Twitter Thread by Jamie Degen - @Hellscreen_Game Dev

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So @moreelen posed the question about "How to stay motivated with side projects". I left a few tips but I wanted to elaborate here.

After 5 years on @Hellscreen_Game , Here is a little thread about how I stay motivated

1. Post GIFS of cool things you have made.
Short ingame gifs help bookend your days work and are great for sharing what you are up to. The response will give you snippets of motivation to carry on.
I make posting GIFS a key part of my working day.

2.Dont bother with blogging or long dev logs.
These just sap time & energy away from the game, so unless you write to relax I would skip this. Instead,use that time on the game itself. I do enjoy super quick feature making of's though (if they take the same time to make as a GIF)

3. Keep a log of what you do.
It's is easy to feel like you haven't accomplished much so I like to keep a simple .txt with a list of the things I set out to do & the things I accomplished. It reminds me of my progress & can double as a quick commit message at the end of the day

4. Try and find the fun tasks.
When you are working on non player facing (or non GIF-able) stuff, its again easy to feel like you haven't done much. When I am bogged down in refactoring or save systems etc, I try and save myself something small and fun to do, like a VFX.

5. Find time to actually play it.
Don't play the game JUST to test features. Play the game to enjoy what it is you are making, even if it means you have to fill in the blanks with some imagination. Try and picture what It will look like and enjoy that!

6.Dont be afraid to re-prioritize or not prioritize at all.
Scheduling is very important but can also lead to making dev feel like an obligation. Don't be afraid to mix up the plan a little to inject a little fun into your time for a new feature you cant get out of your head.

7. Set aside a time every week (even if its one hour) and stick to it.
This can be difficult but keeping a minimum time slot to work on it can help maintain a momentum.
I keep my Saturday mornings free to work on @Hellscreen_Game as a standard. Any more time is a bonus

8. But also DON'T CRUNCH
Don't pack to much into your life that you overwhelm yourself and forgive yourself if you cant manage to get to development. Side projects often have to give way to careers/life and thats ok. Burnout will often Kill your project.

9.Take a break
Further to 8, don't be afraid to take breaks. I have taken breaks of up to 3 months on projects and then come back fresh with new ideas and things to try.
Again, your awesome project isn't a obligation.

10. Just open the editor.
When I just cant be bothered to work but I'm sat at the computer anyway (on YouTube or reddit etc), I just open Unity as a habit. Without even realising, eventually I will tab into Unity and start fixing things.
(DON'T do this on your day off though!)

11. Talk to Developers
Talk to other developers about what you are doing. Once the world starts back up, go to meet ups and events. People will be interested in what you are doing, especially if they saw that GIF you posted last week (See 1.)

12.Engage with people who are making similar things.
Getting involved with people who make similar things will help lead you to your player base and also communities that like what you make. Conversations will start and positive feedback will come your way.

13.Find the unique thing about your game and explore it.
Find the thing that makes your game different and explore and develop it. Its motivating to design around something that only your game does and to expand it to its full potential.

14. Use development time to learn something new.
Use the game to push your skill set. Learn to rig or texture or design maps or whatever. Your game should be full of opportunities to learn, not obstacles to completion

15. Make the game work for you.
Can you change your game to be less work? Could you change the art style or make it shorter? Drop multiplayer?
Small games are easier to finish & mean less chance of demotivation.
@Hellscreen_Game art style helps to avoid texture seams for example.

16. Find ways to save time (But don't cut corners)
If spending 5 mins researching a new plugin will save you 3 hours of placing rocks by hand, do it BUT don't spend 3 hours writing something that just needs doing by hand anyway.
Don't take any step of the process for granted

17. Not everything has to be perfect.
Not every asset/mechanic has to be 10/10 quality.
7/10 will do for most main things & less for background stuff. Focus on the hero objects & just get lesser things done quick unless they get in the way.
Don't spend ages pushing around pixels

18. Have a side project from the side project.
Or to be clear, don't be afraid to explore new ideas or games. Your brain will always come up with new stuff. Give it some time or a weekend jam & then bank it for later. If that idea keeps at your, maybe thats the one to focus on

19. Don't be afraid to kill your project.
Sometimes your cool idea just isn't working & that's fine. Maybe your skillset isn't there yet, that's ok too!
Abandon it, or maybe retire it till a later date.
Nothing is lost as you learned lots and levelled up and you take that forward

20. Finally, Forgive yourself
It is ok to not do side project work for a while or at all. Its ok to drop it or not even start it. Just cut yourself some slack.
Making games is hard, let alone when you are doing it part time. Make sure its fun!

If you enjoyed this thread, please wishlist @Hellscreen_Game on #Steam !

https://t.co/Phk43He0ju

I'm making this solo so all your support really helps!