

How To Sleep At Night

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Sometimes working on projects can make you feel icky, or they can aggravate your anxiety, or your ethics.

Here are some ways to get through it.

1. Be nice to people, and when you can't be nice, be neutral.
2. Your projects are important, but your life, family, and friends are more important. Mental health, too. Don't sacrifice yourself so that a project goes up. Money rarely cares how much you've bled to get something up. **I am terrible about this.** That said: if it's your art, this changes.
3. What subversive things can you do to insert your values? I'm not suggesting that you sabotage a project or cut frames into the final exports a la *Fight Club*, but I am suggesting that you can do things that are net positive within the schema of a project. Hiring more diversely, teaching people, being kind, reducing electrical consumption, ride-sharing, and improving accessibility are all really great examples.
4. You should remember to pivot when necessary, which is often. Most of the time, pivoting takes less time than fighting against it. Don't make your job harder on yourself or your team!
5. It's always better to smile, nod, and be solutions oriented than it is to find out who's at fault or to aggressively defend yourself. If you find yourself escalating a conversation in a negative direction; try to diffuse and move on. Ripping jokes is an important skill here.
6. Stay positive! Don't sweat things too much. Big reactions and negativity can really impact your team. If you are a glass-half-empty kind of person (I am), remember to be positive as often as you can.
7. **Remind people what they're doing right, and if they're doing it wrong, offer critique towards success, not critique towards blame.** I know only a few people who are good at this - it's a very special skill.
8. **Find your allies** on projects and work together to help make your lives easier. My life and efforts have been saved by my colleagues and collaborators countless times.
9. Don't take on too much. While you probably know how to configure a router, you probably don't want to be responsible for all the network things, at the risk of becoming **Sheriff of Network Town** (more on this later, but heavy is the heart that wears the badge).
10. To that end; **avoid overwork.** We've all pulled 30 hour shifts on projects. I did a 40 once. This is a young person's game, but it's never a thing you should ask someone to do. As you get older, your ability to function well after 14 hours rapidly deteriorates. You suddenly find yourself not able to operate logically. Math is hard. Manual efforts are still possible, but eventually they go, too. You don't want to "work stupid" because this can become ineffective and unsafe. **Operate in Marathon mode, not Sprint mode.** If a project is operating with long shifts and consistent burn out, it's not being managed properly and/or something has gone off the rails. Though, sometimes there is a sprint to the finish and that's the nature of the beast. Remember, at the very least, all projects

come to end eventually.

11. **Pay attention to your team's mental health** and encourage breaks / pivoting when someone is stuck or down-in-the-dumps. If you're in charge, sometimes this means you have to prioritize your team and not help yourself. This is why you have an "on-site" budget. Buy everyone a meal.
12. **Remember to take breaks.** Remember to have cool-down periods, rather than white knuckling to the finish line. Your job is rarely life and death and it shouldn't be treated as if you're going in and saving lives in order to get the background low-poly water effects just right.
13. **Protect yourself and your colleagues from distraction.** Constant interruption is counter-productive. Multi-tasking is a myth unless it's folding laundry and listening to a podcast. Find a way to gate-keep yourself and your team! **Flow states are efficient.** I say that with two instances of Claude running and while I'm writing. Yikes!
14. **Hop on the phone to solve problems.** Remove the subtext of Slack, or an email, or a text. This is almost always a time-saver. Also, some people just don't have the skill-set or patience to work efficiently in the digital (these guys are called "phone guys"). This is fine! Pivot to accommodate whenever you can.

Oh yeah, and don't forget to stretch!