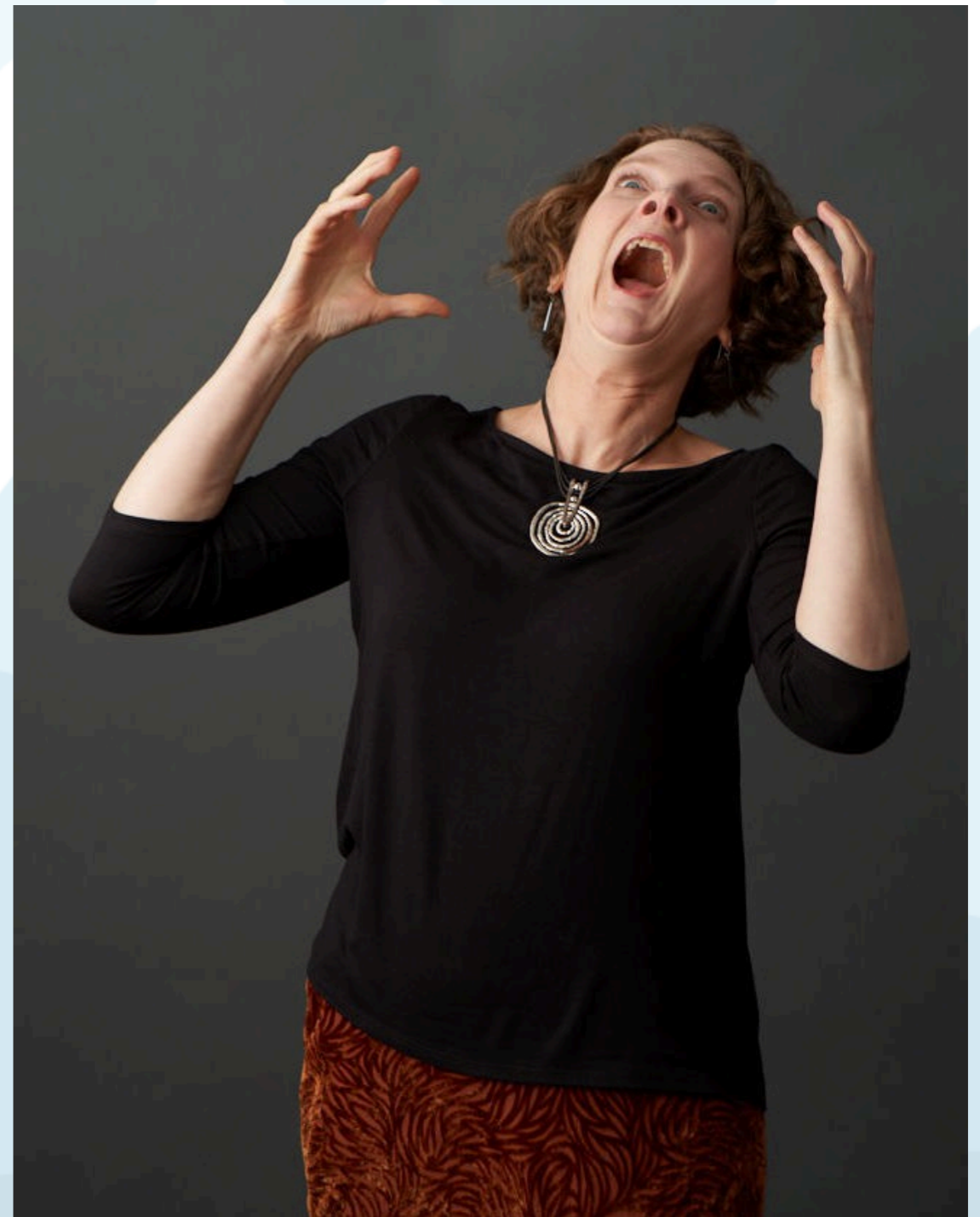Kirsten Starcher
outsideinthesun.com

**fighting your own demons:
how to deal with all your wordpress problems at once**

who is this person?

- WordPress front-end developer & generalist

- Part tech, part creative

- Clearly takes this stuff very seriously

learning outcomes

- Identify problems that can occur when working with WordPress sites

- Identify a strategy for troubleshooting each problem

You've got a great website!
Everybody's gonna love it!

BUT THEN...

< < < **DRAMA** > > >

possible demons

- Site down / 500 error / critical error

- Site doing weird things / code buggy

- Hacked or defaced site

- Slowness

- Disappointing traffic

- Unhappy client

- Frustrating colleague

what do we do first?

- Stay calm

- Retrace your steps

- Look for the root of your conflict

- THEN troubleshoot

staying calm

- Everything goes more smoothly when you're not freaking out, and that'll help the people around you not freak out too.

- It's not happening to you, it's just happening.

- Don't believe everything that you think.

retracing your steps

- Like looking for your keys

- When do you last know it was working?

- What has happened since?

understand the root
of your conflict

breaking it down into smaller pieces

- Get specific

- Get details: errors, behaviour

change one thing at a time

- If you change too many things, you still won't know what the problem is

- …and you might create more issues

- In a crisis, "Restore backup" counts as one thing

leave a breadcrumb trail

- If you change settings, take screenshots or notes so you can get back to how it was before.

code trouble: syntax or logic?

- Typos - that evil missing ;

- Inaccurate logic

- Do your variables have the values you think they do?

- Display everything! Use var_dump() and echo()

code trouble: thinking in pseudocode

- Say it out loud, or write it in English if you have to:

```
FUNCTION CleanTheFridge
    for EACH item in the fridge DO
        IF(the item is rotten) THEN
            put it in the compost
        ELSE
            put the item back in the fridge
            add 1 to AnythingLeft
        END
    END
    IF (AnythingLeft > 0)
        Make Dinner
    ELSE
        Order in Sushi
END
```

site crises

Site down! Site down!

- Are people actually in danger of dying?

- Didn't think so (but maybe your client thinks so)

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

technology culprits

Theme

Plugins

Server

Domain name

eliminate suspects

- What can you rule out?

- Deactivating plugins/ themes, commenting out sections of code

- Works on one page but not another? What is different about those pages?
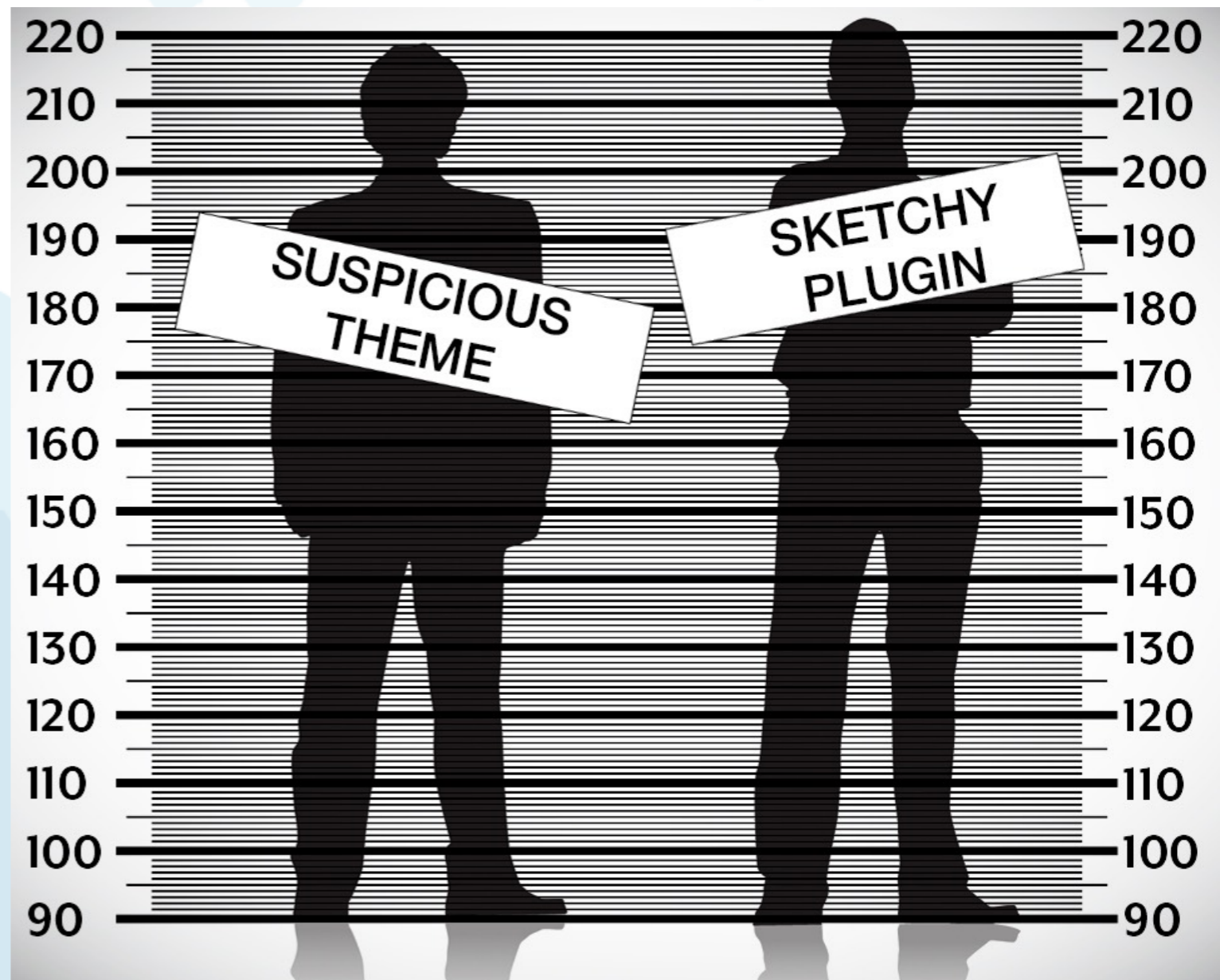
what are plugin conflicts?

- A plugin trying to alter the same functionality as another plugin or current theme

- A plugin loading a different variation of the same script loaded in another plugin or current theme

- A plugin out of date with the latest WP, or not up to standards

Site buggy

- Essentially the same situation, but less alarming

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

slow site

- Sometimes it's just a temporary issue at your host, and if you ignore it it will go away.

- Could be too much traffic - investigate hosting

- Could be plugin or theme - deactivate and test

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

disappointing traffic

- You need to be proactive

- SEO is a moving target

- Where are you marketing?

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

people problems

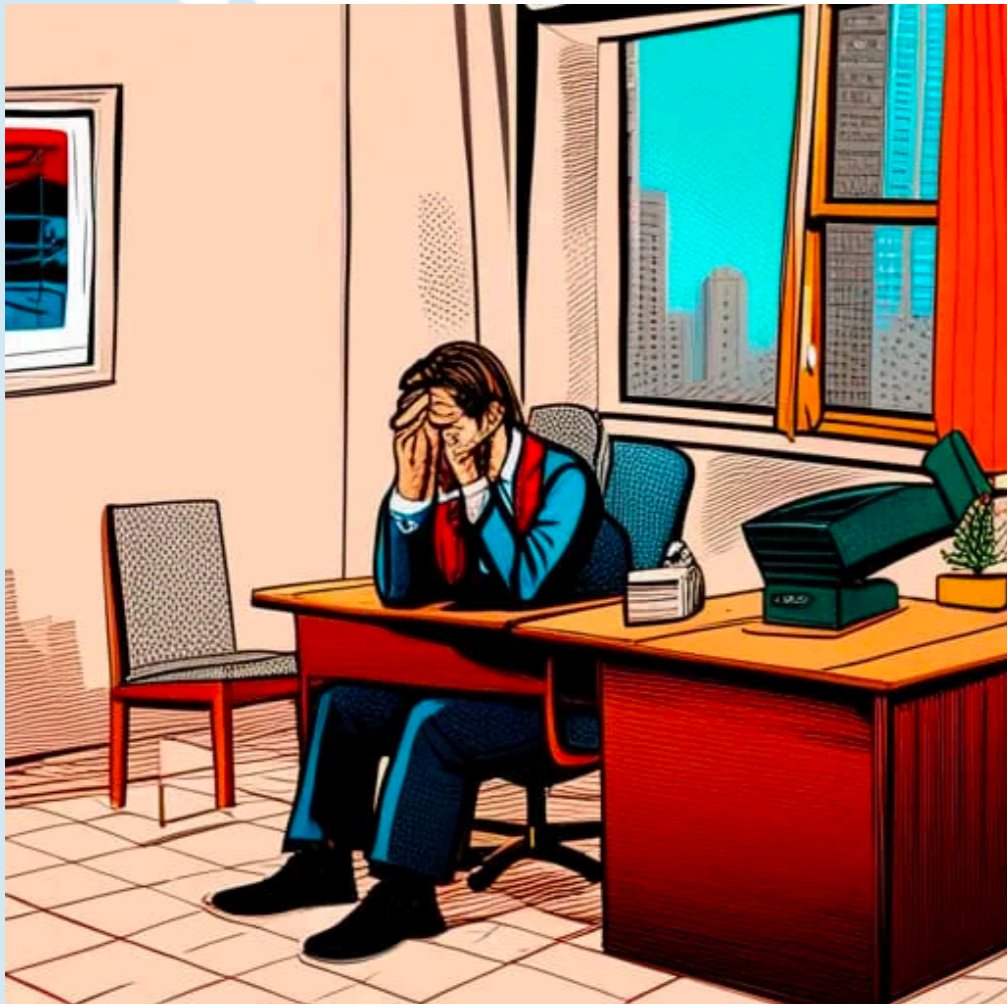# what were those steps?

- Stay calm

- Retrace your steps

- Look for the root of your conflict

- THEN troubleshoot

unhappy client

- ...Because site is down/broken?

- ...Because of your communication time/style?

- Are you clear on what you're providing?

- Did you overpromise and underdeliver?

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

frustrating employee or contractor

- Have you been moving the goalposts?

- Are you clear on what you're asking for?

- Are you listening to what they have to say?

- Are you giving them space to work?

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

set expectations

- Let the person know when they can expect to hear from you.

- What's your communication style?

- Leave wiggle room on time estimates.

- Be realistic about what you can and can't do.

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

acknowledge and reflect

- Drop the defences and address the root of the matter

- "I'm hearing that you're really worried about slow loading time."

- "Are you getting frustrated that the development site isn't looking exactly like the designs?"

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

expressing your concerns

- Take a collaborative tone

- How will this impact the project or the budget?

- Your emotional state may or may not matter to them

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

make suggestions

- What steps can you take towards change?

- Request ≠ ultimatum

- "Can we agree on a time for a weekly meeting to check in on the site's progress?"

Stay calm
Retrace your steps
Understand root of conflict
THEN troubleshoot

more resources

- Nonviolent Communication - Marshall Rosenberg

- Say What You Mean - Oren Jay Sofer

- https://tinyurl.com/nvcwp

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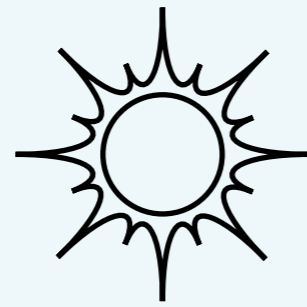
outside in the sun

Questions??

Feel free to reach out to me:

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Sign up on my website
to learn more about
WP troubleshooting!