

Work re-organisation --

A hazard to workers'

health and safety

*What is to be done?*

Dorothy Wigmore, MS

Work, Stress and Health conference 2011

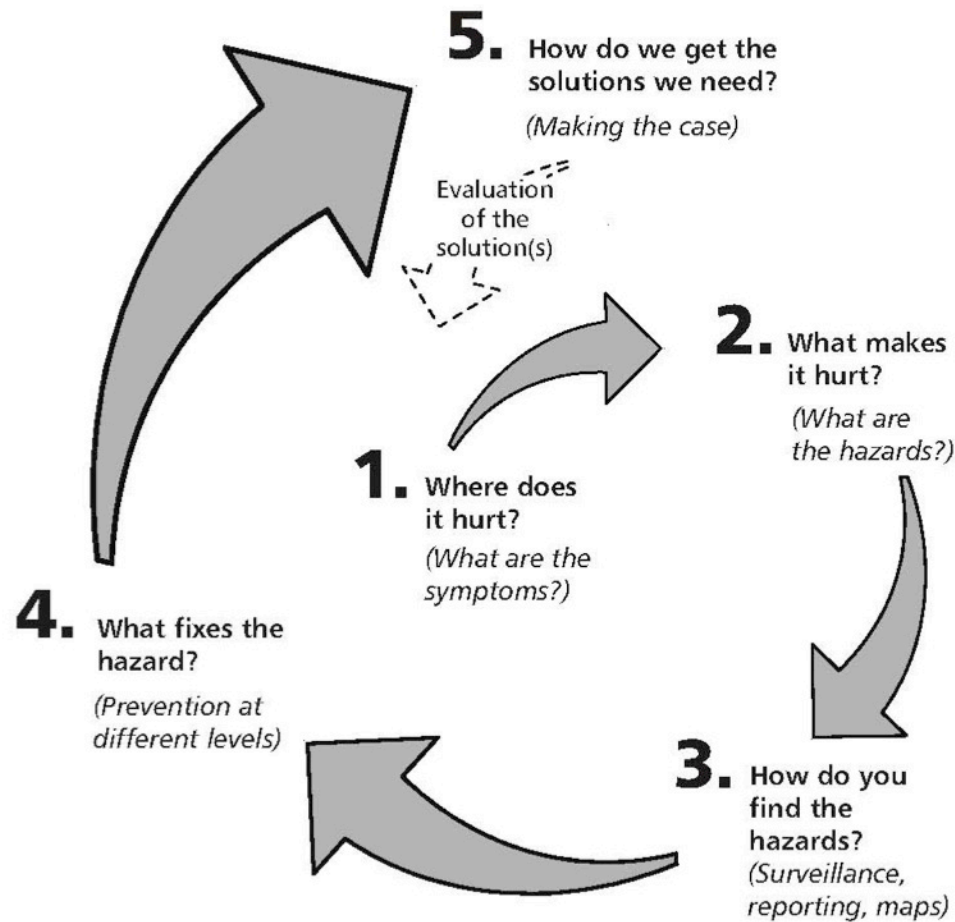


# What do you see?

- symptoms/injuries/health effects?
- hazards?
- solutions?



## Five steps to a healthy and safe workplace



**A framework  
to get to  
healthy and  
safe  
workplaces**

**-- whatever  
the hazard**

Wigmore, et al. 2008  
Seeing the Workplace with New Eyes



Work  
organisation  
matters --

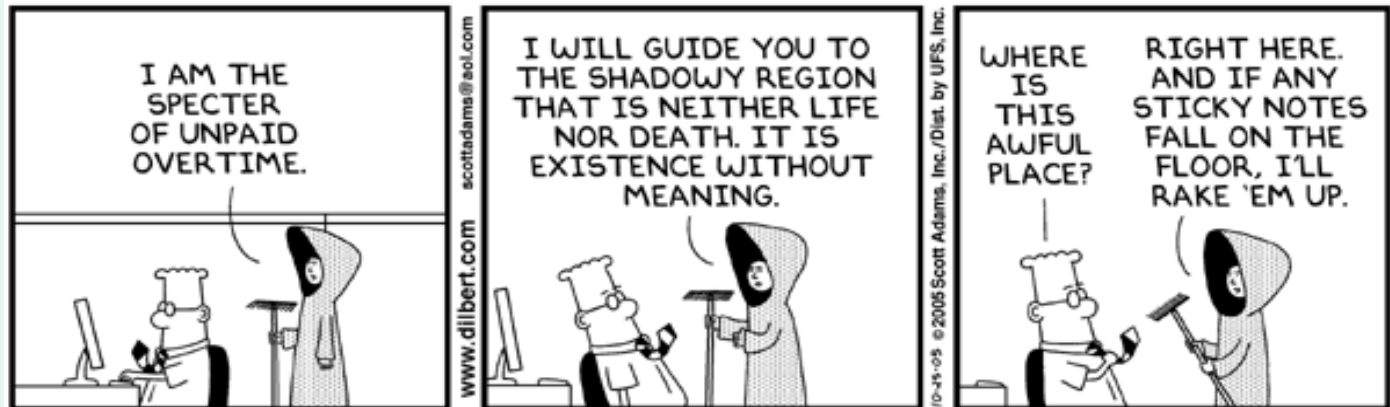
it has,  
it does and  
it will

*The irregularity of employment and of income must be a fruitful source of disease.*

*For instance, while there is much enforced idleness, a tailor has often to perform "nine days' work in a week."*

*The insufficient sleep, the strain to the eyes, the lack of proper time to take meals or outdoor exercise, and the prolonged confinement in unwholesome and over-heated workshops are naturally important factors in undermining the constitution of even the most fortunate among the journeymen tailors.*

*Report of the Lancet Special Sanitary Commission on 'sweating' among tailors in Liverpool and Manchester. The Lancet, April 14, 1888.*





# We know a lot about:

- the harm that hazardous work organisation and work-related stressors does to workers, organisations and our communities



*Look at the stress stickers around you. What do you see?*

# We know this from:

- history
- our own experience
- research
- conversations with others

# Evidence about the health effects of work organisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century

- Government inquiries/commissions into sweating, child labour, navvies, capital/ labour, shops (e.g., U.K. Child Labour Commission, 1867)
- Government agencies (e.g., inspectorates, Board of Trade, public health)
- Arbitration & related industrial tribunal hearings
- Medical and health journals on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g., *Lancet*, *American Journal of Public Health*)
- Union/sympathetic group reports
- Incidental employer material
- Academic journals (economics, law, medicine, sociology)



Michael Quinlan, 2011. Why work organisation matters -- and matters even more today: a reflection on the contribution of Theo Nichols to research on occupational health and safety. Presented at: *Safety or profit? A conference to celebrate Theo Nichols' contribution to a sociological understanding of health and safety at work. Cardiff.*

# Health effects included ...

- ✓ Fatigue, exhaustion, sleep deprivation
- ✓ Poor diet, malnutrition (wasting disease)
- ✓ Cramped posture, repetitive strain injuries
- ✓ Overcrowded, poor ventilation, unhygienic working and living conditions
- ✓ Increased risk of infectious disease (workers and communities)
- ✓ Insecurity and mental well-being
- ✓ Children –interrupted physical/mental development and early onset chronic injuries



Quinlan, 2011



# Stressors take a toll in our lives

short-tempered

The bills aren't paid.

elbow hurts

back hurts

give me CHOCOLATE

give me chips

I want to sleep, sleep, sleep

The gym can wait

I don't want to go out of

I can't sleep

I can't sit still

My knees hurt

Gotta do Summer School

I can't get my mind off work

We are always one check away from total poverty

Ms. Blair

students in the classroom)

## Where does it hurt?

Front

Back

bad sleep habits

short-tempered

irregular meal times

fatigue

mood swings

worse cramps

frustration

quit

headaches (caffeine stress)

sore muscles

negative attitude

No time in my stress "sandwich"

Wish I could draw!

Achy!

Can't plan...

Training... Always learning

It will settle down..

Ah retirement

Tired. Counting the days! Running Around...

blood sugar shifts

- Aches and pains
- Where "stress" shows up
- Other symptoms



## Strain (long-term) physical effects include ...

Sleep disorders, insomnia, fatigue, exhaustion

Headaches, tension, grinding teeth

Cardiovascular problems (e.g. high blood pressure, heart attacks, other changes to the heart and circulation system)

Chest pains/problems

Immune system problems, which make it easier to get sick

Asthma

Digestive system problems (eg. spastic colon, ulcers, impaired digestion, irritable bowel syndrome); weight gain or loss

Diabetes

Menstrual disorders

Sexual dysfunction

Joint and muscle pains; arthritis

Burnout



## Strain (long-term) non-physical effects include ...

Anxiety, increased tension and fearfulness

Feeling apathetic, low self-worth, blaming ourselves for our stressed state

Social isolation, withdrawal at home and work, stop participation in family, sports and community activities

Inability to concentrate and finish tasks

Mistrust, blaming others (including "the union"), paranoia

Drug and alcohol abuse

Conflict with family and friends (sometimes violent), fights with co-workers and supervisors

Anger, frustration, envy

Depression, mood changes, constant negativity

Suicidal thoughts

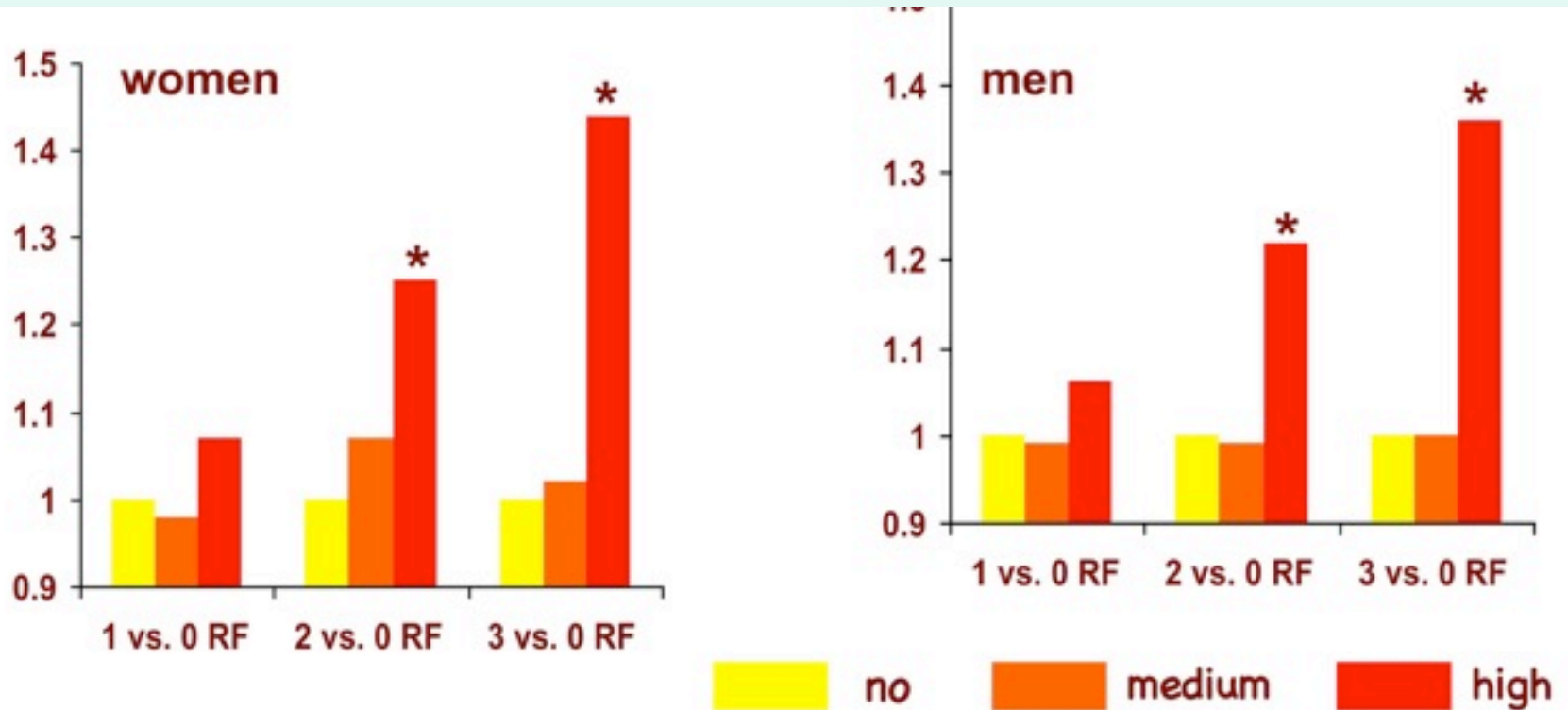
Over-reaction, irrational behaviour

Job dissatisfaction

**Long-term, less visible effects are well-known too**

**"Lifestyle" health issues (smoking, overweight, little exercise, heavy alcohol use) can be related to high effort + low rewards at work )**

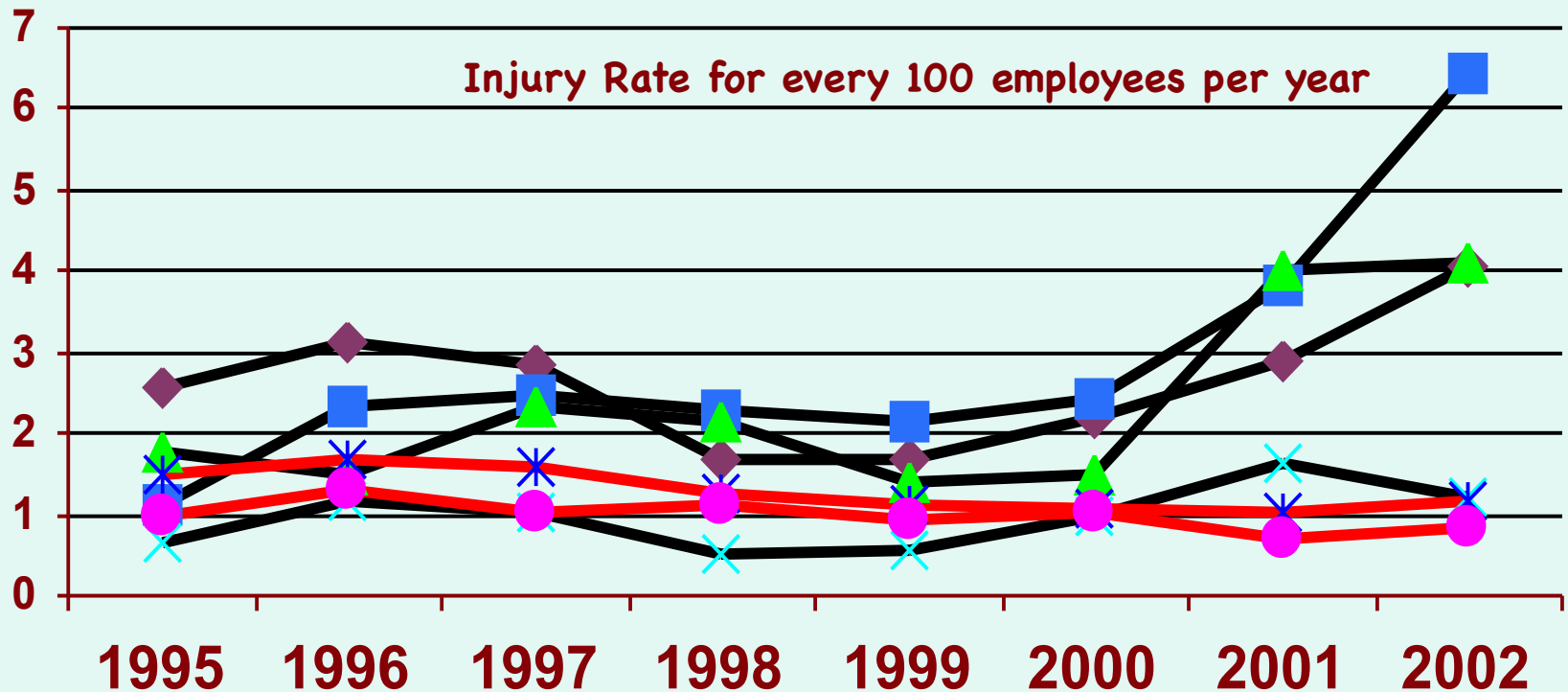
8,844 women and 7,233 men, Finnish public service. Risk factors (RF): BMI  $\geq 25$ , smoking, heavy alcohol use, physical inactivity; Odds ratios, adjusted for age, SES, marital status.



High effort + low rewards

Kouvonen, et al., *BMC Publ Health*, 2006, 6:24 (as summarised by Paul Landsbergis, 2010)

# Downsizing increases injury risk (6 U.S. electric utility companies, 1995-2002)

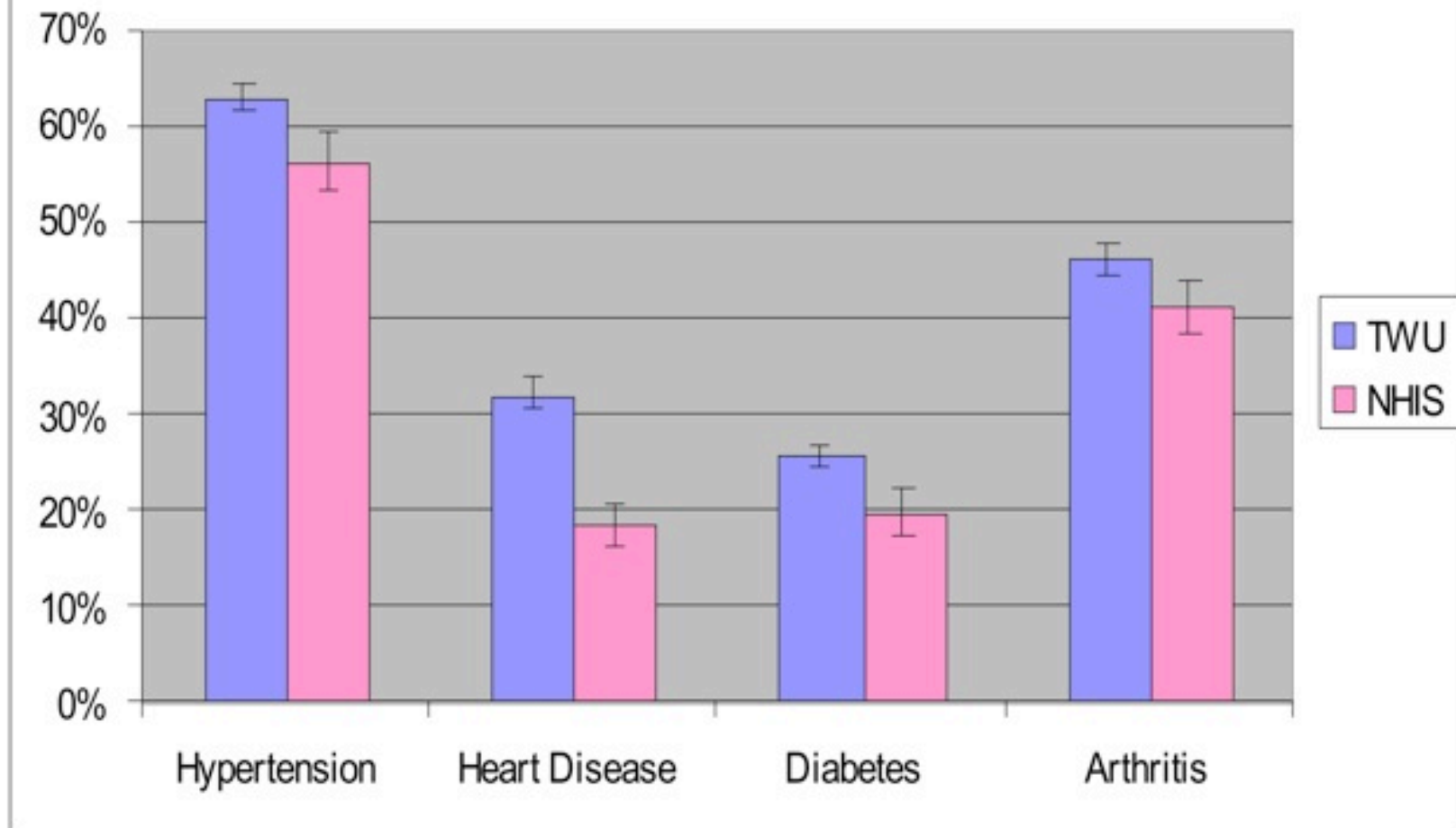


**4 Black lines: Companies with major downsizing 2000-2002**  
(increases in injury rates in nearly all occupations)

**2 Red lines: Companies with no downsizing**

# Stressful work takes a toll on health

Transit Workers Union Local 100 retirees vs  
retirees from National Health Interview Survey





# Workers affected in the early reports included ...

- Sweated labour and outwork (mainly women)
- Child labour
- Casual labourers (e.g., dock, agriculture, navvies)
- Indentured immigrants (especially non-European)
- Shop workers
- Merchant seamen
- Subcontracted/outsourced labour

Quinlan, 2011

## Sound familiar?





# We know a lot about:

- what kinds of work organisation and stressors (and other hazards) harm workers, organisations and communities







Given the opportunity, we integrate our knowledge and experiences to describe workplace hazards, including work organisation and stressors

Whether we're researchers

...





Union

Aria Hotel

Wall of Wind

Monorail Train

Harmon Hotel

Area of Potential for  
the  
what???

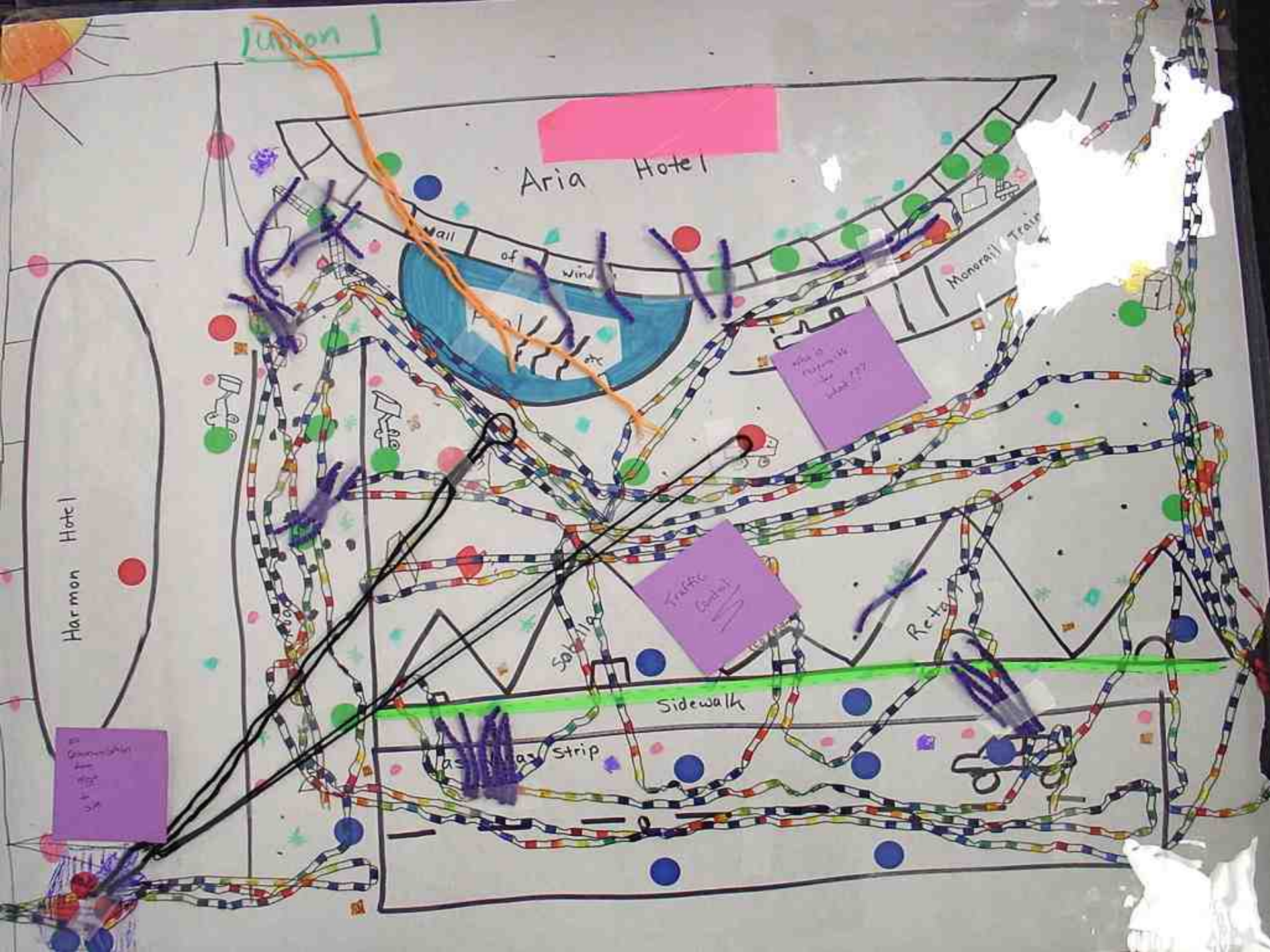
Traffic  
Control

on  
Communication  
from  
the  
top

Sidewalk

as  
Strip

Retain





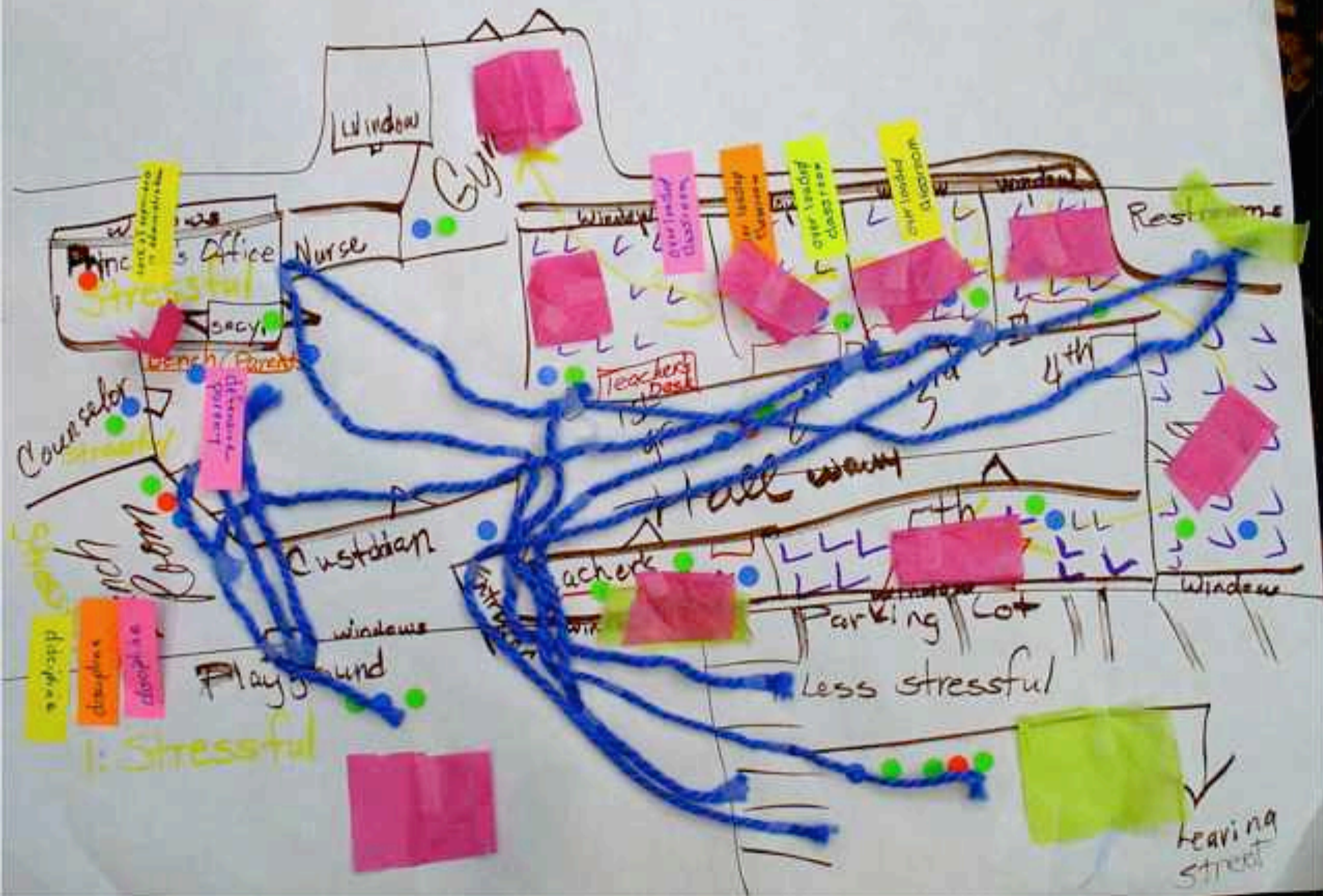








Long-term care work, on a  
“short-handed day”



.. in a school setting



↑ Demands/Workload ↑

↓ Control/Say ↑

↓ Support ↑

↓ Respect ↑

Overriding responsibility

Too serious with the Control Say

To complete the "Leadership"

Lack of respect "to help"

Increased responsibility and the related resources

Too serious all the time

To work to achieve survival in the work

Other Adults

Not enough time

Petty Problems & Complaints

Support relationships social

Disrespectful Children

Violence

Many Complaints

Lack of Support

on the same job for long periods of time

Traumatic injuries

Phone System in the office

Things that are not addressed

Respectful & kind

Slips/falls

Non-Work Demands

no long distance

Everything must be turned in by 8:30am

Regulation Institute

Language & Lack of Support

Rich Children

Weak Load Demands

no that relationship

Constant closed lines w/ short notification

Conflict between Ability and responsibility

Inconsistent Incompetent Leadership

not really ABE to Delegate Authority

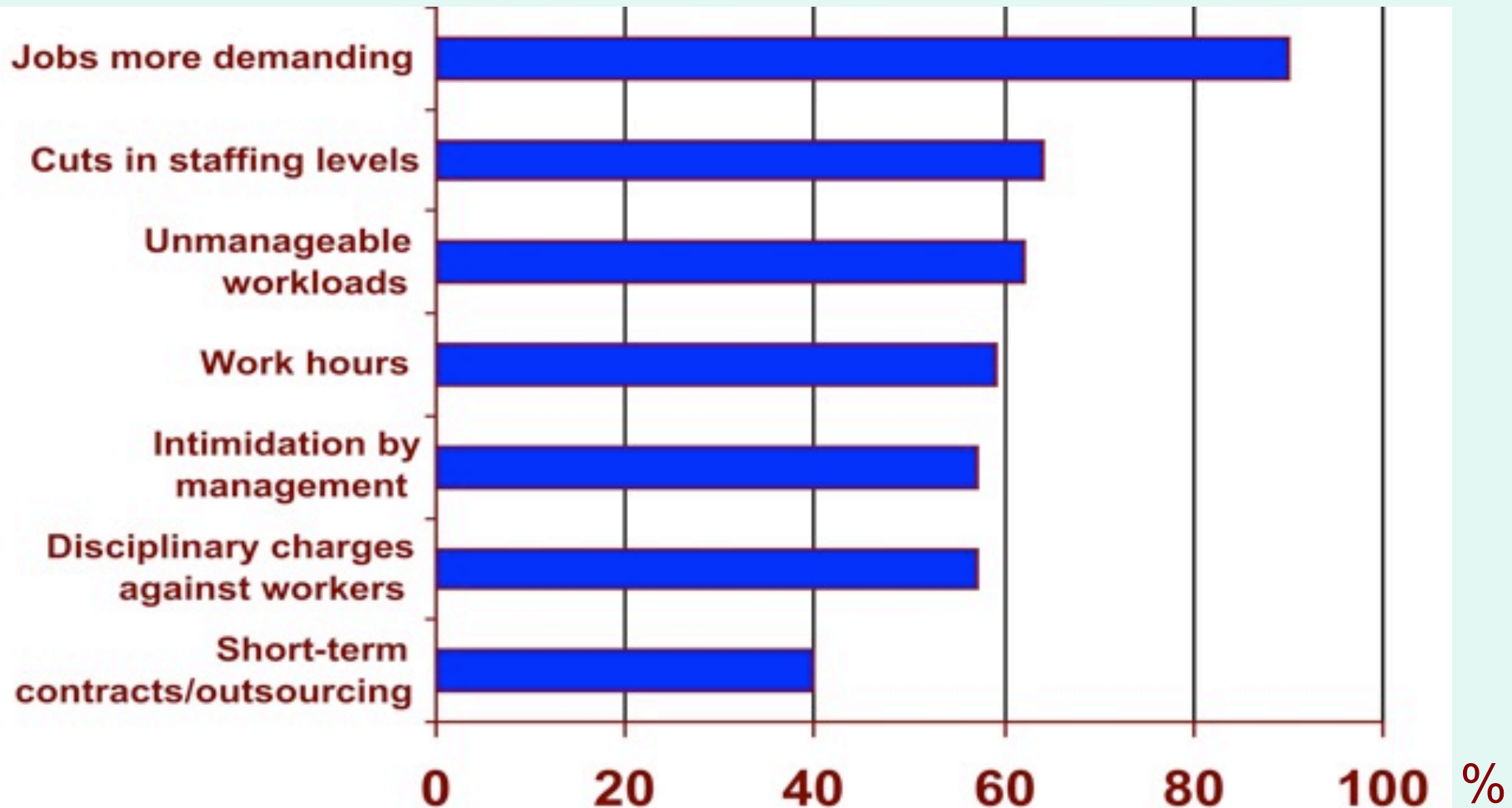
Doing for Dem's JOB

One size does not fit all

US and Canadian workers and union health and safety representatives increasingly say key factors causing or contributing to injuries, illness and stress in their workplaces include:

- downsizing/understaffing
- mandatory overtime
- longer hours of work (e.g., 12-hour shifts)
- push for production
- cross-training/multi-tasking
- lack of effective and on-going training for extra duties
- work overload
- increased work pace

# ITF global study found increases in ... (2000-2007)



Many of these hazards  
are features of  
precarious or contingent  
work, an increasingly  
common form of work  
organisation

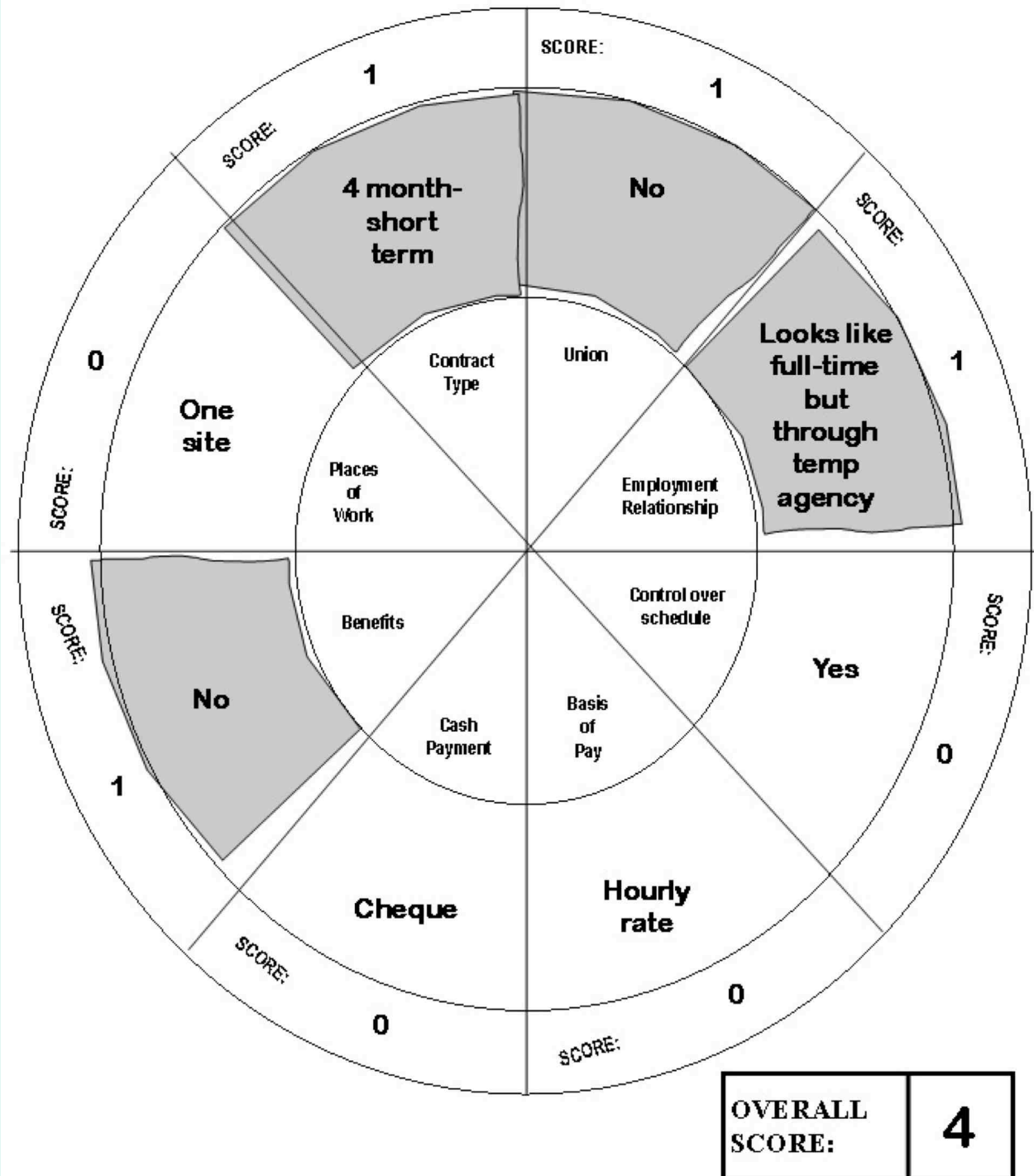
*Listen to what some workers say  
about this.*



# The precarious work wheel - eight dimensions

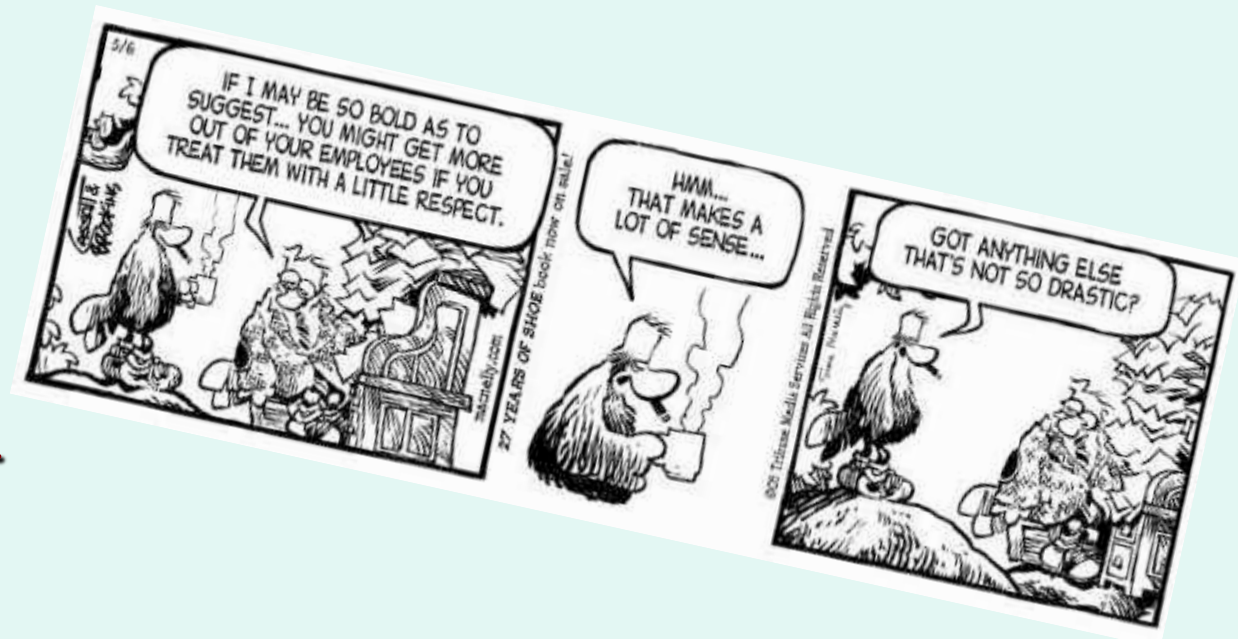
Community service worker  
- clerical work, temp  
contract, legal office (was  
a lawyer)

From: Immigrants and  
Precarious Employment  
A Popular Education Workshop  
Spring 2009, prepared for the The  
Immigrants and Precarious  
Employment Project, Toronto.



Other work organisation hazards and stressors at the top of workers' minds these days are forms of violence linked to the changing structures of work:

- verbal abuse
- physical abuse
- bullying
- harassment
- lack of respect



Many employers are turning to “Behaviour-based Safety” (BS) methods. A form of bullying, they are a work organisation hazard, not a solution, and ...

- include practices such as:
  - ☐ “safety incentive” programs that offer rewards to workers who don’t report injuries
  - ☐ injury discipline policies that threaten and deliver discipline to workers who do report injuries
  - ☐ behavioral observation programs that blame workers for being inattentive or working “carelessly” if they are hurt or get sick, and take the focus away from hazards
  - ☐ are effectively used to hide increases in work-related injuries and illnesses
- ignore workplace social relations, as part of the responsabilisation of health and safety (see Gary Gray, 2009)
- become part of the “iron cage” that stands in the way of collective responses and solutions

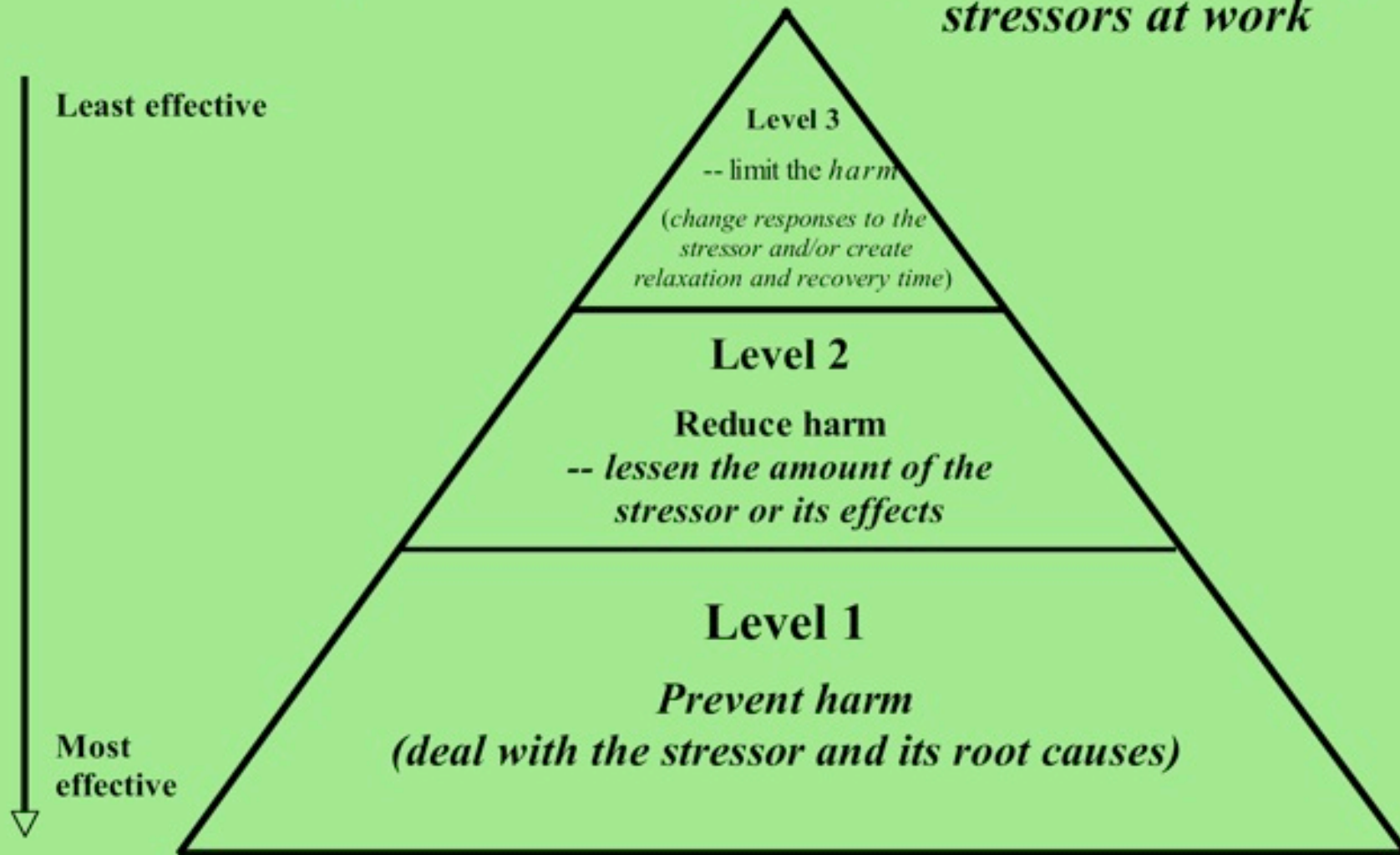
# We know a lot about:

- the solutions that would prevent and do little harm to workers, organisations and communities



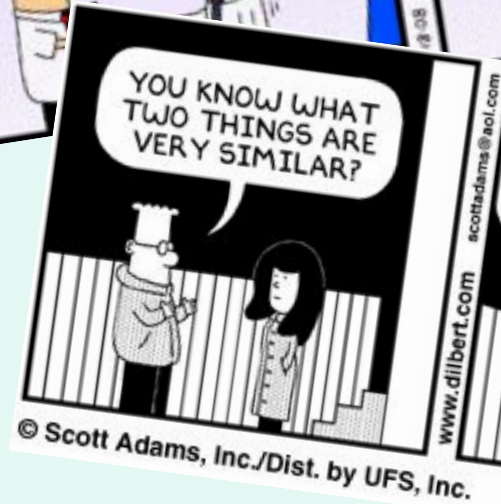
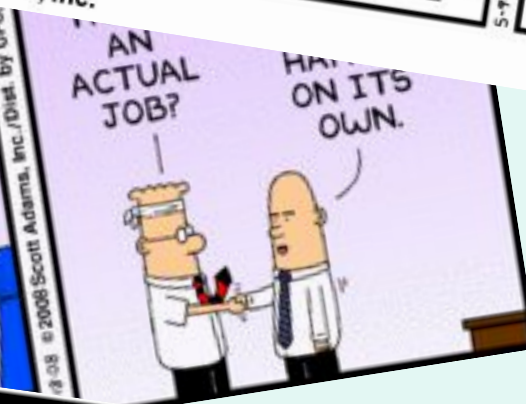
# We know the principles ...

The stress prevention triangle - - - *principles for tackling stressors at work*



DEW: Version 8 (2008), thanks to Robin Baker (Labor Occupational Health Program, UC Berkeley), Canadian popular educator Bev Burke and the Belgians who use levels of prevention (see <http://www.meta.fgov.be>).

We learn  
from what  
doesn't  
work



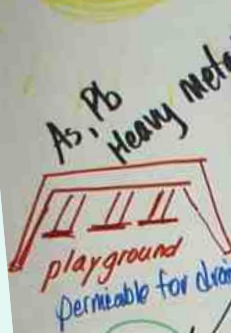


# We have our visions ...

respect  
happy  
good attitude  
flexibility  
open-natural light  
serenity (at times).  
inner  
variety  
Confidence  
communication  
Creativity →  
Competence  
Space & Time  
helping hand -  
good manager



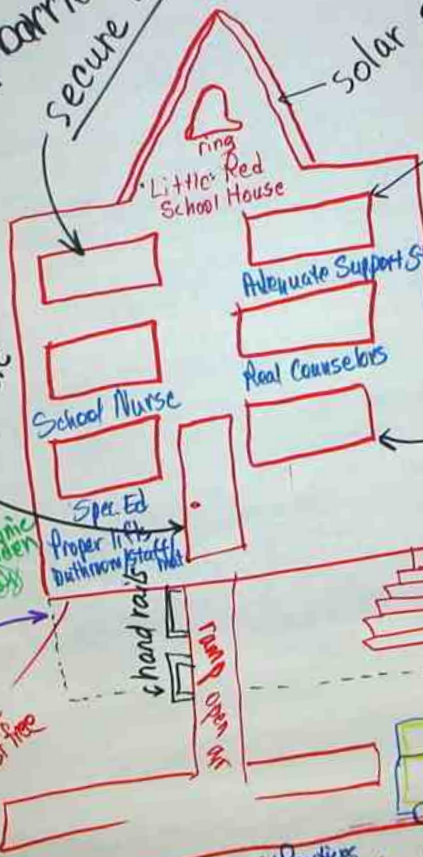




As, Pb Heavy metal free

Wind barriers

secure lab facilities ventilated chem storage



solar panels appropriate sized classrooms & offices well ventilated & insulated natural light functioning storage HVAC

safe flooring Cafeteria Nutritious multiple means

stair ramp of access safe transportation - loops away from school parking lot secure

appropriate drainage away from base ment Adequate storage (not in plastic) dust free

Wellness Program for staff Exercise Room and Staff bathroom Adequate training Frequent breaks for staff

Best Practices for H.S. + Training Green Cleaning

Daily recess or social time for kids Adequate technology Ergonomic furniture Classroom materials

From research and experiences, we know the kinds of solutions we need for work-related stressors

- ❑ the best solutions get rid of the hazard, using a “better safe than sorry” approach (the precautionary principle)
- ❑ collective solutions work better than individual ones -- and they’re fairer (we still need to be able to do things for ourselves)
- ❑ we want to prevent people getting “stressed out”
- ❑ we want solutions that match the real problem (participatory actions with unions and workers)
- ❑ we don’t want solutions that try to “fix” or blame us
- ❑ it can be difficult to get to Level 1 (on the prevention triangle) right away, or at all; we need to look at short-term solutions, as well as longer-term ones
- ❑ participatory action research and other studies provide useful lessons about effective solutions (e.g., Barbara Israel, Pam Tau Lee)

# And we have international guidelines about “decent work” from the ILO

Decent Work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers:

- a fair income,
- security in the workplace
- social protection for families
- better prospects for personal development and social integration
- freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives
- equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Decent work can be understood as the opposite of precarious work, and as a goal to strive for, individually and collectively.



*So, how do we get the  
“fixes” we need?*

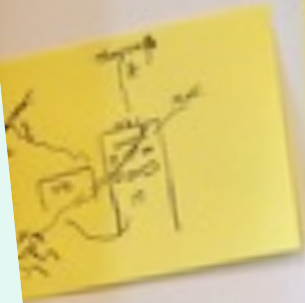
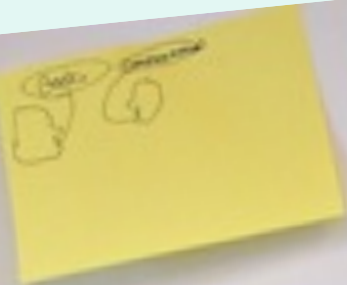
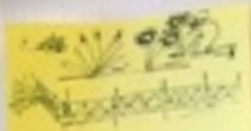
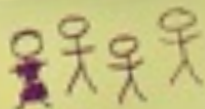
*This is the oft-neglected  
step towards a healthy and  
safe workplace,  
organisation and community*

Think about the images you've seen in this presentation. Who made them?

Respect workers, their knowledge, experiences and visions. Work with them, their unions and their collaborators.

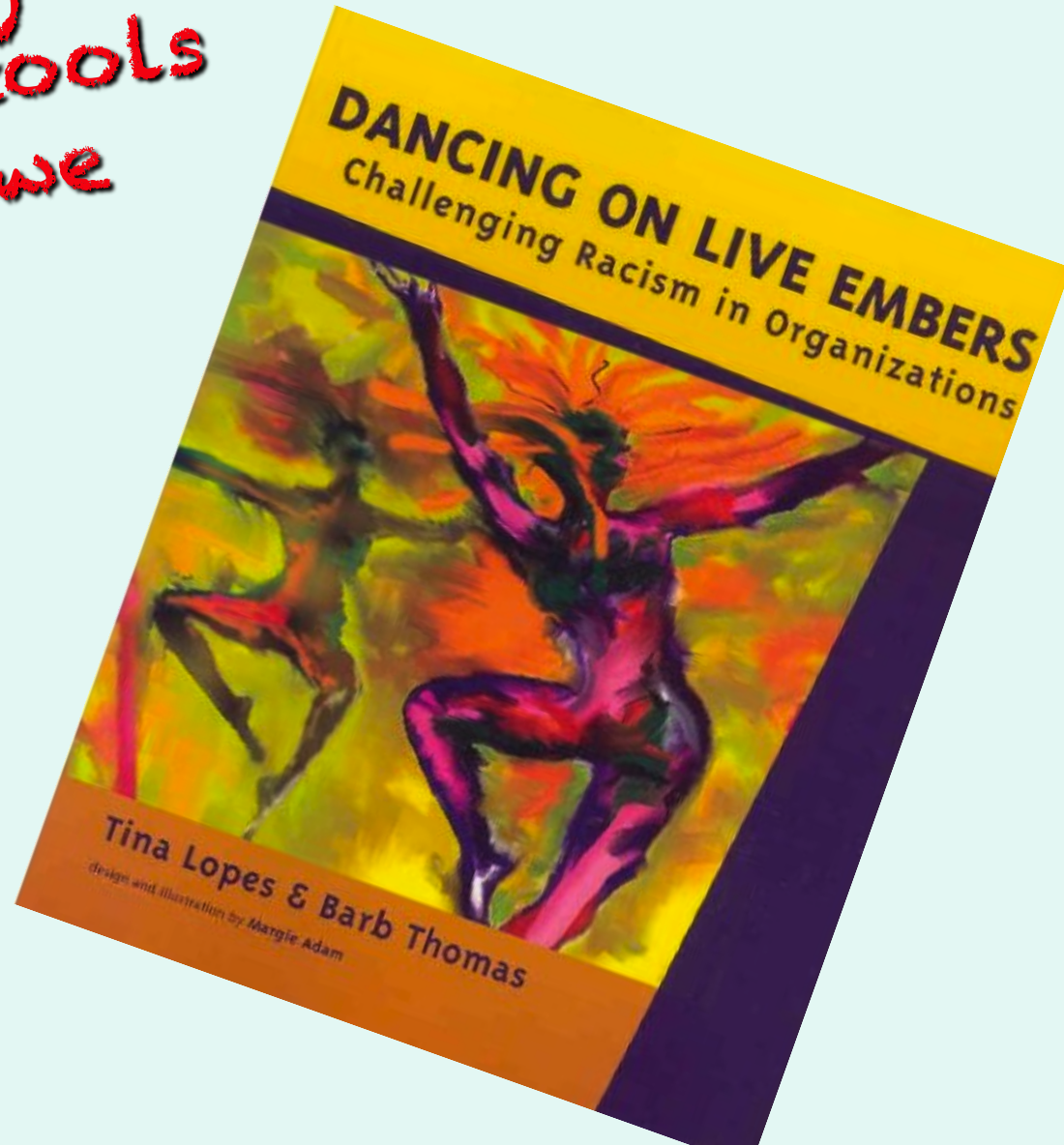
Individually  
and  
collectively  
we can build  
on what we  
like --  
where we  
have the  
opportunity  
to do that

We like these  
things about  
our jobs





We need to use  
what we already  
know and the tools  
and resources we  
have



# We have to separate solutions from strategies

Solidarity Solutions	
<p>Step 1</p> <p><u>We want to change</u></p> <p><u>Discipline</u> -</p> <p>1) Adm. doesn't follow Policy statement.</p> <p>2) Adm. doesn't follow discipline plan - at their school level.</p> <p>3) <u>Disruptive students</u> - allowed to return to classroom (environment).</p> <p>★</p>	<p><u>Short-term solution(s)</u></p> <p>1) Send student to the office.</p> <p>2) Send the child to another classroom. (If the teacher has a good rapport with the child)</p> <p><u>To act it well</u> -</p> <p>1) Make the principal aware of the disruptive student.</p> <p>2) Remind him of the Policy Statement and the procedure for dealing with students who are disruptive.</p> <p>3) TEAC Concern.</p> <p><u>From the Union, we need</u></p>
<p><u>Longer-term solution(s)</u></p> <p>1) Follow the Policy Statement - P. 31, Section B (Article 4)</p> <p>2) <u>"Counseling"</u></p>	

... and work on solidarity/  
healthy solutions together





We need to  
acknowledge  
power and  
deal with it

## 6. What fixes these hazards?

### 6.2 Who are the "players"?

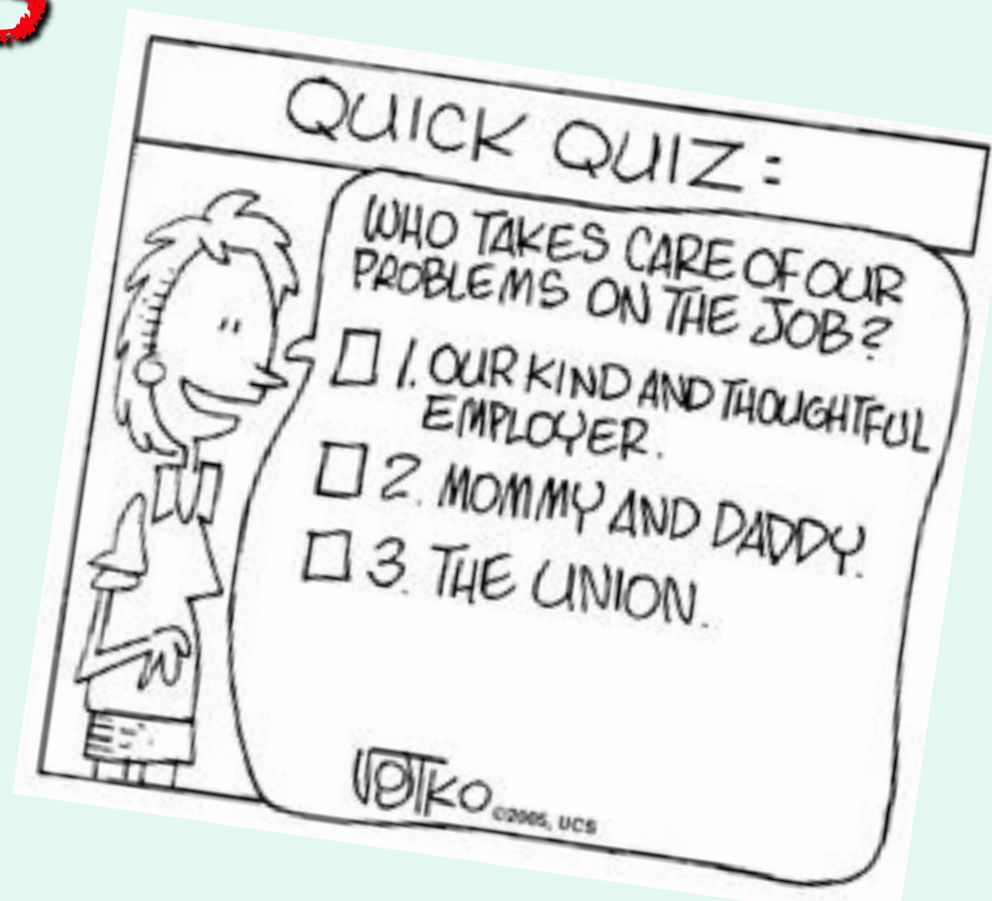
Player	Why involve?
Second-in-charge (or) Supervisor	Take load off super, can make decisions
Senior mgmt	Make decisions, case to senior mgmt
Shop steward / union	Purse strings, set policies, CA prob? collective response, pressure sent mgmt
JHSC	Stressors are
Employees	h2d
Insurance co (benefits)	To prevent / reduce stressor costs

Public health goals

Accountant  
- not likely  
- budget  
- contains

?

We need unions --  
for precarious  
workers too



We need coalitions to resist current forms of work organisation, especially the false solutions that blame and harm workers and ignore social relations.





Think big. Think  
solutions. Think tools.  
Think collective  
action.

We need to put research, community  
and public health energies into  
getting "the fixes", rather than  
focusing on the problems we know  
much about.

*What can you do?*

*What is one thing you  
will do?*

Think about Pete Seeger's version of  
"Over the rainbow" 