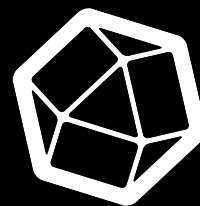


# Learning to be a Failure

David G. Simmons  
Senior DevRel, InfluxData

 @davidgsloT



# Let's All Get On The Same Page



# Empathy

em·pa·thy  
/'empəTHē/

*noun*

the ability to  
understand and share  
the feelings of another.



Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash



# Sympathy

**sym·pa·thy**  
/'simpəTHē/

**noun**

**feelings of pity and  
sorrow for someone  
else's misfortune.**



Photo by Mat Reding on Unsplash





# Understanding

**un·der·stand·ing**  
/ˌændərˈstandɪŋ/

**noun**

**The ability to understand something; comprehension.**

***adjective***

**Sympathetically aware of other people's feelings; tolerant and forgiving.**

**ARCHAIC**

**Having insight or good judgment.**



Photo by ian dooley on Unsplash



# Impostor Syndrome

How many of you know what impostor syndrome is?

How many of you experience it?

The rest of you are saying to yourselves:

*“I’m not admitting that or they’ll know  
I’m an impostor!”*



How do we  
develop these  
qualities?



Photo by Artem Maltsev on Unsplash



# We Make Mistakes

In Public



Photo by Jen Theodore on Unsplash



# It's Story Time



David G. Simmons 🥑 @🏠

@davidgsloT

Do you have impostor syndrome?  
Worried that you will make some small  
mistake in your job and never recover?  
Then follow along as I tell you this story.  
It's still happening and it is ... well, you  
decide. 1/9

10:09 AM - 16 Apr 2019



David G. Simmons 🥑 @🏠 @davidgsloT · Apr 16

Some background: I've been organizing and attending technical conferences for nearly 30 years. Y'all are used to submitting your CFPs, etc. on-line, but back in 1991 & 1992 I organized the FIRST CS conference that ONLY accepted on-line applications. 2/ 9

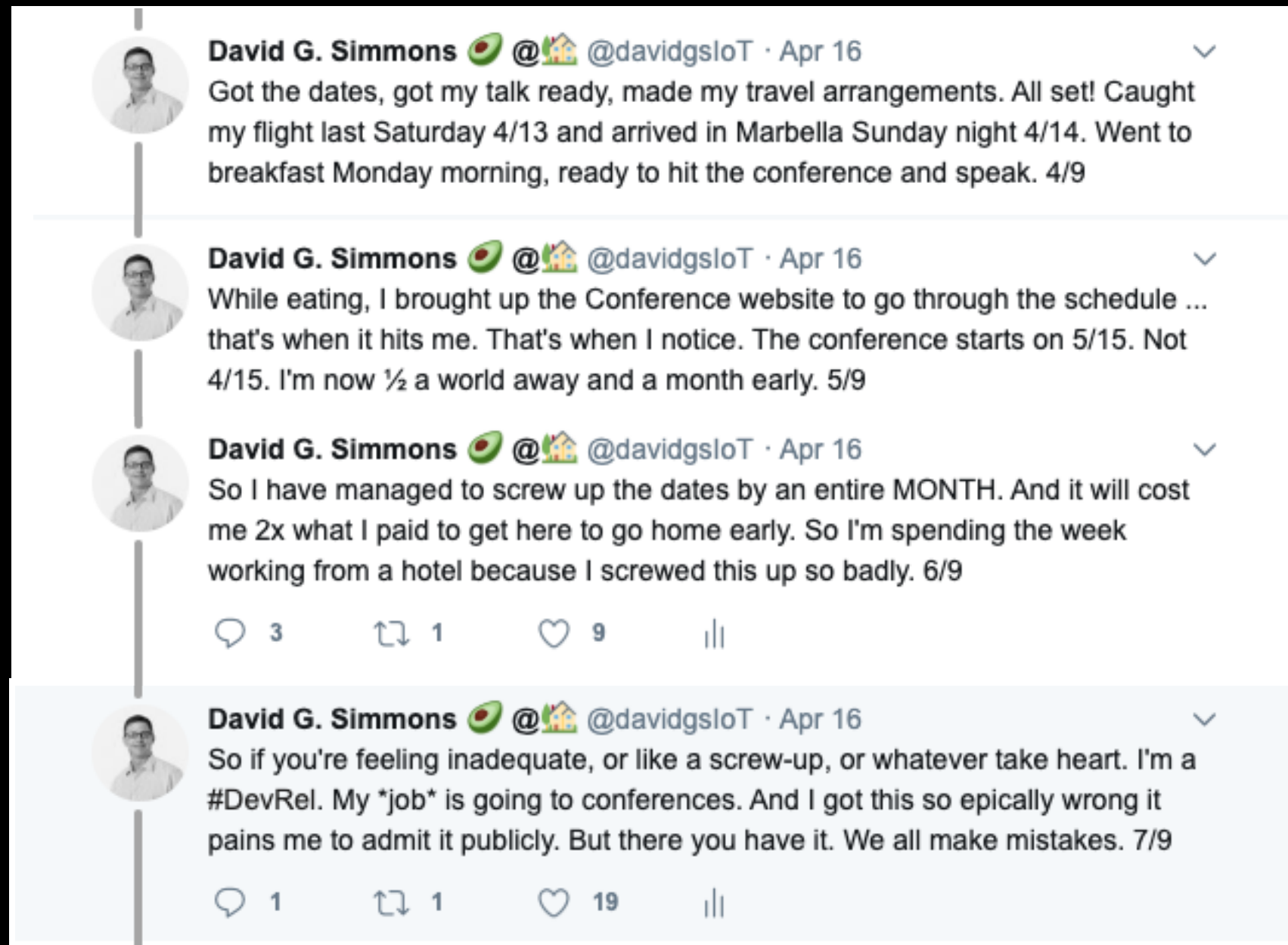
1 1 8



David G. Simmons 🥑 @🏠 @davidgsloT · Apr 16

I speak at conferences. I do booth duty, you name it. It's like second nature to me. So that's the setup. Here's where we are today. I submitted a CFP -- which was accepted, so speak at JonTheBeach in Marbella, Spain. 3/9

# It's Story Time



**David G. Simmons** 🥑 @🏠 @davidgsloT · Apr 16  
Got the dates, got my talk ready, made my travel arrangements. All set! Caught my flight last Saturday 4/13 and arrived in Marbella Sunday night 4/14. Went to breakfast Monday morning, ready to hit the conference and speak. 4/9

**David G. Simmons** 🥑 @🏠 @davidgsloT · Apr 16  
While eating, I brought up the Conference website to go through the schedule ... that's when it hits me. That's when I notice. The conference starts on 5/15. Not 4/15. I'm now ½ a world away and a month early. 5/9

**David G. Simmons** 🥑 @🏠 @davidgsloT · Apr 16  
So I have managed to screw up the dates by an entire MONTH. And it will cost me 2x what I paid to get here to go home early. So I'm spending the week working from a hotel because I screwed this up so badly. 6/9

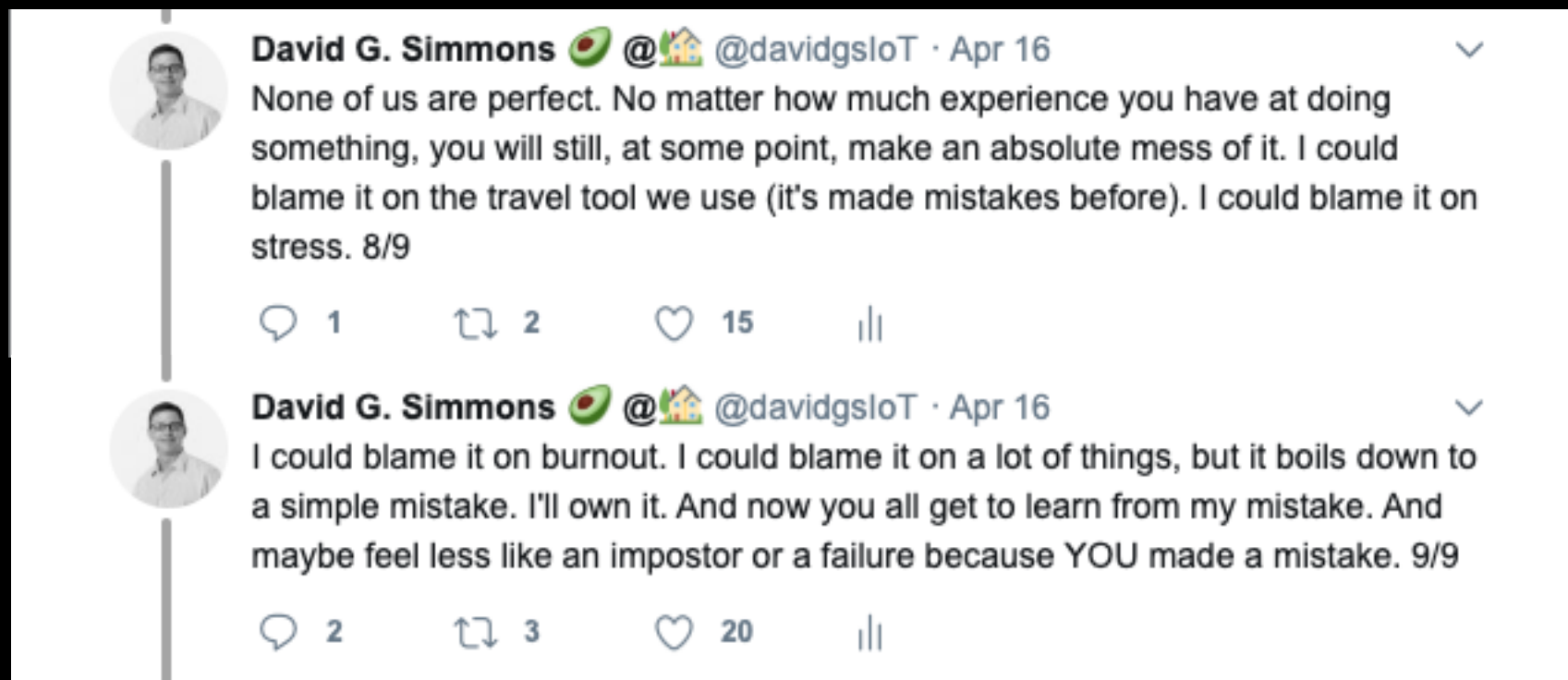
3 1 9

**David G. Simmons** 🥑 @🏠 @davidgsloT · Apr 16  
So if you're feeling inadequate, or like a screw-up, or whatever take heart. I'm a #DevRel. My \*job\* is going to conferences. And I got this so epically wrong it pains me to admit it publicly. But there you have it. We all make mistakes. 7/9

1 1 19



# It's Story Time



# Embarrassment

em·bar·rass·ment  
/ə'm'berəsmənt/

*noun*

1. a feeling of self-consciousness, shame, or awkwardness.



Photo by Dmitry Ratushny on Unsplash



# But Then ...



**Leon @ AWS re:Invent** @LeonStigter · Apr 16

Replying to @davidgsloT

Nothing but mad respect for you sharing this, my friend!!



**Taylor Krusen** @TaylorKrusen · Apr 16

Replying to @davidgsloT

Well told. What a journey!

Thank you for sharing. Great lesson. I feel a little bad for being so amused 🙏😄.



**Liz Krane** @LearningNerd · Apr 16

Replying to @davidgsloT

Thank you for sharing, @davidgsloT ! I'm just starting my devrel career and it's good to know I'm not alone in being human and making mistakes. I wonder what my next epic mistake will be hahah 🤔 I promise to share it!



# And Also ...



**Jay Porter** @nonfamousjay · Apr 16

Replying to @davidgsloT

But also, Marbella! Seriously thanks for sharing this.



1



# And My Favorite ...



Jeremy's ready for #DevRelCon @IAmJerdog · Apr 16

Thank you for sharing. Transparency, even when it requires us to share where we f&%^#^\$@^k up, is a value which pays dividends. Often you don't see the return on that, but it does. This story will touch someone - heck it's touched me! - and will make an impact. We got you David!



↺ 1

12





# Feel What They Feel

- ◆ Your users are embarrassed to ask 'stupid' questions
  - ◆ They feel like impostors for not already knowing the answers
- ◆ Your community can either shame them or have empathy for them
  - ◆ They will take their lead from you
- ◆ Do the hard work of making your mistakes public
  - ◆ Your community will support you
  - ◆ Your users will respect you
  - ◆ They will feel empowered to do the same

Having the courage to  
share your vulnerabilities  
and mistakes often  
prompts more people to  
do the same, which  
magnifies your impact.

— Laura Santamaria



Photo by Stefan Gunnarsson on Unsplash



# Privilege

priv·i·lege  
/'priv(ə)lij/

*noun*

a special right,  
advantage, or immunity  
granted or available  
only to a particular  
person or group.



Photo by Lucas Sankey on Unsplash





# My Privilege:

Being able to make mistakes in public

Isn't White Male Privilege Great?

# Spend Your Privilege

Help PoC (and other marginalized people) reduce the burden of added labor that they spend on proving that they have the right to be there at all, before they even get to the point of doing something wrong.







# Thank You!

[davidgs@influxdata.com](mailto:davidgs@influxdata.com)

