Dealing with Anxiety in Operations

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Me

- Chief Anxiety Officer
- Director of Web Operations @ Spring
- Sys Admin since 2006
- Cannot dunk a basketball
Spring is a marketplace of 1,000+ amazing brands that people can shop on app and web. Our goal is to enable people to shop all their favorite brands in one place in a way that's convenient, easy, and fun.

shopspring.com
Goals of this talk

- Educate you about Anxiety disorders
- Discuss anxiety/stress in our jobs
- Methods to mitigate those anxieties
- How you can help
Quick Disclaimer

This is not medical advice. I am not a mental health professional or a doctor. These are my own experiences…. Please don’t sue me or O’ Reilly

But if you had to pick one…
### Survey Says...

#### How are you feeling?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proud</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Hurt</th>
<th>Irritated</th>
<th>Embarrassed</th>
<th>Tired</th>
<th>Sorry</th>
<th>Disappointed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>Bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>Miserable</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Frightened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Fed up</td>
<td>Brave</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Puzzled</td>
<td>Terrified</td>
<td>Mad</td>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Anxiety disorders affect about 40 million American adults age 18 years and older (about 18%) in a given year, causing them to be filled with fearfulness and uncertainty.”

- 22.8% of the cases are classified as “severe”
- Only 36.9% are receiving treatment

Average Age-of-Onset: **11 years old!!!**

Sources:
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2847357/
My Illness

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
  - With a Panic Disorder
- Symptoms appeared around 13
- Wasn’t diagnosed until 17
What is Anxiety?

- Feelings of panic, fear, and uneasiness
- Problems sleeping
- Cold or sweaty hands and/or feet
- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- An inability to be still and calm
- Dry mouth
- Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Dizziness

Which shares symptoms of:

- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Flu
- Common Cold
- Whatever Virus is currently in the news at the time
Panic Attack

Sudden onset of intense anxiety symptoms without warning and sometimes without reason

- Fight or flight
- Logic goes out the window
Good Anxiety vs Bad Anxiety

● Having Anxiety doesn’t mean you have a disorder
● This is the job of a mental health professional to help you figure out!
Stressors of Operations
Oncall

https://www.flickr.com/photos/churl/263989110
Guaranteed Outages

100% UPTIME?

THAT'S UNPOSSIBLE!
Maintenance Windows
New Technology

https://www.flickr.com/photos/techbirmingham/76169852
Complexities

- Nginx
- Django
- CockroachDB
- LDAP
- Kafka
- Logstash
- Elasticsearch
- Kibana
- OpenVPN
- YubiKey

All in a giant Docker container

Sitting in the Cloud

Which is all powered by #serverless technology

That requires #NoOps to run
A “team” of One

https://www.flickr.com/photos/piratescott/481789838/
root@spof.justinlintz.com:~# rm -rf /
OMG WHAT WAS I THINKING?
Minimizing Anxiety

In our operations jobs
Don’t be an Ops team of One

- Just cause you are the only one with Ops in title doesn’t mean you should be the only one doing Ops
  - Shared Oncall w/ Engineering
  - Empower and train engineering
  - Don’t be a SPOF of knowledge

- DevOps
Controlled Burns
Bring Service down
Did it fail as expected?
Did the correct monitors go off?

- Did you even have monitors in place?
- Did *too* many monitors go off?
Was availability affected?
Blameless Postmortems

Remove fear of punishment from the equation

https://codeascraft.com/2012/05/22/blameless-postmortems/
Checklists

● general steps for being paged
● go back and automate what you can
● “playbooks” for detailed steps

Checklists

• takes stress and pressure off the moment
• even for the simple things!
• removes the guesswork
Training

● Observation/Monitoring tools
  ○ knowing which tool to reach for
● Expanding your toolset
● From vendors themselves
  ○ learn the gotchas
  ○ bring plenty of questions
On-call Partner

- Talk out a problem with them
- A second set of eyes
- Redundancy!
Talking to your Employer about your Mental Health

- Hard to approach
  - Will they understand?
- Takes time to build a comfort level
- Remember you’re not alone!
- Removes anxiety of hiding your anxiety
- Choice is up to you
Recap

1. Team of (N > 1) is > Team of 1
2. Controlled Burns
3. Blameless Postmortems
4. Checklists
5. Training
6. On-call Partner
7. Talk to your employer
When to seek help?

Anxiety becomes:

- excessive
- intrusive
- persistent
- debilitating
Anxiety is manageable and treatable!

- Therapy
- Medication
- Exercise
- Diet
- Breathing exercises
- Meditation
How can you help someone?
Listen
Ask what they need?
Avoid being dismissive

“just relax”
Take them to a quiet place
Avoid touching or grabbing
When in doubt, seek emergency medical treatment
Wrapping up
Recovery not linear

Anxiety recovery or JVM Heap Usage?
Health > Job
Resources

Finding Help
- https://therapists.psychologytoday.com

Books
- “10% Happier” by Dan Harris
- “Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy” by David Burns

Crisis
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number 1-800-273-8255.
- Crisis Text Line - Text START to 741-741
Questions?

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