

GDC[®]

Party of One: How to be “The Audio Department”

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GDC[®]

alternate titles....

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How to Survive as a one person team

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“Party of One” an Audio Post-Non-Mortem

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How to make Beeps and Boops,
and Hopefully Influence People



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Spreadsheets, the silent friend to a Sound Person



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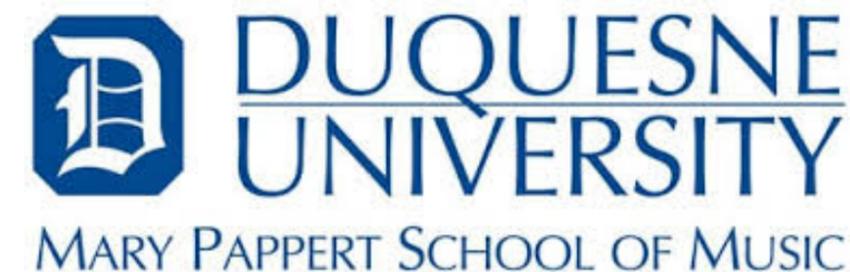
How to make Beeps and Boops,
and Hopefully Influence People

Spreadsheets, the silent friend to a Sound Person

I have beeped things... things you wouldn't believe....

a bit about Bonnie...

- Duquesne University
 - BA in Music Tech MS in Multimedia
- Varied Background before and during Game Dev
 - technical theater and stage management
 - opera performance
 - composition and arranging
 - multimedia and video
 - ...puppetry
- Audio Lead at Schell Games 2011-2016



MATERIA COLLECTIVE

“The Audio Department”?

- At Schell Games 5.5 Years
 - March 2011-Nov 2016
 - size at beginning, ~25-40 people
 - size at my end, ~120
 - First 4 years was only audio person





What do the Audio do?

- Booth maintenance and management
- Recording sessions
- vocal direction and coaching
- Organizing/building co sound bank
- Foley recording and sound design
- music composition
- audio implementation (when possible)
- asset tracking and management
- any audio documentation
- maintaining breakdown calendar.....
- Knowledge and familiarity with multiple platforms
 - Oculus Rift
 - HTC Vive
 - Google Cardboard
 - Daydream
 - Samsung Gear
 - iPad
 - iPhone
 - google tango
 - museum exhibits with ...who knows what speakers
 - web





Takeaways

- All audio under one person, not an ideal situation
- I survived and so can you...
 - Be an Advocate for Audio
 - Be more Visible and Active
 - Stay Sane and Healthy





Be an Audio Advocate



“Audio Always Comes Last”

- BREAK THE PATTERN

- Pre-Production

- Tech and engine discussions early

- “*A week spent in pre-production saves a month later*”

- Stay up to date on existing tech



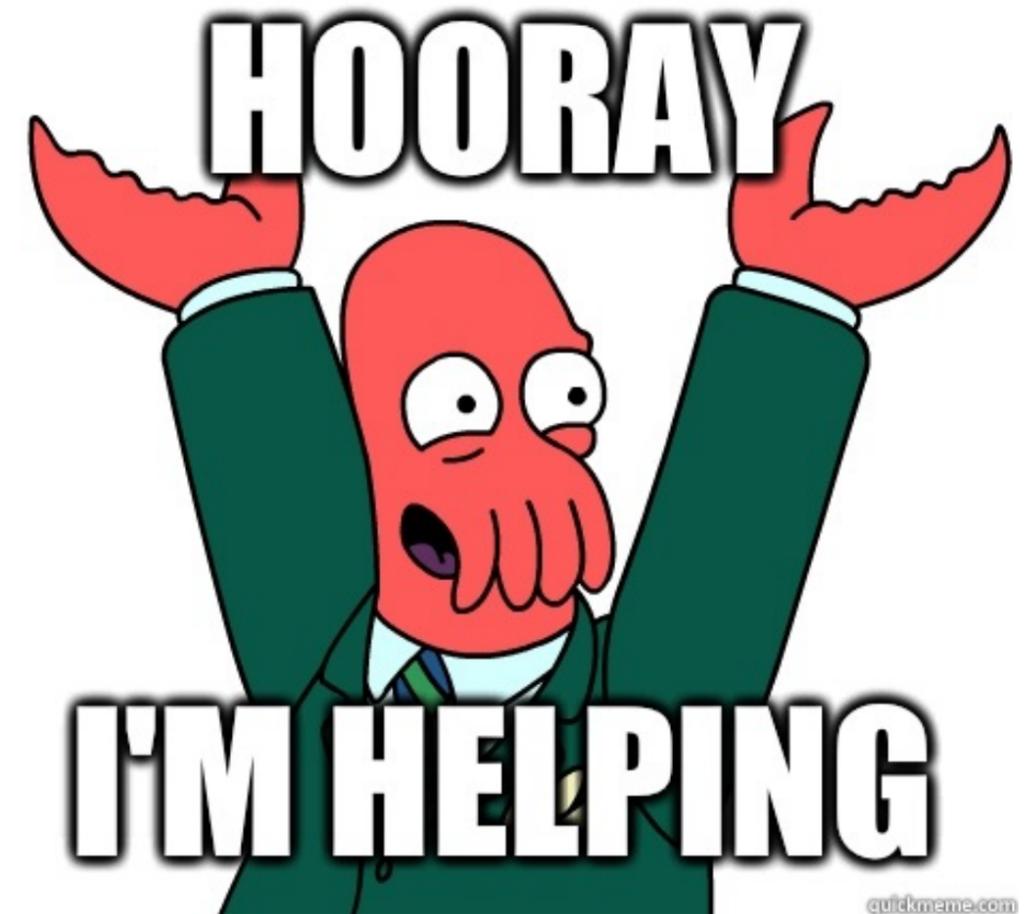
Q.a.A.d.

- Be a part of the QA process
 - Identify issues early
 - Only 'you' are listening for them
 - Get in for any mid-production tests
 - Make QA audio guides



Stop Destructive “Helping”

- Teams not used to having an audio person are use to
 - taking shortcuts
 - using temp copyrighted placeholders
 - mismanaging/labeling audio files
 - don't always keep asset trackers
 - might break your booth





Most Changes Affect Audio

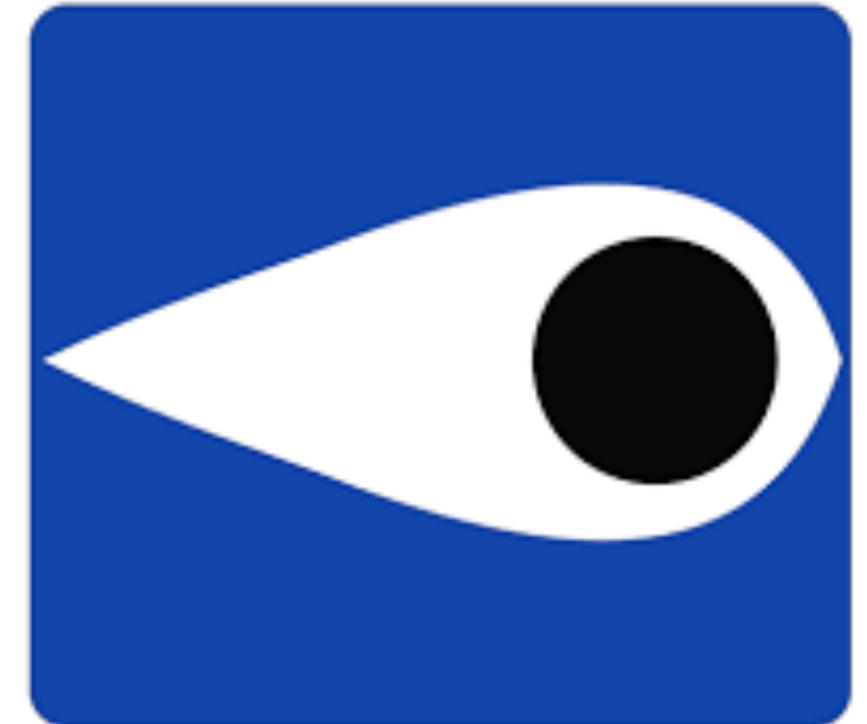
- Games can change, and the sound design can be affected by changes in...
 - style
 - characters
 - landscapes
 - animation
 - battle systems
 - narrative



Find Audio “Allies”

- If you cannot be present in all meetings (and you can't) find those who can represent
 - text you when important topics come up
 - take notes of how to follow up
 - Producer, Art Director, someone who does animation...

**NEIGHBORHOOD
WATCH**



WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

Out of Site, Out of Mind/Meetings

- Being physically seen can keep you in the loop
 - Booth is 'invisible', Offsite is 'gone'
 - When offsite, tell the appropriate person
 - In the booth? Work out a visual system
 - keep an ally aware so you do not miss critical information



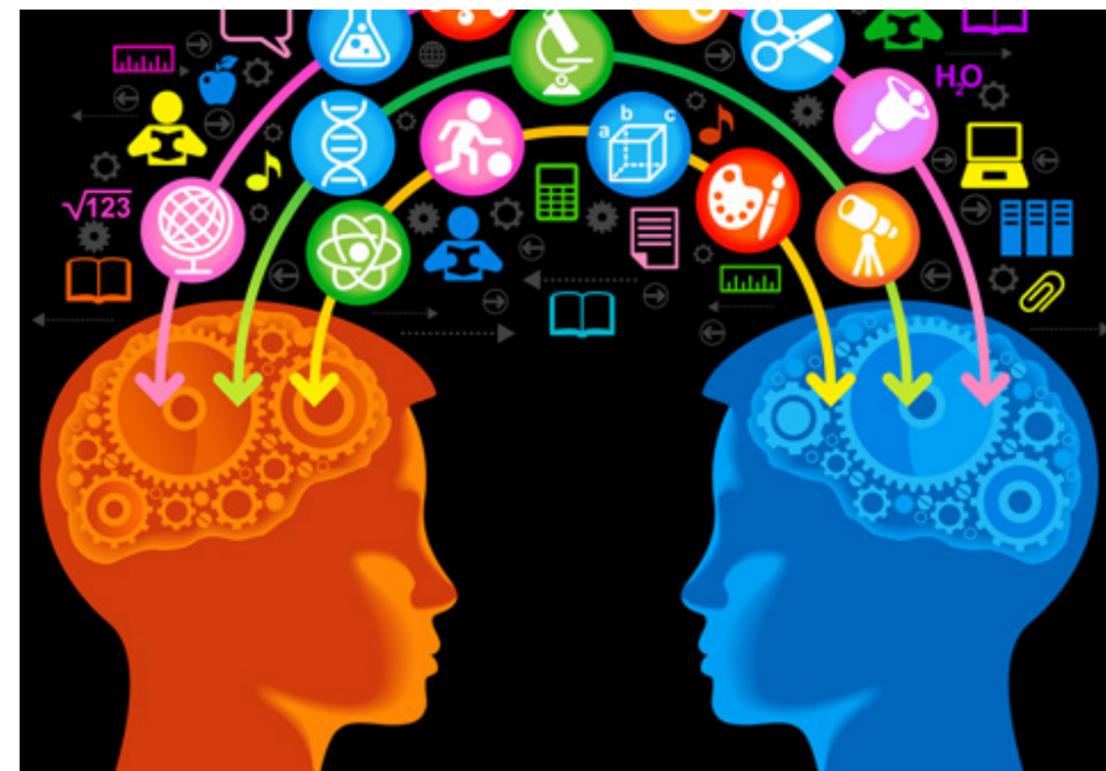


Be Visible and Active



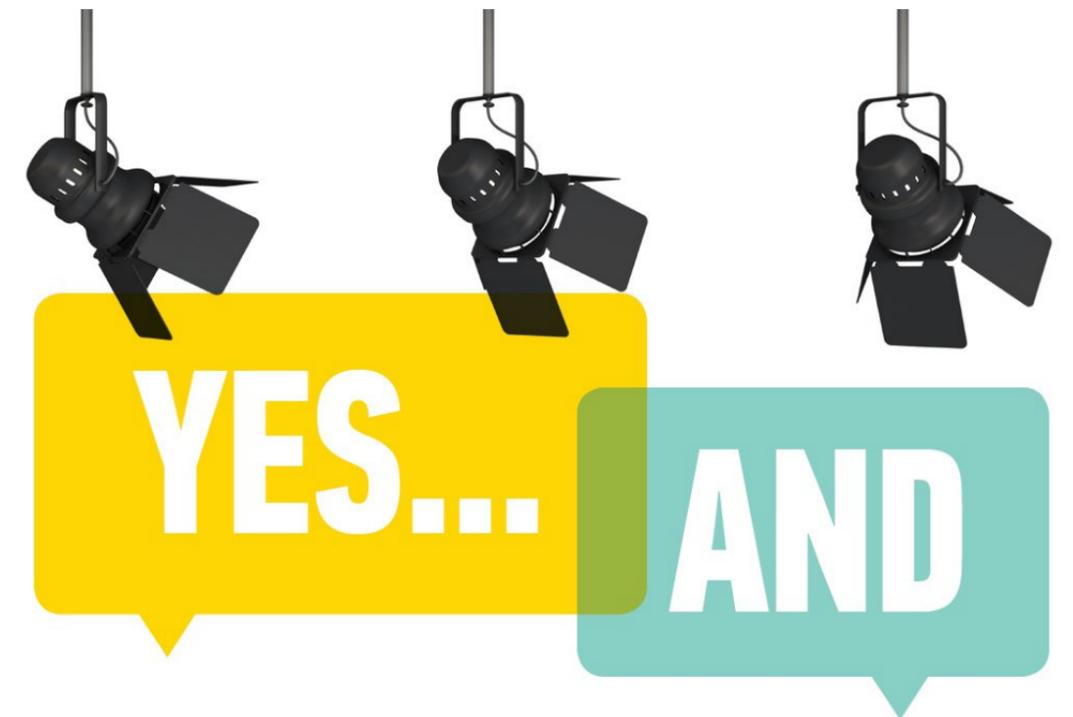
Interest Shared, Interest Gained

- Share Interest in other Departments
 - Get to know the different skill sets
 - Learn some of their language
 - Don't "butcher it"
 - Interest may be returned in kind



Take and Improv Class

- Groups can move fast-paced
- No room for negativity
- “Yes and” not “NO NO NO!”
 - panic inspires panic



Keep Project Heads Aware

- Share your breakdown
- Make your schedule visual
- Shows where priorities are
- alerts other teams if they need to fight over Audio Time



Be Seen AND Heard

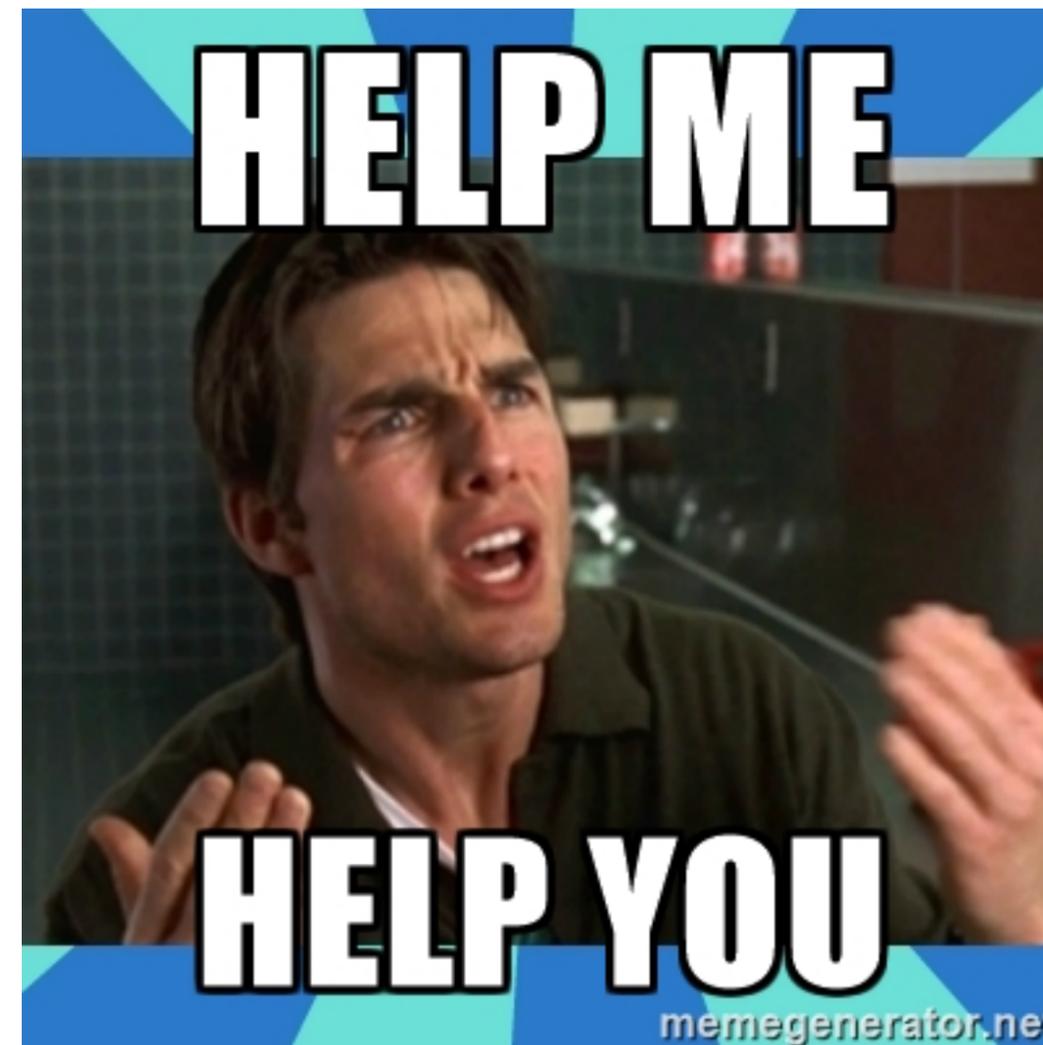
- Make public appearances when possible
 - Open houses
 - Panels
 - Twitch streams
 - Educational presentations
 - Audio is an 'actual' career path





Up your Usefulness

- Implementation
 - Can you get more control?
 - Get your hands in the tech
 - do this positively
 - present as 'helping'





Staying Sane and Healthy



Time to Reflect and Reorganize

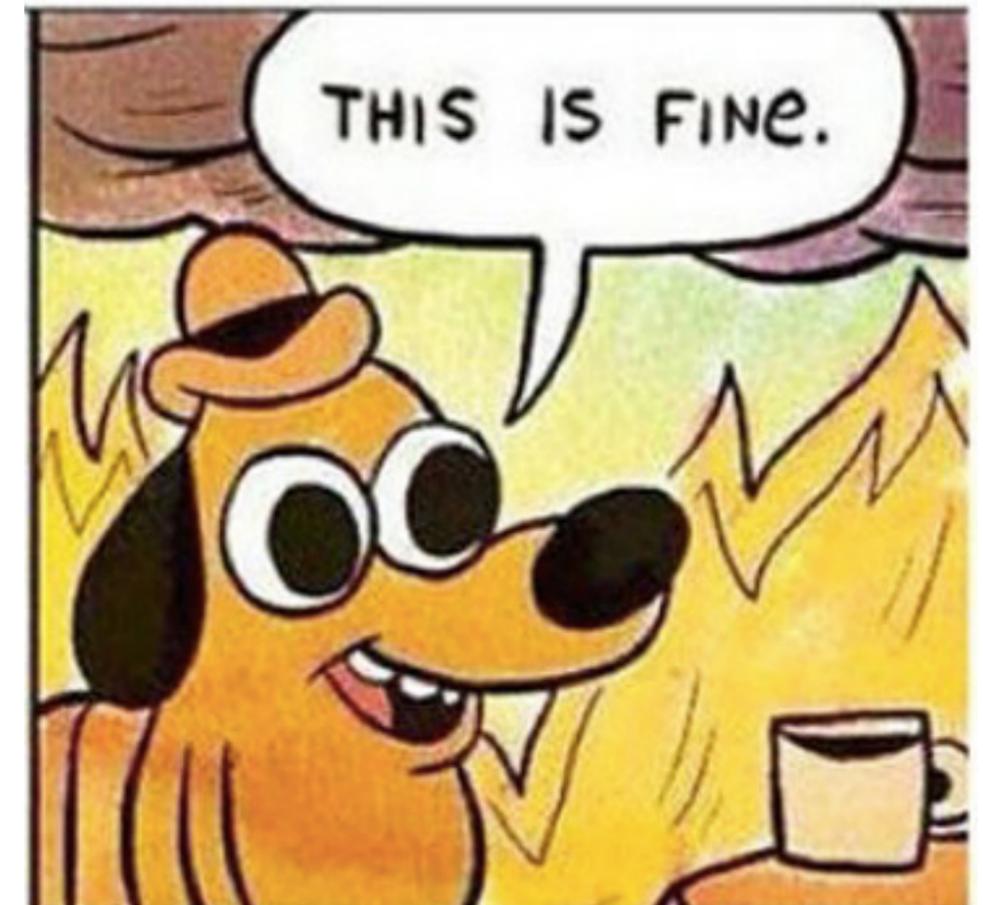
- Your own 'team' scrum
- Make 'office hours'
 - review the big picture
 - gives a chance to step back
 - allows a time slot for non-scheduled project heads to meet with you





Don't Stew in Silence

- Schedule an audio “sync up” with supervisor or relevant dept head
 - weekly or bi-weekly
 - as soon as sparks of fire begin
 - Keeps them in the loop
 - Alleviate or solve concerns early



Track all the things!!!

- Spreadsheets/Docs
- Organized Folders
- Get organized
 - two lifesavers
 - Data Validation
 - Conditional Formatting



Avoiding Confusion with Requests

- Insist on references when possible
 - youtube, SoundCloud, etc
 - if so make sure to get clear descriptions
 - what exactly do they mean
 - who is giving the final feedback



Too many meetings!!!!

- Spend your time wisely
 - long meeting?
 - How much is relevant to your dept
 - get called in later
 - put audio at beginning or end
 - alert later if follow-up needed





Prepare for Reinforcements

- Will there be help later?
- Find your own kind
 - Go to GDC/GSC/AES/MAGfest
 - Keep track of future collaborators
 - Contractors/ hires/ interns/
Production houses /Asset Stores/
Instrumentalists/Resources



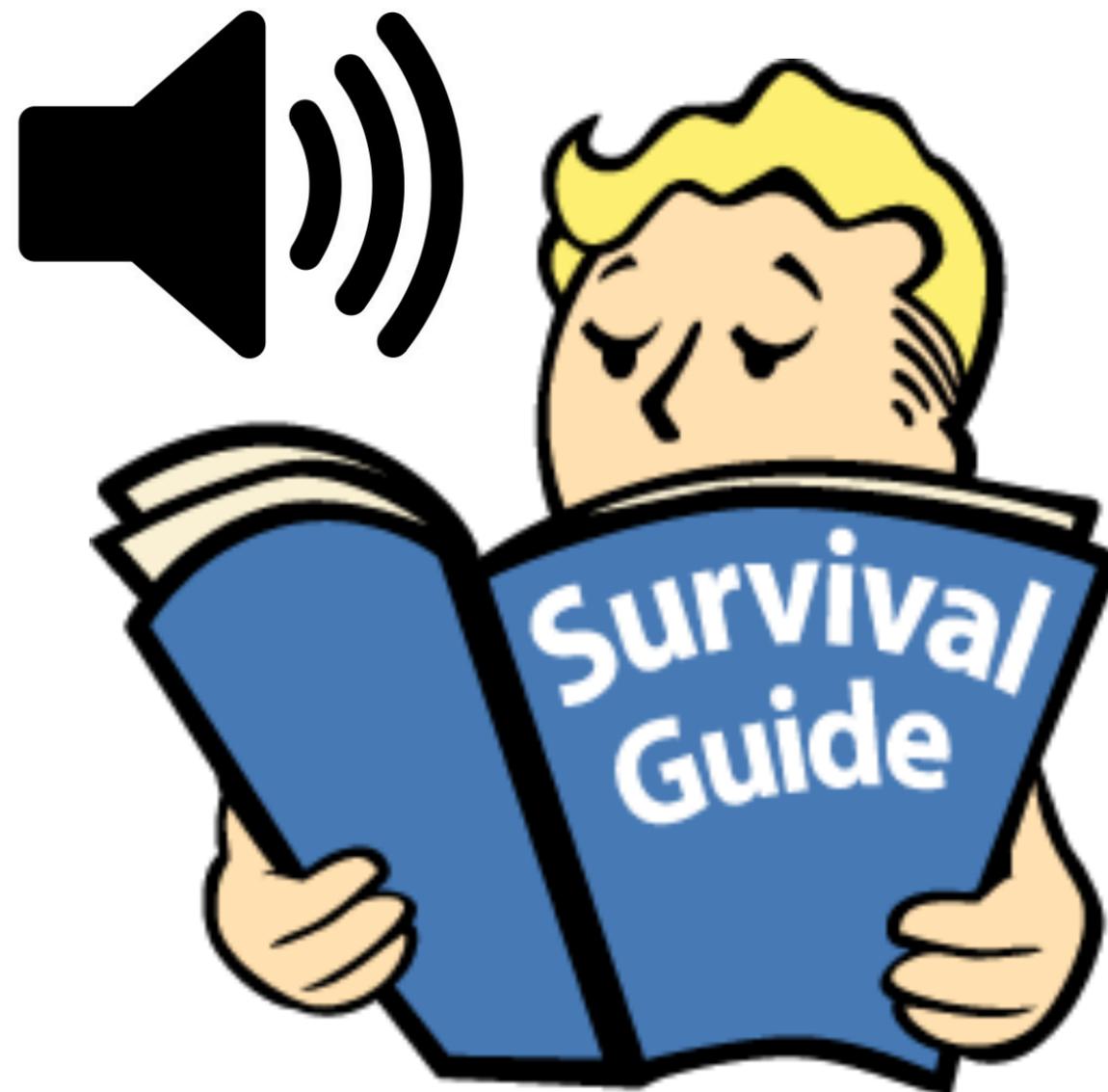
Take Care of Yourself

- TAKE BREAKS
 - Think how much you have to do
 - Double that if you are exhausted
 - Walk away (every 2 hours min)
 - Hydrate regularly
 - Yoga and stretching when possible



In Conclusion

- Be an Advocate for Audio
- Be more Visible and Active
- Stay Sane and Healthy



Thank You!

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Please remember to fill out your surveys!