

# How to Work with Other People

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& Floor Drees



Understanding how *different* things affect *different* people *differently* will help make a safer and more productive workplace.

Tangible actions you can take to  
improve your colleagues' happiness,  
whether they are neurodiverse or neurotypical

# whoami

- Systems and Database Architect
- Based in Edinburgh, Scotland
- Open Source user, contributor (25+ yrs)
- PostgreSQL exclusively (16+ yrs)
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- Author, [PostgreSQL Mistakes and How to Avoid Them](#)
- Co-author, [PostgreSQL 16 Administration Cookbook](#)

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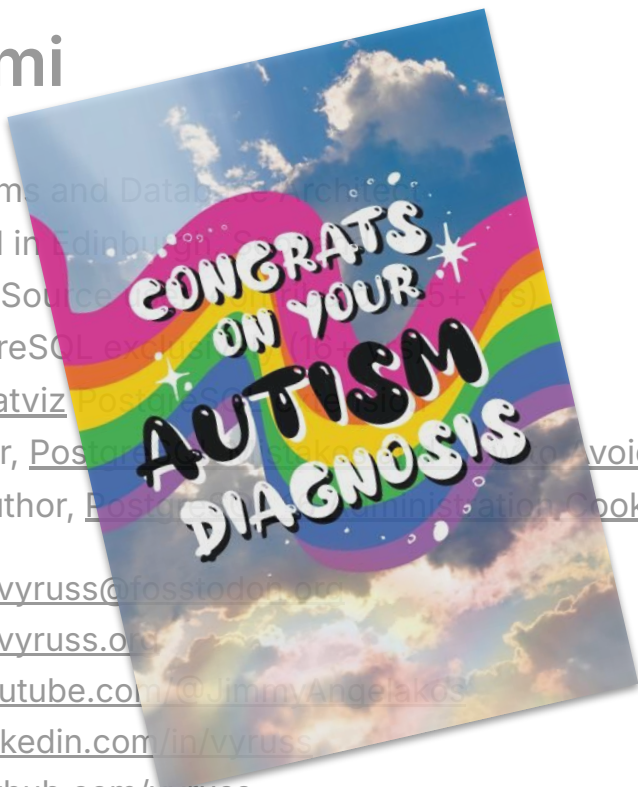
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# whoami

- Head of Education @ Tembo
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- Chicken mom, dog mom, single mom

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# whoarewe

- Neurodivergent means having a **brain that works differently from the average** or “neurotypical” person
- Invisibility makes it harder to talk about and for folks to consider
- Between **15-20%** of the global population are neurodivergent
- Only **29%** of autistic people are in full time work
- **Masking** can lead to comorbidities as it brings discomfort for sometimes long periods of time





# The IT job market doesn't help

- Mass layoffs and restructuring
- Few entry-level positions
- Job reqs no-one can match, complex interviews
- WFH (Work from Home)
- But also RTO (Return to Office)



# It's rough out there

- Mass layoffs and restructuring
  - Few entry-level positions
  - Job reqs no-one can match, complex interviews
  - WFH (Work from Home)
  - But also RTO (Return to Office)
- Anxiety, depression
  - Hopelessness, despair
  - Adequacy / Impostor syndrome
  - Needing the structure
  - Sensitive to triggers
    - EXTRA BONUS: Open plan office

# Job descriptions, interviews

- Overemphasis on social skills
- Unnecessary requirements
- Lack of flexibility
- Stereotypical language
- Emphasis on cultural fit



# Autism Spectrum

- May have difficulty in social interaction
  - “Scary people”
- Hyperfocus
  - “Monotropism”
- Set very high standards for themselves
  - And very hard on themselves when they don’t live up to them
- Constant internal pressure to do better
  - Tendency to take on too much → risk of burnout 🔥
- Comorbidities
  - Anxiety / Depression / ADHD overlap

*Outside perception:  
socially inept, “bad with people”*

# ADHD (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder)

- Subtypes: inattentive, hyperactive/impulsive and mixed
  - Difficulty to manage focus, concentration, emotional regulation, impulse control and self-motivation
  - Dreamer / that person that can't sit still
- Time blindness
- Tendency to take on too much → risk of burnout 🔥
- Comorbidities
  - Depression / Anxiety / Substance abuse ("self medicate"), eating disorders

*Outside perception:*

*lazy, immature, unintelligent, en-vogue label*

# Depression

- Extremely low energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sense of emptiness and despair
- Being on the verge of tears constantly
- Lack of motivation/pleasure
  - In doing those things they usually enjoy!

*Outside perception:*

*lazy, not conscientious worker*



# Outside perception: Fundamental Attribution Error

- Fundamental attribution error (FAE) is a *cognitive attribution bias*
  - Observers over attribute the behaviors of others to their personality
  - Under attribute them to the situation or context
- Leads us to believe that:
  - Dispositional factors (personality traits) are more powerful than situational factors





~~Reading~~ diving into (more) situations 🥽

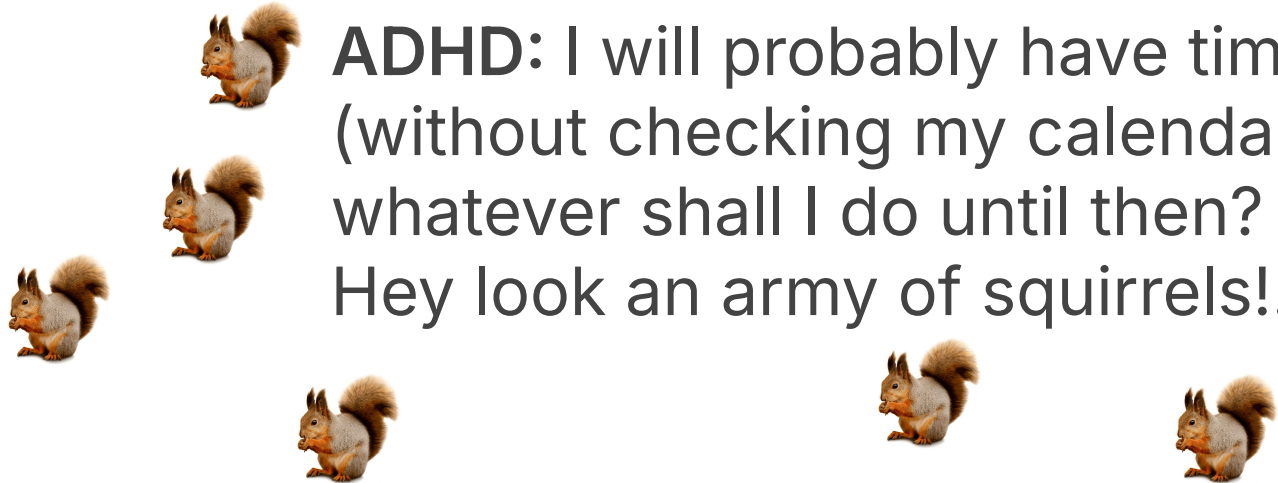


**Manager:** Let's meet in an hour?

**Manager:** Let's meet in an hour?



**ADHD:** I will probably have time  
(without checking my calendar),  
whatever shall I do until then?  
Hey look an army of squirrels!!!



**Colleague:** Do you have  
5 minutes now?



**Colleague:** Are you open  
to feedback?

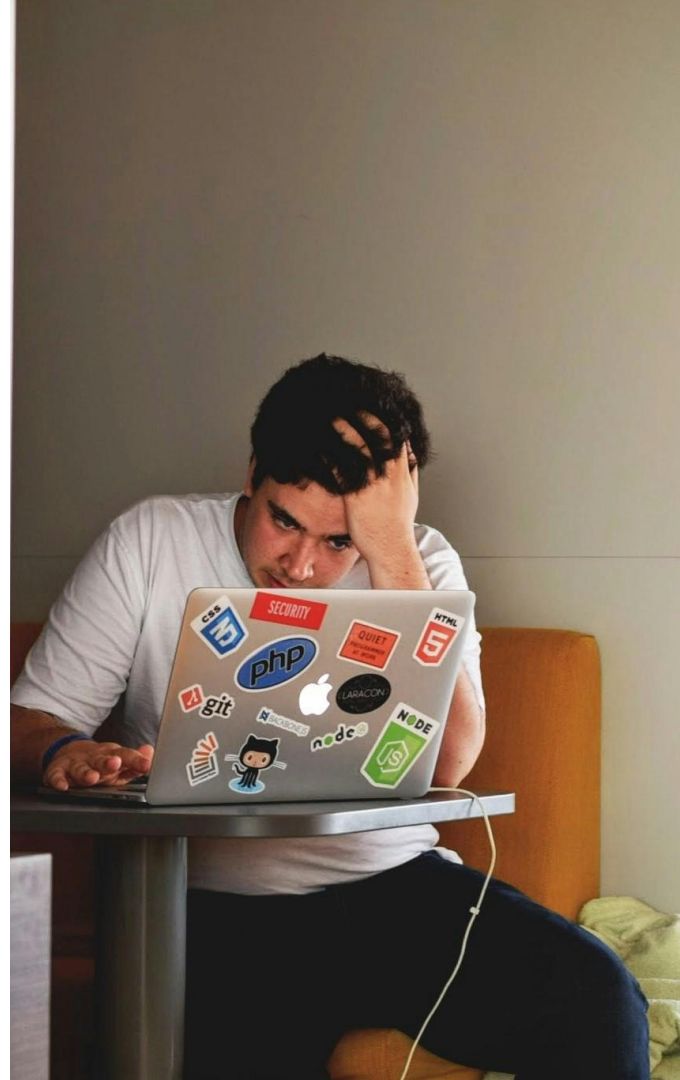


**Colleague:**  
Can you review  
this for me by EOD?

*(Sends 11 pages of text)*



**Colleague:** Bill is OCD about getting these reports right...





## Other mental health issues / neurodiversities

- Like dyslexia, OCD, Tourette's...
- Melatonin deficiency → "Not a morning person"
- Social stigma
  - Mental illness always mentioned in crime news reports
- Fear of being singled out
- "Stupid", "nonsense" — WORDS MATTER!
  - Enough self-worth issues and impostor syndrome already

## But also

- Sharing your condition can result in heartwarming acceptance & support



It doesn't make sense that you can  
*accommodate* a broken limb but not  
anxiety or depression.

It also doesn't *logically* make sense that everyone should have the same skills and aptitudes.



# Diversity drives innovation

- Can break groupthink
- Skills, not “superpowers”
- Neurodivergent folks self-select away from our companies and out of our communities
- Make sure you really need a “sociable data center manager” before you put that in your job ad
- Not everyone considers the same things perks

# How to work with Other Colleagues

💚 Body Doubling

💛 READMEs, but for people

💖 Time Out/Off

🧡 Assume good intent\*

💜 Train your empathy muscle

## ♥ Body Doubling

- When you hold each other accountable by doing a thing together
- Productivity strategy with different implementations

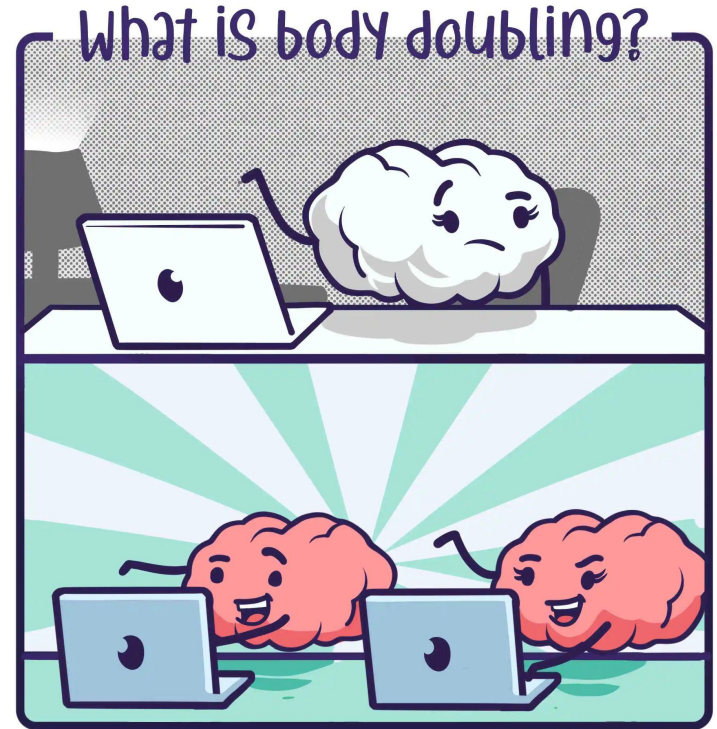


Image: <https://www.flow.club/blog/body-doubling-adhd>





## ♥ READMEs, but for people

- Internal cheatsheet shared where everyone can access it
- Standardized questions
- Read your team's manuals, and discuss
- Manual of Me: <https://www.manualof.me/>
- How to work with me manual: <https://www.remotecompany.com/blog/how-to-work-with-me-manual>

## 💖 Time Out/Off

- Having a quiet space to retreat to when things are too much
- Part time contracts and other “solutions” HR comes up with
- “Unlimited vacation days”
- “Quiet room” at conferences/events



# ♥ Assume good intent\*

- Nobody wants you to fail
- Find your community:
  - ERG (Employee Resource Group)
  - SIG (Special Interest Group) / WG
  - Supportive coworkers





make  
people  
feel  
loved  
today

## 💜 Train your empathy muscle

- Use scheduling to not add to overload
- Write and maintain wikis
- Low lighting / low noise
- Accommodate by default
- Listen, don't "solution"

# Some other things

- Add a recent photo of your face to chat/online profile
  - ND people (specifically autism)
- Don't send feedback or action points at EOD/Friday evening
  - Thinking about it throughout the entire night/weekend
- TL;DRs are good things to do
  - "Can you review this for me?"



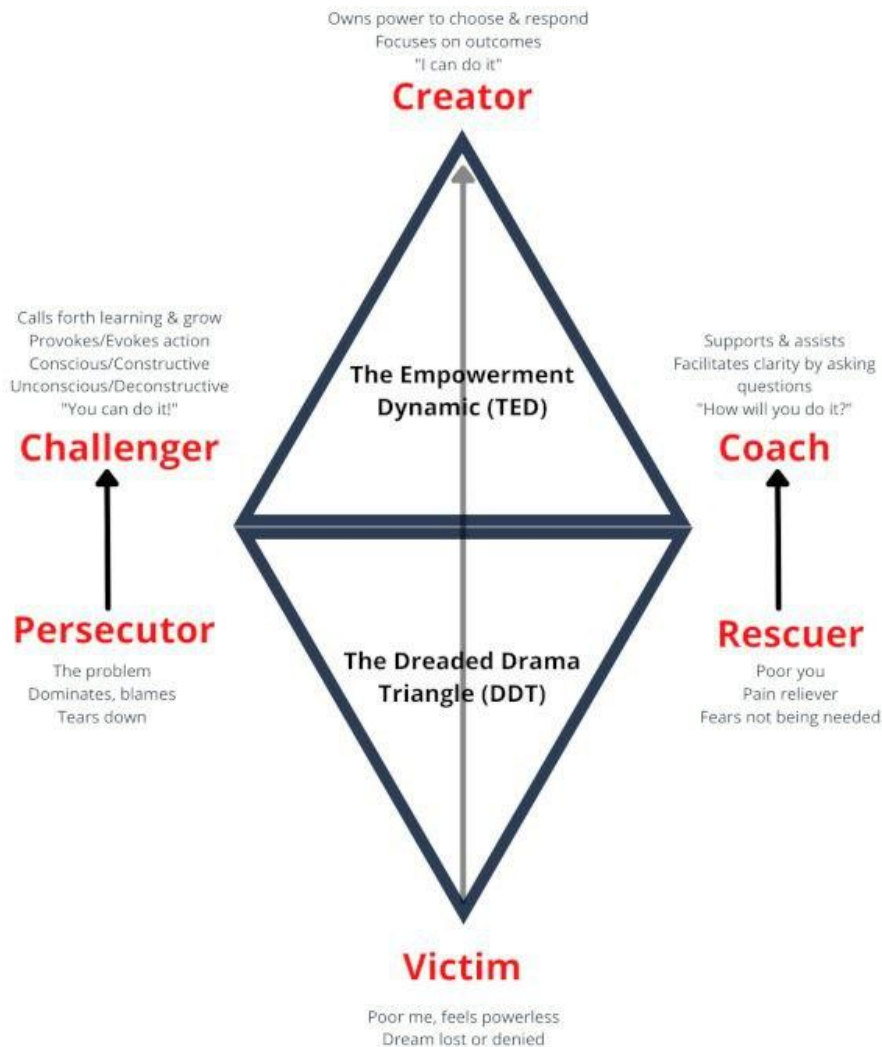
# T.E.D. / D.D.T

- The Empowerment Dynamic

- Passion-based
- Outcome-focused

- The Dreaded Drama Triangle

- Anxiety-based
- Problem-focused



# Mailing list “culture”

- 2000/3000 emails a month
- Newcomer needs to adapt, not the existing group
- Understanding the Postgres Hackers Mailing List Language  
<https://www.crunchydata.com/blog/understanding-the-postgres-hackers-mailing-list>

wiki.postgresql.org/wiki/So\_you\_want\_to\_be\_a\_developer%3F



## Participating in the development community

Information about the mailing lists is available on the [Mailing Lists](#) page, also reproduced here for your convenience.

### Mailing List Culture

The PostgreSQL community exists world-wide on our mailing lists. As you dive into our community, you will encounter people with wildly varying levels of expertise for databases, software development and system administration. Excellent technical and professional advice is given freely on the mailing lists, but there is no guarantee or expectation that anyone can solve any particular problem. Flaming or personal attacks are not tolerated on our mailing lists, IRC or related forums connected to the postgresql.org site.

Above all, the PostgreSQL community's expectation is that each person treats the other with respect, and grants each other the benefit-of-the-doubt when it comes to terse or critical language. The Robustness Principle applies to participation in our community: Be conservative in what you send; be liberal in what you accept.

That said, [our](#) community is known for its aggressive and technical discussion style. For those unfamiliar with our community, our discussions can come across as insulting or overly critical. Please keep in mind that as a new contributor, you are encountering a new culture. Every culture has different rules about appropriate behavior, social norms, and expectations. Much like when learning a new language or visiting a new, unfamiliar country, your experiences while joining the PostgreSQL community will undoubtedly include an "adjustment cycle". That can and likely will include high and low moments, friendly or otherwise.

As with any encounter with unfamiliar culture, you must take some time to get acquainted. Take extra time to communicate clearly. Ask for clarification if you're confused or a response doesn't make sense to you. [This list](#) of commonly-used terms might be helpful. Be careful to avoid personal attacks if someone makes a mistake. If there's one universal constant, it is that everyone makes mistakes.

Remember that we are a learning community, and with few exceptions, people are communicating with the intention of learning, sharing and refining ideas.

### Email etiquette mechanics

Signatures that include "confidentiality notices" are useless in the context of PostgreSQL mailing lists. All messages to our lists are archived publicly, are immediately available worldwide and will not be removed from our archives. Please remove the notices from your email to our lists, particularly when posting code that you wish to be contributed or shared with our community.

When replying, please be respectful and use appropriate quoting. See the [Mailing List Etiquette FAQ](#) for details about what constitutes appropriate quoting when replying to mailing lists.

Our mailing lists are generally set to "reply to sender", but the preferred way to participate in threads is to "reply all". That means that you'll include both the email address of the sender and the mailing list in your response. Also, please do not send HTML-enriched email to the mailing lists.

Finally, our community generally does not "top post" in response to mailing list threads (See [Wikipedia: Top Posting](#) for a definition of top posting).



# Postgres resources

- PG EU / PG US Diversity Committee
- postgres-contrib.org
- ... the Chess Club and other SIGs that don't need icebreakers



PostgreSQL Contributions | postgres-contrib.org

🌟 Contributions for the week of 2024-11-11 (Week 46 overview)

[Jimmy Angelakos](#) | Nov. 18, 2024 | Category: [contributions](#)

- November 12th: [Katherine Saar](#), [Stacey Hayler](#) and [Christophe Pettus](#) hosted an online meetup for PostgreSQL San Francisco Area User Group, "Be Thankful: Logical Replication traps you did not fall into", presented by Kacey Holston.
- November 12th: [Floor Drees](#) published an episode for the "Hacking Postgres" podcast S3E2 ([Apple Spotify](#)) interviewing [Heikki Linnakangas](#) and [blogged](#) about it.
- November 14th: [Elizabeth Christensen](#) hosted an online meetup for the [PostgresMeetup for All](#), where Arka Ganguli...

🌟 Contributions for the week of 2024-11-04 (Week 45 overview)

[Boris Melles](#) | Nov. 11, 2024 | Category: [contributions](#)

- [PGConf Brazil 2024](#) was held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, on November 7th-8th. It was organized by:
  - Kenia Gallego
  - Danielle Monteiro
  - Euler Taveira
  - Fernando Franquini
  - Lucio Chiesi
  - William Ivanski

The Call for Papers committee was formed by:

- Fabio Telles
- Gerislen Santos
- Glaucio Torres
- Kenia Gallego
- Luciane Pinheiro

- On 6th of November, the Copenhagen PostgreSQL User Group held a meetup where Luigi Nardi presented DBTune.

🌟 Contributions for the week of 2024-10-28 (Week 44 overview)

[Jimmy Angelakos](#) | Nov. 4, 2024 | Category: [contributions](#)

- [PGConf EU 2024](#), held in Athens from October 22-25, was the biggest PostgreSQL event in the world yet! It was organized by:
  - Andreas Scherbaum
  - Chris Ellis
  - Dave Page
  - Ilya Kosmodemiansky
  - Jimmy Angelakos
  - Keren Itz
  - Magnus Hagander
  - Tomas Vondra
  - Valeria Kaplan

The Call for Papers Committee for PGConf EU 2024:

- [Afsane Anand](#)
- Andreas Karlsson
- Derk van Veen
- Gulcin Yildirim Jelinek
- Stefan Fercot

The Code of Conduct Committee for PGConf EU 2024:

- Ilya Kosmodemiansky
- Pavlo Golub
- Stacey Hayler

The fol...

📅 Introducing postgres-contrib.org and the PostgreSQL Event Calendar at PGConf EU Lightning Talks

[Pavlo Golub](#) | Nov. 2, 2024 | Category: [news](#)

[Floor Drees](#) and [Andreas Scherbaum](#) took the stage during the [PGConf EU lightning talks](#) to present [postgres-contrib.org](#) and the [PostgreSQL Event Calendar](#). Slides [are here](#).

# Call for PGConf DEV panelists

We're applying to the CfP (until Jan 1) and need more panelists with fresh perspectives. Please connect!

PGConf DEV

May 13-16

Montreal, QB, Canada

<https://2025.pgconf.dev/>



# Thank you!



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