hard-on-it

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“Studies show that for the IT professionals emotional dissonance predicts work exhaustion better than traditional predictors such as perceived workload”

Alexander Serebrenik, Eindhoven University of Technology

“Emotional Labor of Software Engineers”

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“Our analyses also suggest discontinuation of the use of overall burnout measures because they are highly consistent with the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout only.”

Radostina K.Purvanovaa & John P.Murosb, Journal of Social Behavior

“Gender differences in burnout: A meta-analysis”
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001879110000771

Drupal Specifically

Code of Conduct

The Drupal Code of Conduct

- We are considerate
- We are welcoming
- We are respectful
- We are collaborative

All require emotional labor from us.

Their absence demands it from others.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/alborath/30589009825/

Forcing people to perform emotional labor is a common form of trolling

Who performs emotional labor?

The primary tasks of emotional labor are all coded as “feminine”

Doing “what’s expected”

Gender bias regarding emotional labor

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A 2005 study conducted by Madeline Heilman, a New York University psychologist, found that a woman who stayed at work late and offered help to a coworker was ranked **14% less favorably** than a man doing the same thing. If she declined to help, she was rated **12% lower** than a male peer who did the same.

https://qz.com/599999/at-work-as-at-home-men-reap-the-benefits-of-womens-invisible-labor/

https://www.flickr.com/photos/29978062@N04/13447963835/

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“Tasks that require the emotive work thought natural for women, such as caring, negotiating, empathizing, smoothing troubled relationships, and working behind the scenes to enable cooperation, are required components of many women's jobs. Excluded from job descriptions and performance evaluations, the work is invisible and uncompensated.”

Mary Ellen Guy & Meredith A. Newman, Public Administration Review

“Women's Jobs, Men's Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor”

"Hierarchy" of contributions

* This slide taken directly from Preston So *

The primary tasks of emotional labor are not valued equally with “real work”

Informal duties

The personal cost of emotional labor

The time women spend on these necessary but unrecognized chores taxes their energy, undermines their workplace authority, and reduces the time they could be spending on more socially and professionally recognized and valued work.

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“If it is natural to do certain things, then all women are expected to do them and even like doing them.”

Dr. Silvia Federici, Hofstra University

"Wages against housework"
https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/federici-wages-against-housework.pdf

Who contributes to Drupal? (2017)

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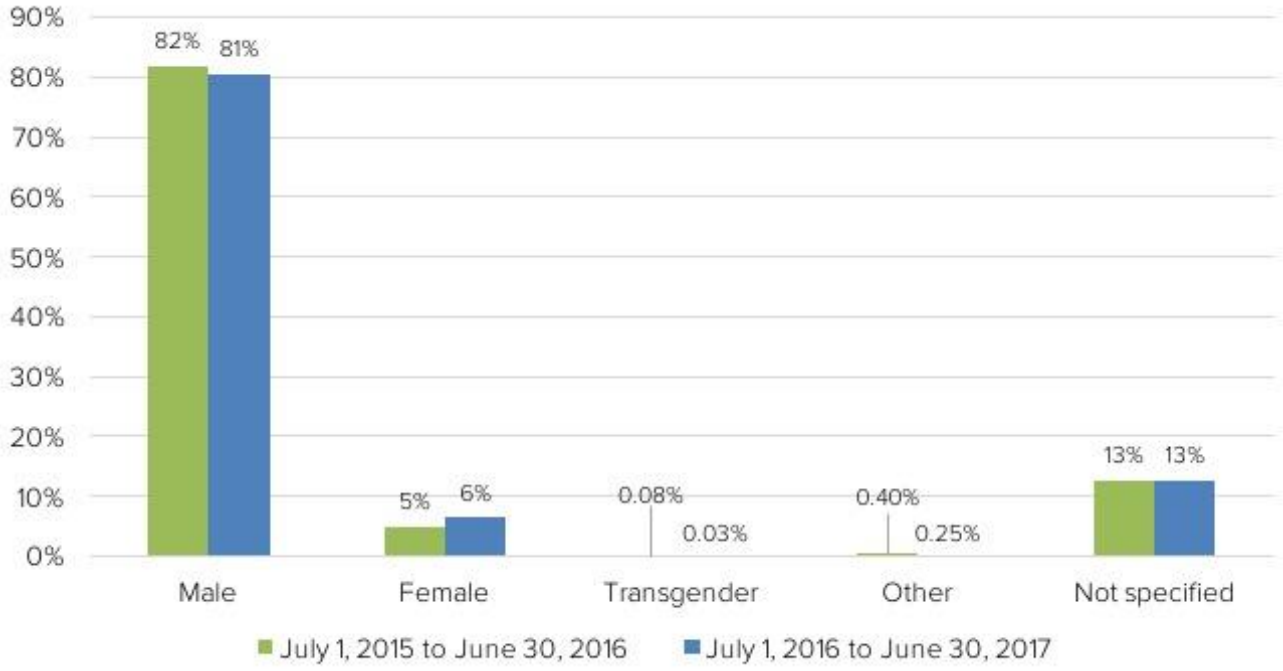
6% identify female



https://dri.es/who-sponsors-drupal-development-2017

How do we recognize contributors?

How do we recognize contributions?

- Code is still the most highly valued contribution
- We still make assumptions about people's roles and skills based on gender
- We often place barriers in front of new contributors

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“Assume everything is possible. Do not make assumptions based on how one represents themselves.”

Preston So, Acquia

“The do-ocracy dilemma”
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q384ZoP2H2R2dHphlvR3zoM1bRBnu0CP/view

Requiring emotional labor from someone in order to join a group is a form of exclusion

What challenges does Drupal face?

We've come a long way

DrupalCon Amsterdam (2005)

Drupal was invented by Dries Buytaert, and the original contributors were a handful of fellow students at university in Ghent, Belgium.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/roland/54001448

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“Positive leaders and closely connected teams are better equipped”

Karl Werder, University of Duisburg-Essen

“The Evolution of Emotional Displays in Open Source Software Development Teams: An Individual Growth Curve Analysis”

Drupal is everywhere

We have thousands of contributors worldwide

In the 12-month period between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017 we saw code contributions on Drupal.org from 7,240 different individuals.

Drupal events are worldwide, and reach audiences that we unimaginable when the project began.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/cafuego/37393822661/

https://www.flickr.com/photos/pepej/21646838808

Who contributes to Drupal? (2017)

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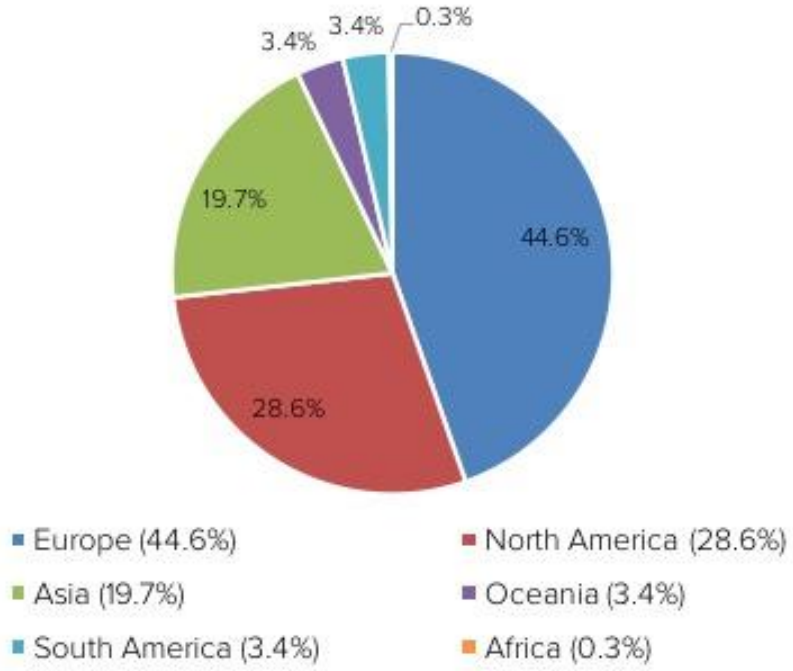
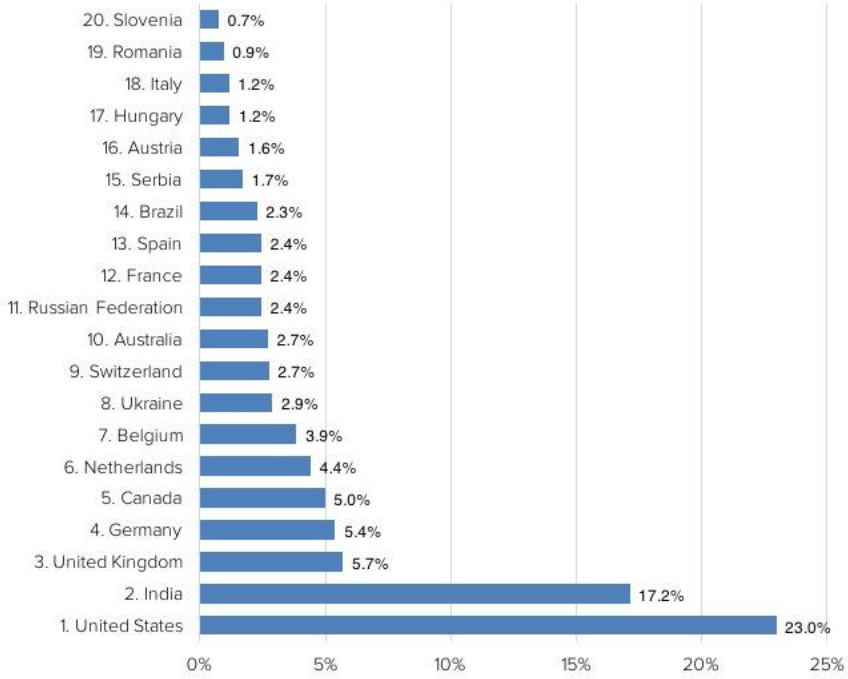
6 different continents and 116 different countries





https://dri.es/who-sponsors-drupal-development-2017

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“Larger teams. . . experience a stronger decrease of team positive emotional display.”

Karl Werder, University of Duisburg-Essen

“The Evolution of Emotional Displays in Open Source Software Development Teams: An Individual Growth Curve Analysis”

Getting together to solve problems

DrupalCamp Dakar (2011)

We come together for common reasons — to create shared solutions to common problems — but we do not always share the same **values**, **attitudes**, or even **language**.

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Schadenfreude

German

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Litost

Czech

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Schadenfreude

Pleasure derived by someone from another person's misfortune

(Adopted into English)

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Litost

A state of agony and torment created by the sudden sight of one's own misery

(No equivalent in English)

Emotions are social

Dr. Arlie Russell Hochschild

Human emotions — joy, sadness, anger, elation, jealousy, envy, despair — are, in large part, social.

Emotional standards are cultural

And not always shared

Each culture provides us with prototypes of feeling which, like the different keys on a piano, attune us to different inner notes.

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Culture guides the act of recognizing a feeling by proposing what's possible for us to feel

Recognizing cultural differences

Monocultures fail to recognize their biases

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https://www.flickr.com/photos/borisbaldinger/15213449757/

Aspects of cultural diversity

These can create barriers to inclusion

- Gender Identity
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Location/Region/Country
- Socioeconomic status
- Neurodiversity
- Tenure (time with project)
- Race/Ethnicity
- First Language
- Confidence with English
- Dis/Ability
- Caregiver (child or eldercare)
- Identifies as underrepresented
- Tenure (time with technology)

And there's more

It's not just about culture

https://www.flickr.com/photos/borisbaldinger/15213449757/

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“Open Source Software teams tend to use technology-mediated communication, limiting the interaction quality.”

Karl Werder, University of Duisburg-Essen

“The Evolution of Emotional Displays in Open Source Software Development Teams: An Individual Growth Curve Analysis”

Problems of distributed teams

Made worse because we're (mostly) volunteers

When working on **technical** problems, misunderstandings based on **cultural**, **social**, or **language** issues are often made worse.

And it's very challenging to mediate those disputes.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/a-barth/2366653160/

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“Team leaders often lack a formal authority structure and rather emerge within community projects.”

Karl Werder, University of Duisburg-Essen

“The Evolution of Emotional Displays in Open Source Software Development Teams: An Individual Growth Curve Analysis”

Community work is emotional

And it is critically important

This puts even more pressure on emotional labor in Drupal, especially regarding:

- Governance
- Conduct
- Dispute resolution

Without the glue of emotional labor, communities fall apart

What should we do about it?

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“Team positive emotional display decreases with project duration.”

Karl Werder, University of Duisburg-Essen

“The Evolution of Emotional Displays in Open Source Software Development Teams: An Individual Growth Curve Analysis”

We need to be intentional

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Borrowing more from Preston So...

Intentionality involves living and acting according to your own or a group's values and principles rather than the surrounding or prevailing ones. It requires one to be aware of one's fundamental beliefs and to be willing to make an effort to have their behavior reflect these beliefs.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/29978062@N04/13443854254/

We need to redefine contribution

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Recognize the value of community efforts

Recognize and reward people for:

- Welcoming
- Mentoring
- Planning
- Mediating
- Recording
- Listening
- Documenting
- Supporting
- Testing
- Designing
- Teaching
- Recruiting

Invite people in

Everyone is an ambassador

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Make your Drupal spaces **safe**, **welcoming**, and **inclusive**.

Reach out to new groups and new contributors, and be prepared to support them on their journeys.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/peterlozano/14206474754/

Beware of bad actors

Do not tolerate intolerance

People who create more emotional labor than they provide are toxic and may cause permanent harm to their communities.

Set milestones and celebrate them

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Pass along the good news

Set personal and community goals.

Work together to be accountable.

Take turns sharing the burderns.

Celebrate the joys together.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/peterlozano/14206474754/

We are all equally responsible for the health of our community

Be aware of your own limitations

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Trust me on this one

We're all going to make mistakes.

Learn from them.

Do better tomorrow.

Personal photo

Become a Drupal contributor Friday from 9am

- First timers workshop
- Mentored contribution
- General contribution