ERIK DEMAINE: If a student comes to me and they're getting really stuck in solving their problem, then I would suggest to them, collaborate more. But I find collaboration is really the best way both to do brainstorming because you get very quick feedback and ideas, but also you get this kind of compounding effect, where your ideas inspire the maybe more experienced person to have some other idea, and oh, that reminds me of this other paper. Maybe you should go look at this.

And so just talking with people about your problem makes a huge impact. And maybe they join in and help solve it, or maybe they just give one idea that leads you down the right path. But I think if you work by yourself for a long period, eventually you're just going to get stuck because it's hard to maintain that kind of momentum all by yourself. But when you feed off the energy of other people, you can really go much, much farther. And it's also more fun because you get to be hanging out while you're doing it.