

**THE  
PROGRAMMER'S  
BLUEPRINT**

**A Comprehensive Guide  
to Maintaining Physical  
and Mental Wellness  
While Coding**

**JANNE HONKONEN**

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**by**

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## **Dedication**

As all things in my life, this book is dedicated  
to the love of my life, my wife Nana Honkonen  
and to my son Väinö Honkonen.

Without the love you give to me my life would be a void.

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# Introduction

STOP CODING NOW!

Yes. You are in a hurry! Yes! Project is important! Yes! There are more than 10 bugs to be fixed before you can push it to a production or to an another release format and Yes! You are NOT taking care of yourself!

Simply to put: You are slowly killing yourself and after you are in your grave, somebody else is doing your job and only thing left of you is a crying, neglected family / dog / relatives / co-workers / game library.

It's a fucking hamster's wheel and it is was we accepted to be doing when we choose coding to be our hobby and/or profession.

Well fuck.

So what if that work pays your mortgage / car / rent / newest gaming console and/or PC and even if it pays your girlfriend, it is not worth of that. You DO NOT have to kill yourself while doing it. You can even survive while doing it, by applying few, simple, repetitive rules.

But you do not have take my word on it: What do I know? All you know the author of this book might just be one of those new-age mental health coaches who have never typed a line of a code in their lives, or worse, they think HTML is a programming language.

You're right. You have a trust issues, but don't well all. What us programmers value the most are the facts. We do not care what are the philosophical issues with the subject as long as it works, and if it does not work, well we call it a new feature.

So, before we try to be all sassy with how-to-do-and-live-our-lives kind of attitude, let me introduce myself so you know that I know what the fuck I am talking about.



# About author

Hi! I'm Janne. Janne Honkonen to be exact.

Now, if you are not Finnish, my name might sound like an exotic fruit to you, but believe me, I'm a Finnish man driving fast towards my 50s and I have done my share programming all kind of cool shit over the last 30 years. It has not only provided me my house, kind-of-provided my wife, a hobby, a work, lots of different skills and experiences, lot of stress and a nervous break down.

So a tons of fun.

But let's rewind a little bit, you know, like you rewinded those old VHS tapes from the 1980s, a time period where I was also born. In the 1980s world was a lot of cooler. We did not have Stranger Things, but we did have Commodore 64, a first popular home computer which spread around the world. I was at age of 6 when I first got it, and soon started programming with it just because games did not entertain me long enough.

This taught me quickly, albeit being a very literal Basic programming language, to learn different kind of methods for solving problems and overcome issues created by the limitations of the programming environment.

But instead of continuing this text like a programming autobiography, which is different book all together, lets speed up, and summarize all.

Since era of C64, I have kept programming as being my most beloved hobby, and now, after 37 years of programming using over 30 to 40 different languages, 4 different operating systems and creating programming solutions both to desktop, command line, GUI environments as well as creating games using various languages and game development environments.

As a GameDev I have worked with Unity3D and Unreal Engine, and creating software for various hardware from desktop computers to mini-systems such as Raspberry PI to integrated IoT systems, Mega-boards, tablets and mobile phones, and even to old pre-iOS and pre-Android era phones.

I think it would be safe to say I know thing or two about programming.

# Why this book exists?

Why does anything exist? Why even to program, to code, to create worlds with your fingertips in the quickly changing world where AI is going to make us coders all obsolete, why would us coders still care of anything, still code, or even, still exist? I have no god damn idea.

I know, that even in the situation where Artificial Intelligence and generally speaking machine learning may make us all obsolete, our bodies will still slowly decay away like a piece of code made deprecated after the new version of the compiler has been released.

The only thing that matters is how quickly you want your body to cease to exist. General consensus is, that no matter what religion or life path you turn on towards, might it even be a flying spaghetti monster, you will eventually die, and all that we know, that's that.

Nobody will care you or of your obsolete code decades after you are gone so why the hell should you be doing everything in your power to speed it up? Stop it! Stop the fuck killing yourself by coding yourself into a grave.

You are more important than your work.

You are even more important than your code.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 Yes. You really are.

Trust me. I know what I am talking about. It is not worth of killing yourself with work. You can still do your thing, whenever it's your work or your hobby, if you want, but you do not have to kill yourself while doing it.

This book might not save your time, money or life, but it will make your life little bit easier with simple, good and well-tested methods, which I use in my life.

# Exercises while sitting

Following exercises can be done while sitting: This means, you do not have to stop your productive speed coding or look like a lazy bastard in the eyes of your supervisors. You can do everything listed below while sitting on your cubicle or what ever your programming environment is.

They are quick to do, but still provide valuable functions with great return value when done regularly during the programming sessions.

Pun intended.

Disclaimer: All these, and following exercises are aimed for the average programmer with no bone, muscle or any other body dysfunctions or abnormalities. While these exercises will help most of the coders out there, please be advised that not everyone is built same way, and some exercises may have disadvantages to some people. Always consult your doctor before doing these exercises.<sup>2</sup>

---

2 I am not a doctor. Also, I am not an escalator or any kind of expert what comes how body works, so really, really, use your brains and think before doing anything.

I know. You will not likely consult your doctor before you do them, but be sensible and instead of blindly following these exercise, use that beautiful coder brain of yours and be careful doing these exercises. As said, we are all built differently.

Some of us are not even built, they are still waiting to be compiled.

## Exercise 1: Breath

OK. You managed to read this far, or just have skipped the start of the book. No matter. Those texts were not important anyway; deprecated pieces of code we could say. The important stuff begins here.

Breath.

Yeah. I know. You do it all the time. Did you know you most likely suck with it? Yeah. I know. It's stupid, but breathing is quite important what comes to oxidizing your blood and make the blood flow well in your brain.

But humour me. Start by dropping your shoulders down, relaxing them. If you are like me, your shoulders are tense and uptight too high without you even really noticing it, so lower them down, relax your shoulders and drop your tongue down from your palate.

Now take a better position on that chair of yours, and let your back relax a little bit, while still making sure that your shoulders stay down and relaxed. Take a deep, and I mean deep, slow breath using your stomach, take it all in slowly by counting slowly to 5, hold inside you for a 5 seconds and then exhale out slowly counting to five.

Now close your eyes<sup>3</sup> and do this as calmly and relaxed as you can, and repeat this 3 to 5 times eyes closed, slowly breathing in and slowly breathing out, keeping your shoulders down and tongue dropped. It will only take you under a minute, but will calm your nervous system, oxidize your blood and lower your stress level, easing also your muscles all over your body.

You have time to this. Nothing bad will happen if you do this.

This exercise, done couple times a day, or even once in an hour, will not only make your brains work better, but in the long term, will help your mental health and your body. It is not only very easy and fast to do, but will also have a long term effects on your body and mind.

You are important. This is first step of taking care of yourself.

---

3 While proofreading this, my wife, my trusted coffee maker, made a remark that I earlier said these can be done while coding, yet, I instruct people to keep their eyes closed and stated that one cannot code with their eyes closed. Little she does know... oh sweet summer child.



## Exercise 2: Stretching neck and head

Did you do the breathing exercise already? Good. Now. Breathing like that and keeping your shoulders down a quick way to cool down nerves a little bit and help your muscles a little bit, but as said, only a little bit.

Time to do a little bit more.

First, straighten up your back. I know you are not sitting on straight enough; Likely, you have melted down into your chair like a butter left under to the summer sun's shine. In case you do not know, the sun is the bright hot thing in the sky, somewhat like your GPU while playing the newest games.

Now that you are sitting straight, lets start stretching. Tilt your head left slowly to the left, so you can feel your neck stretching and you are brave enough, rise your right palm on your left chest and hold. Keep this position for next 30 seconds, while slowly trying to stretch as long as your can, keeping your back straight up while doing it.

Now slowly rise your head straight and repeat the same mirrored towards the right. This will stretch your neck muscles and open up some of those tense muscles and nerves packed into your neck while pushing the newest update to the production.

Now after you have stretched both to left and right, while still keeping your back straight up, lower your jaw towards your chest slowly, and put your hands behind back of your head and push your head down very carefully. Know your limits and specially, your neck.

Keep this position and stretch for 30 seconds and after you have counted to 30, first release your hands and then slowly elevate your head to upwards position.

Now straighten up your back even once more. If you're lucky, you may even hear few little cracks from your neck as your tight muscles have now opened up. Repeat this exercise at least once a day, but preferably 2 to 3 times a day. Set an alarm for your phone so you actually will do them.

## Exercise 3: Blood flow to legs

Did you know one of the most deadliest thing a people can do is sit? If you are not of the few lucky ones with standing table and / or walking treadmill under the table, your veins WILL clot when sitting, more or less.

Earlier we got more blood on our head, now it is time to do the same for our legs.

While sitting, there are not lot of things you can do with our legs, but there is few things which will ensure that your veins will not clot as much as they would, so here's few things:

First thing you can in intervals, or all the time if you feel like it. Cross your feet from your ankle and swing your legs. Think your legs are a kids swing like in the playground and swing them forward and backwards under the table.

You do not need to do all hyperloop on it, or swing like your life would depend on it, because it could look you doing something unholy under the table. Just keep the pace slow and calm, but do not over do it. It helps if you do it with intervals, say, once in an hour or two, just time it for 30 to 60 seconds, and helps keep the blood going on your feet.

If you keep doing it in regular intervals, it might become a habit that literally might just save your life. Please note, that other people may get annoyed if you keep swinging in the working environment where tables or cubicles are interconnected so that it causes some swaying on other work stations so you might want to have some consideration while doing it.

As legs have biggest muscles in the human body, this not only keep the blood flowing inside your feet, but will also activate your flow all around your body. Your legs may grow tired after sometime or if you over-do it, but still, doing it will keep you alive, so there's that.

You can also shake your legs for a 10 to 20 seconds after doing the swing to enable even more blood flowing to your legs.

## Exercise 4: Rocking the boat

Now we are breathing correctly, stretching our neck regularly and swinging our feet, there is still one exercise we can do while sitting.

In this next exercise, we will activate the core muscles in your body, as well activate the full bodily blood flow which will in itself make your muscles less hurting and body more reactive. Hell, you could even lose few grams of weight doing it.

This exercise is what I call rocking the boat: Think that you are sitting on a deck of a ship in the sea. The winds are high and the ship is swinging from side to side. Hell, even imagine that you are the ship, rocking from side to side.

This is a good movement which will both enable your body to use it's core muscles, but will also enable your muscles to remain little bit more active and body awake.

It is important that you notice that this exercise is not suitable for all working environments as this is large motion of the body, and may at least be disruptive to fellow coders and make yourself earn a title of elastic coder for rest of they year.

As this is a large motion, you do not have to do this is regularly as you would do the other sitting exercises. Perhaps few times a day is enough, but each one own it's own. Who knows, you may even become a new Harlem Shake master with this, even though, that thing is long gone by now.

Always, before doing any of these, know your limits, and know the limits of your chair and other hardware, so you do not end up hurting yourself, or your equipment. You you over-do it, you might find yourself from the floor with a broken chair, a broken back and a very much broken ego.

# Exercises while standing

While doing exercises sitting in an important pause interval for any programming project, they are not enough. The exercises following are done while standing, and a good practice is set your clock to an alarm so you remember to do it 2 to 3 days in a work day. This ensures, that your brain keeps running, and your body does not end up being a pile of a compost waste.

As previous exercises, these are also quick to do, and for that, are even better to your body. These will not replace the exercise done sitting, but will give your body a better boost to survive the whole damn coding project.

As before, disclaimer comes: All these, and any previous and following exercises are aimed for the average programmer with bodily abnormalities. These will help most of the coders out there, please be advised that not everyone is built same way, and some exercises may have disadvantages to some people. Always consult your doctor before doing these exercises.

It is very likely that you still will not consult your doctor, but please, be reasonable and never over-do anything, not even a coffee, although overdoing coffee, is very, very tempting idea.

## Exercise 1: Hip pendulum

Time to get up! You have reached the level of your personal exercise drive so well, that you even want to get up and do simple exercises standing! Good for you! Lets start with something simple, yet, something that enables your body to see to both left, and even to the right.

Lets start by getting up. Find a location, where there is an about meter free space around you, so you don't accidentally knock down anyone or anything. Gods know if you work in the server room, knocking down one of those racks might annoy someone.

While standing straight, put your hands together forming a fist on your waist level. Your elbows and arms should form an L-shape letter on both sides while holding hands with your self. We can also think this as a way to taking care of your personal little self by holding your own hand.

Start slowly to rotate your upper body all the way as far as left as you can rotate, while keeping your lower hip and legs in place. After reaching your limit, start to rotate slowly to the right and then return to the middle. Now repeat this task 10 times, from left to right to right to left. This movement opens up your core muscles and joints and whatnot and enables your blood to shoot much better around your body.



This is a quick under minute standing up exercise, with is good for your body, and for your mind, as any and all moments away from the keyboard are good moments. As all exercises what are and will be mentioned, this can be performed alone, or as a set with other exercises.

You should repeat this exercise 2 to 3 times per a working day. A good method is setting up alarm for the exercise for exact each time for each work day.

## Exercise 2: Eastern army

As we already tried pumping blood to our feet earlier while sitting, let us pump even more. Following exercise is somewhat knee safe and much more easier, and safer to knees, than squats, which are, quite frankly, the hell's invention.

This exercise is so simple, it's stupid. It's like writing your first "Hello World" program and still getting error message from it.

Start by standing up straight, and then, while standing, slowly rise your left knee as up as you can, while keeping the rest of the leg pointing down. Try to keep balance, and if you have a bad balance or get dizzy easily, take support from anything solid before doing it. Try to rise the knee as high as possible, and then, lowering it down. Then repeat the same movement with the right knee and if necessary, change balancing hands.

Repeat this movement 10 times for each leg. It is much more safer to knees than squats, and makes your feet's large muscles to pump the blood better to your body. If you did not before, know this: Legs have the biggest muscles in your body, and are responsible for most blood pumping towards your heart and from there to the rest of the body.

Think of this exercise like watching and matching eastern military marching. Knees up, and each exercise, try to reach new heights.

As we know, sitting is a silent killer and due the fact that legs have the biggest blood pumps, some people consider walking treadmills during the work be the best invention since the fire. Keep your legs moving and the code flowing.

This exercise is simple, quick but does a long term goodness.

As with the earlier exercise, repeat this 2 to 3 times per day working day. Keeps your body and legs moving.

## Exercise 3: Reaching the toes

Now, some of the more experienced programmers like myself, might have a developed not only a sore back but also a larger stomach area, which may make the following exercise a little bit harder, but never give up. If I could eventually do it, so can you.

As you might already guess, the following exercise is all about bending over, but fear not, we are not in prison, and even if we are, it is just a matter of bravery.

Warning ahead: If you get easily light headed or else wise dizzy, consider of skipping the next one or have someone looking after you. There will be techniques which will tell you how to prevent fainting or dizziness, but still, be safe.

Let start by standing up. Maintain a good, straight upwards position and then, slowly start to bend towards your toes with your arms. Maintain a good relaxed and calm pace of breathing and slowly bend yourself so that fingers of your hand try to reach your toes. Keep your legs straight up.

If you a long time coder like myself, the first times will be a living hell. Do not give up. Let your head down relaxed without keep it stiff and keep bending down while reaching your toes. Even if this feels hopeless and you feels you cannot ever reach your toes, do not give up. Stretch down as far as you can.

Keep reaching toes and stretch for at least 30 seconds, counting on your head and keeping your breathing calm and stable. After 30 seconds, rise slowly straight up to full standing position while inhaling air well: This eases up any dizziness you may occur.

If this movement is difficult to you, I do not blame you. It is a worst exercise since the invention of the squats. There is a few things which will help. If you have a hard time doing this, find a wall with space to go as near as possible, lie down on your back and lift your legs up to the wall so that your butt hits the wall and you form a shape of an L-letter.

Your butt might rise up, but slowly, and carefully, you can stretch it down, while stretching your legs and back. This makes the exercise easier, and helps you reach your toes in the end.

# Important tips to all exercises

Remember this with all exercises: You do not have to do this every day: If you only work at weeks, it is a good method of just resting and clowning around during weekends and time all exercises to exact times for each work days.

Make them a part of a routine: My phone alarms exactly with following intervals: 09:38 AM, 10:38 AM, 11:38 AM and 13:25 PM which means I usually try to do all mentioned exercise at least four times per work day, but usually ending up them at least two times per day.

The time the exercises will consume from you is minimal: Even if you would do all sitting and standing exercises, they would take only a total of two or three minutes from each day from your work day, but would greatly improve your muscles, joints and blood flow much better than just sitting around.

Lets be frank: You some times spend more time doing the number two in the toilet during work day than those three minutes, and you know, Elvis died on doing the number two on the toilet.

I know these things are not related any way, but works as an important reminder, that you usually spent more time pooping, than doing short but good exercises.

Routine is the key. Don't hit yourself into head if you miss an exercise, or two, or even several days, as long as you restart them.

Being and feeling well is not a sprint. It is a marathon.

## Consider this: Drink water

Now I live in Finland, where the tap water is cleaner than a bottled water or the water from the water cooler, but it is not same everywhere: Water, a very essential substance and requirement for our living is not always available as easily as it should be, but yet, it is the most important substance for our coder's life.

A good hydration as very important part of your bodily functions to work as they should, as it not only keeps the joints and muscles in better shape, but it also keep your metabolism working much more fluently.

Regular human male needs about 3 litres of water in everyday and a female needs 2 litres of water everyday. Most of this comes to us coders from coffee, energy drinks or with-in food and/or other edibles.<sup>4</sup>

Although coffee and energy drinks feel, sound and taste better option than your generic h20, do not shame the good old water: Whenever you are a hydrohomie or not, drinking water each day is very important for a body to work, and you should drink at least one litre of water everyday in addition to everything else you ingest.

---

4 According to various sources from the internet, but don't trust me. Do you own research.



Just be sure not to over do it: If you are wondering how many cups of water you should drink, consider each cup of coffee or other caffeine product qualifying to same amount of water, and then try to get about 2 to 3 litres of total liquid every day.

Eventually, even with world filled with good energy drinks, coffee, tea, soda and so on, water is the best beverage to drink if you want to keep your body healthy. Now I am not saying you should stop drinking your coffee, no sir. I will not, neither should you, but maybe replace the amount of energy drinks with equal amount of water.

Not only you save your heart and other vital organs, but you also save money, and it makes you eventually feel better.

## Consider this: Eat regularly

As we are programmers, us coders tend to eat quite unhealthy. It is just much more conveniently to eat a candy bar or other snack quickly while coding than actually take a time to stand up from the computer, walk into a break zone and eat there, but that is just what we need to do.

That is just what you need to do.

Even if you only have that candy bar as a snack, lock your work station, stand up, walk away from the computer and spend a good moment just to breath, eating your candy bar relaxed, without hurry and at ease, tasting every little thing from it. You deserve it.

You are not a cogwheel on machinery. You are a person. You need your space.

A good practice is either to purchase, or prepare yourself, a proper short- or longer meals for work. Depending of your work environment and of you manager's mental issues, you might or you might not have a chance to take a pause from all this hamster's wheel, but try. It is important to take time to relax, ease up, and just being calm, while eating your meal.

If you think this advice is not important, just look outside at ducks on the pond. They are not driving themselves dead by trying to just keep eating as a part of a work and/or living. They take their time eating the pieces of bread which are thrown to them.

Be a duck.

## Consider this: Regular breaks

While coding, it is often like running a marathon without breaks, without help, just you and your code, and this is why it is very important to have regular breaks.

Studies have shown, that learning and brain usage actually improves, if people keep regular breaks from their brain demanding work sessions, and helps not only to lower the stress but also keeps you more overall healthy.

Now, I'm not saying you should jump into couch after every semicolon, but doing earlier mentioned exercises are good way to have breaks, as well as have a good timed coffee and dinner breaks are also gods gifts to us. If you boss is not a piss head, you may just want to lie down into the floor for a few minutes with your eyes closed just face towards the ceiling.

Just give a heads up to your boss and co-workers so they don't start to resuscitate you. You do not want them to put those AED stickers on your chest and give you a shocker.

Breaks are important because you are important. They help you to survive and maintain a healthy, and fruitful working relationship. It is true that in every work environment there are no chances to take breaks or lie down, but if the toilet is your only mean to escape, then take a break on toilets, even if you do not need to use it.

Use private space in toilet to breath, sit down and just calm down. You need it.

# Philosophy: Why should I take care of my self?

Cold fact: The company does not care of you. For them, you are only an asset. Nothing more. Most of the business men, managers, they do not care about you and they do not care of your code as long as it work. You are just another tool for them how to make money.<sup>5</sup>

For you, your code may be your work of art, even you may feel like it would be a child of yours, but for the company, it is just something that makes money to the company. They DO NOT care who does it, they DO NOT care you, about your code, about your life or about your family, and even if they state that you are part of the family, they are fucking lying.

Company thinks you are a tool. Expendable. Replaceable. Not worthy of their time.

Company thinks like this, but they do not want you to think like it. They want you to give yourself into a company like it would be your family, they want you to give everything you have and can do for them to make the money and run the business. Even, and specially, the Human Resources or the HR only wants what is best of the company, not what is best of you.

---

5 There are of course, exceptions to this, but mostly, you are just an another brick in the wall.

Although you might have people who love you and care of you, they cannot do all for you, and this is why you need to start caring more of yourself.

Always remember. You are worthy. You are not a tool. You are not expendable and specially underlined, you are not replaceable. After you are gone, you're done. There will not be another like you. Companies will have another coders, developers, leaders and bosses, but individuals like you, will be gone, forever.

So remember, you are important. Never lose yourself and never give up on yourself.

# Empowerment: Prologue

Sometimes we all need to hear that we are worth of it, we are important, we are needed and we are loved, by not a company or the manager, but other people, people we know, people we love, people we need. They need you. You are important.

The pages which follow these page have a small thoughts, a philosophical phrases, for your day. These are the thoughts I want to share with all the coders in the world who feel they are not up to the task, or feel that their burden is slowly crushing them.

To you, and to all these people, I just want to say: Don't give up. You are worthy. When you feel that the moment of everything just being too much, go to the next few pages, and randomly point your finger to the one set of sentences, separated by a line, and find our encouragement, your mantra, for the day, to keep you going.

We might not have a chance to choose our work, or just to leisure around, but we are not alone. You are not alone. These are my words to you.



## Empowerment: Page #1

You are enough. Do not value yourself by the standards of the others and accept the fact that you are simply enough.

---

Providing to the needs of the others does not necessarily mean that your needs are provided. Remember: Only you know, what is important to you, and for that, choose, what makes you happy, not the others.

---

I believe in you. Yes you. The random person there somewhere.  
I think you rock!

If you feel everyone else are just dumb fucks, let  
them be dumb fucks.

---

*you can write something important down here,  
which reminds you to hang on:*

## Empowerment: Page #2

It is time for you to take a break. World will still  
keep spinning.

---

Breath. Take it all in, slowly, calmly, close your  
eyes and drop your shoulders.  
Everything is going to be alright.

---

Stress is not a resource. Stress is a cancer.  
Take a five. You have earned it.

---

You're good. Even if you'd fuck up, you're good.  
It is not your place to burden yourself.

## Empowerment: Page #3

When a duck woke up this morning do you think it said: “Damn this work day is going to be so stressful?” No. It did not. It just said Quack and was a duck

Be a duck. Say quack.

---

In a hundred years all the code you wrote  
will not matter,  
so why should it matter to you now?

Take a break.

Inhale. Drop your shoulders. Smile.  
Drink a cup of water. Smile again.

It's all going to be alright.

---

Stop coding! There is world outside! Go and smell the  
air. Even if it smells bad, it's still more fresh than coding.

—

*Write here the names of the people who inspire you and  
keep you going:*

# Postface

“ Well here we are again. It's always such a pleasure ” and so was this book-let-ish what is now ending. If it did any good for you, or helped your daily routines, I'm happy. Even if it did nothing new or good for you, I'm happy you are reading this postface.

Why? Because there is enough sadness and sorrow in the world, enough wars, famines, viruses, evil and greedy people and all other sort of shit in the world, so we need to find the happiness from the small things in the world.

And you reading this postface is something that makes me happy. I hope you are happy too. You deserve all the happiness in the world.

It is not just some old stupid phrasing. It is really something I truly believe it to be and so should you. You deserve happiness, and relaxation, and less stressful life. Find your own thing in the world what makes you happy and do it.

Even if you could not do your happy thing for your living, do it on your free time. All the little happy things in the world are the most important things in life. They make us whole.

# Something else to read

World is filled with books. Good. Bad. Weird. But books. And reading is, and will always be, an important resource for people to learn and experience from.

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