

**MID-CAREER SURVIVAL
FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T
WANT TO BE AN
ATTRITION STATISTIC
WHEN THEY GROW UP**

Julie Pagano

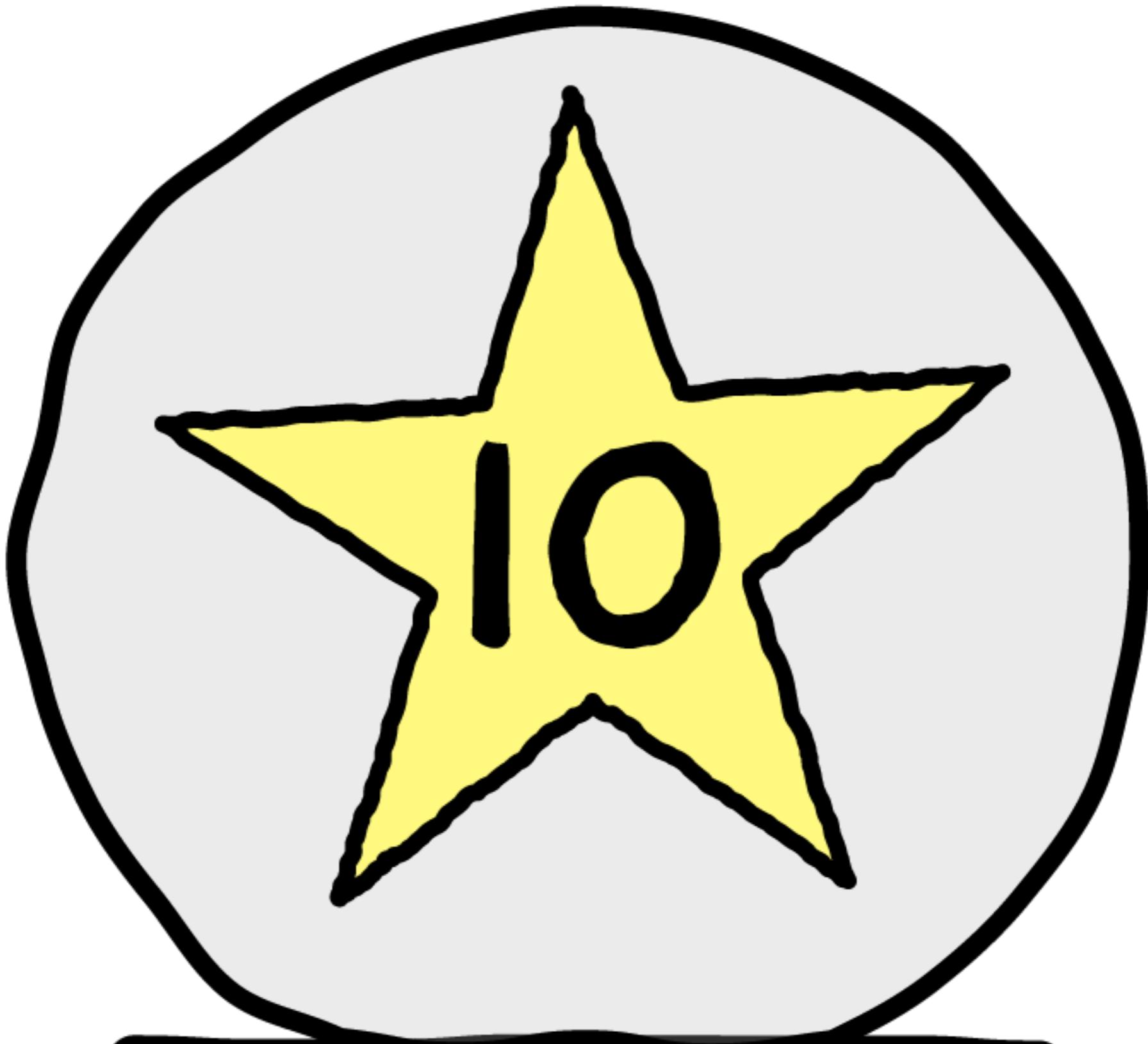
Write/Speak/Code '17





major
milestones





years in tech



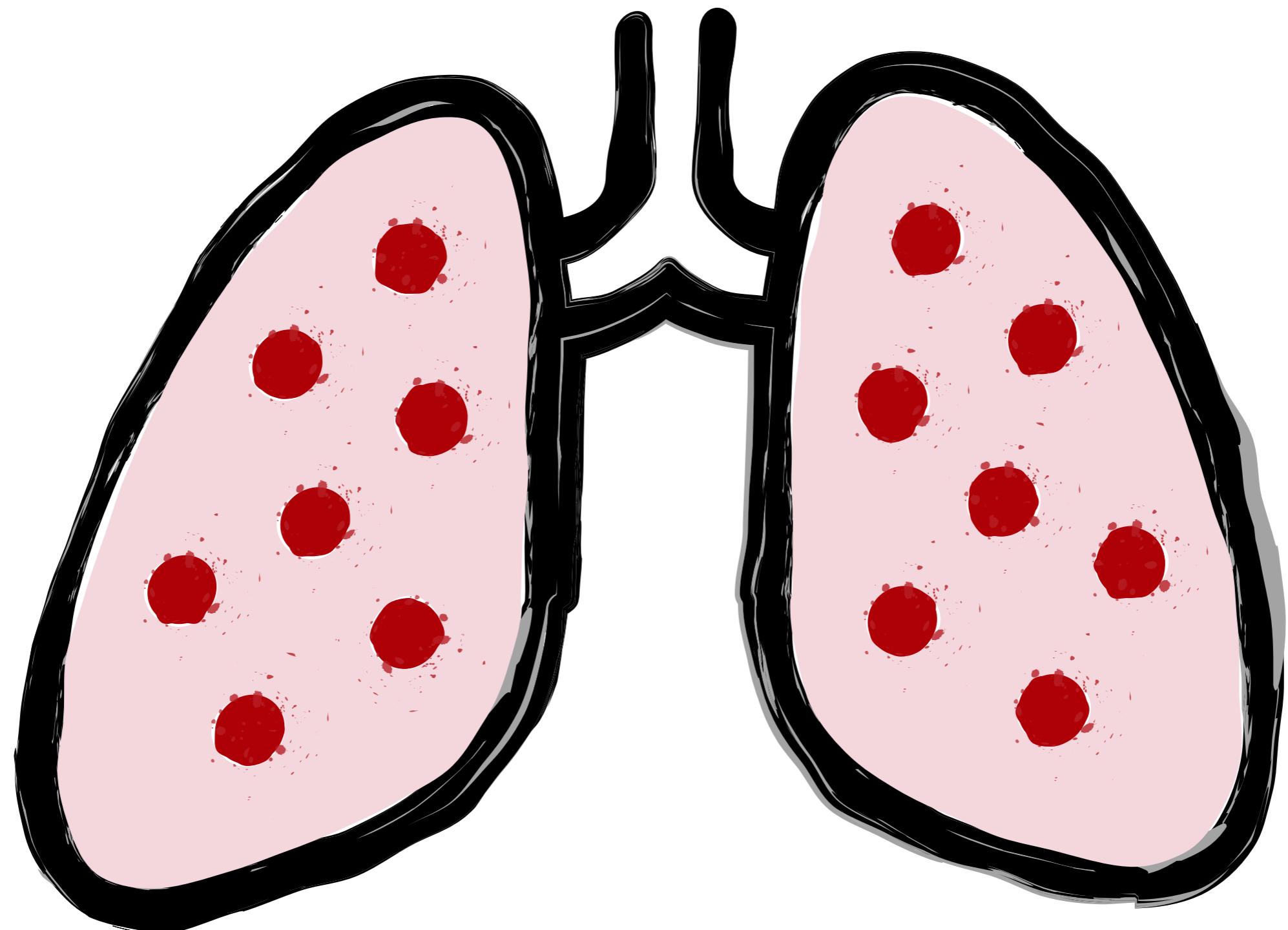


pulmonary embolism



The sudden blockage
of a major blood vessel
in the lung, usually by
a blood clot.

Lots of blood clots

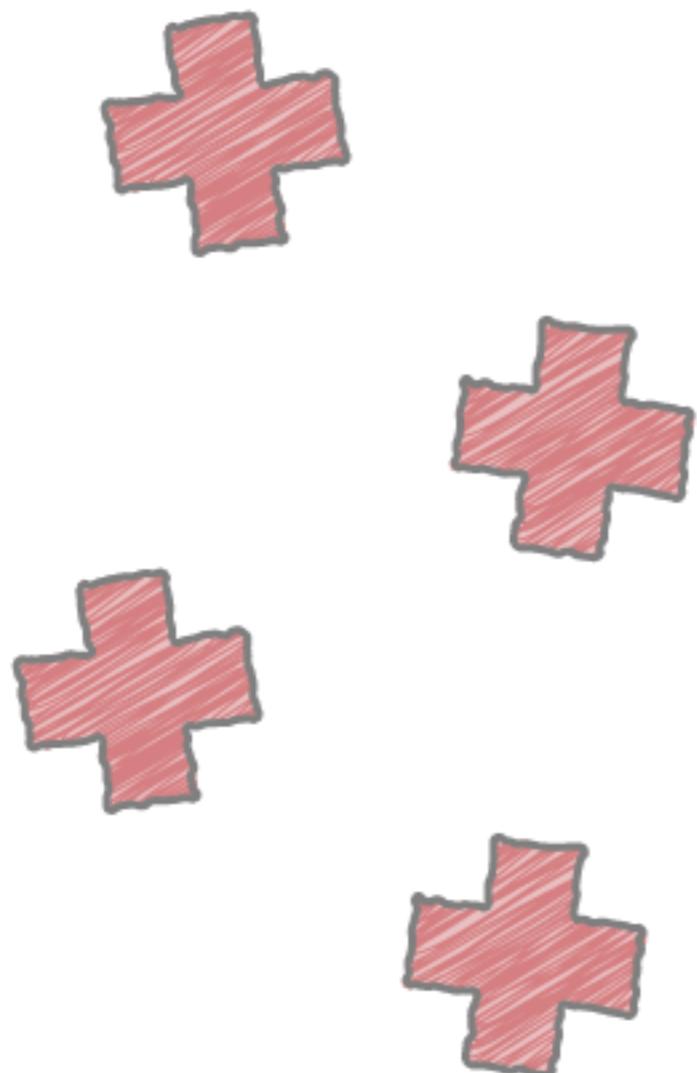
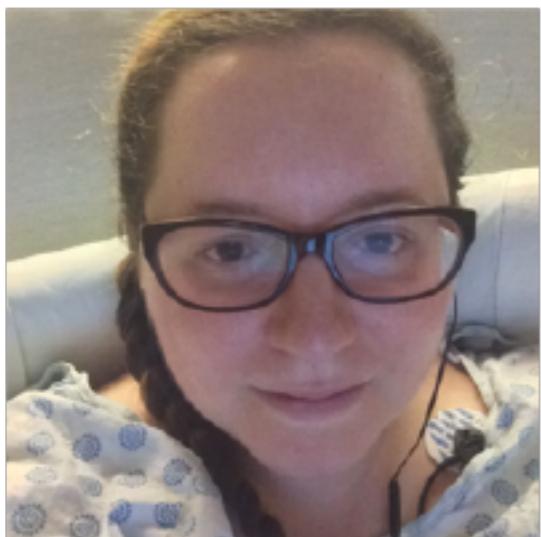




Pulmonary
embolisms kill
young people.

- ER doctor

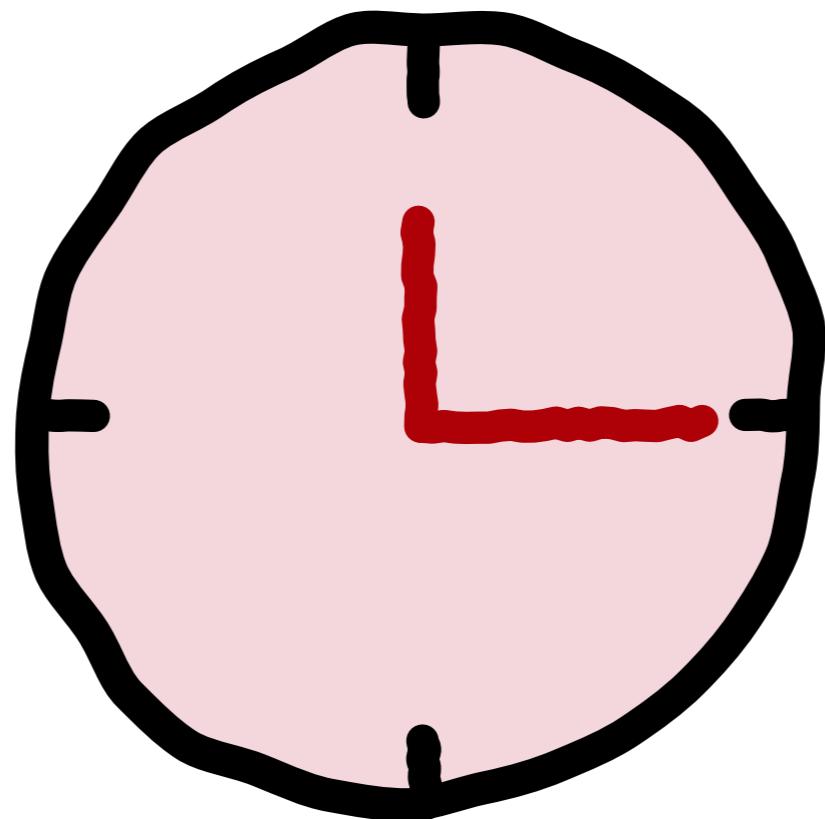
my week in the hospital



medical leave



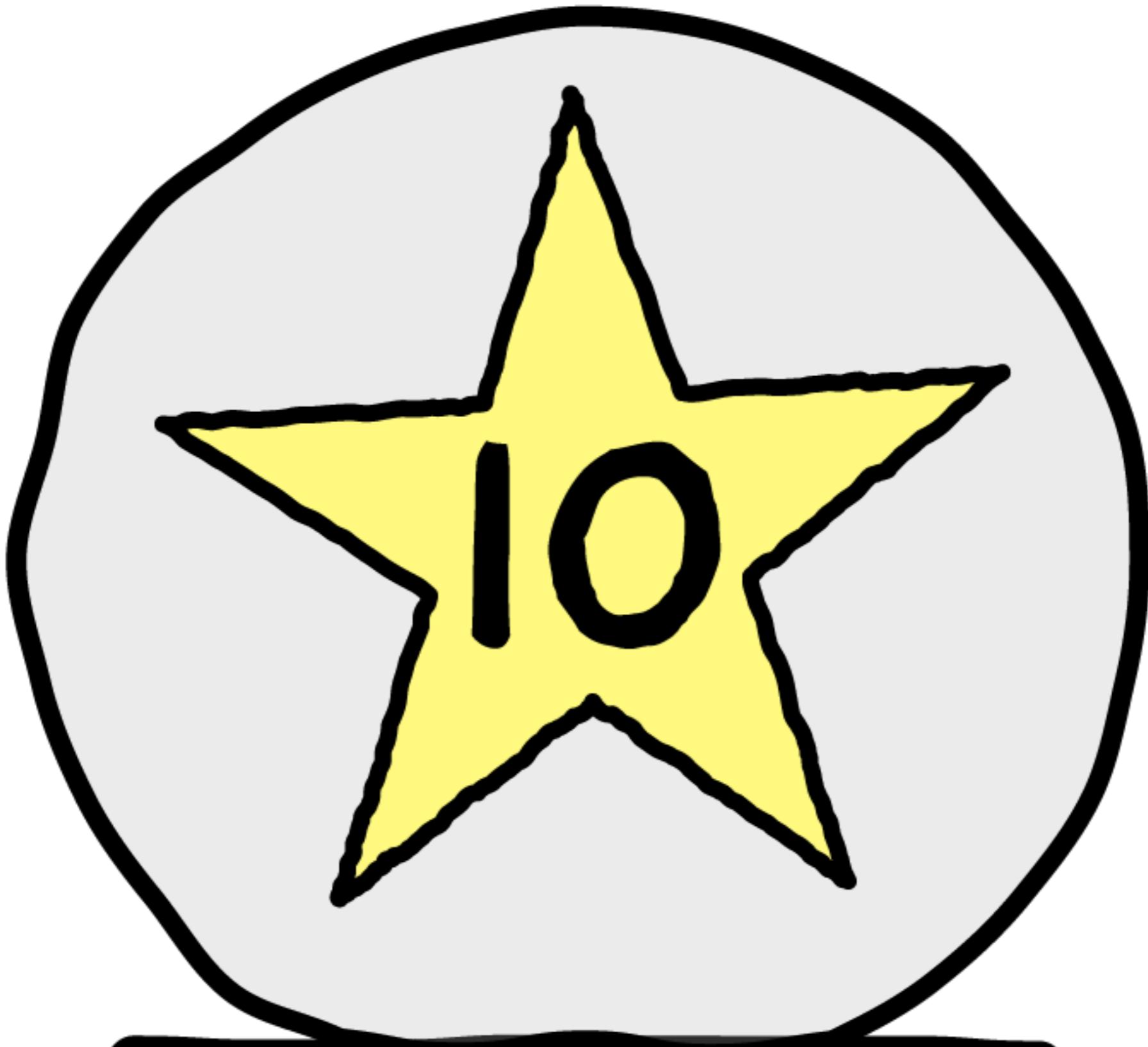
lots of



to think

1/3 life crisis

career crisis



years in tech

41% of women
leave technology
companies after

10 years of experience

(from the Athena Factor)

You are
statistically
unlikely to
survive this.

EXPIRED

conventional wisdom

ignores the cost of

being different

Y O U N G

Y O U N G

W H I T E

YOUNG

WHITE

MALE

YOUNG

WHITE

MALE

CISGENDER

YOUNG

WHITE

MALE

CISGENDER

HETEROSEXUAL

YOUNG

WHITE

MALE

CISGENDER

HETEROSEXUAL

ABLE-BODIED

YOUNG

WHITE

MALE

CISGENDER

HETEROSEXUAL

ABLE-BODIED

MIDDLE+ CLASS

YOUNG

WHITE

MALE

CISGENDER

HETEROSEXUAL

ABLE-BODIED

MIDDLE+ CLASS

ETC.

conventional wisdom

is unlikely to help

if you are different

conventional wisdom

can hurt you

if you are different

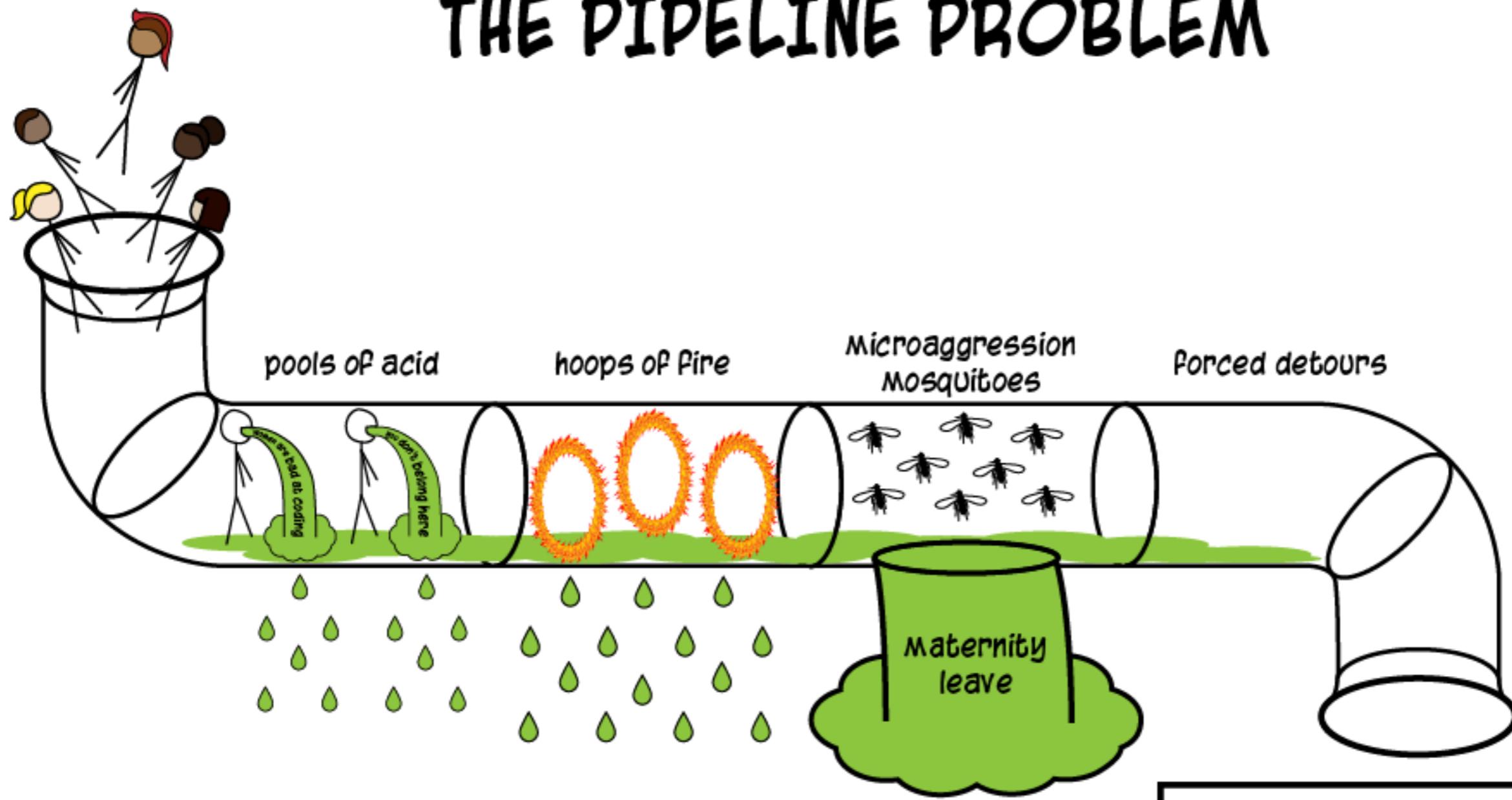
advice for people

who are different

(if there is any)

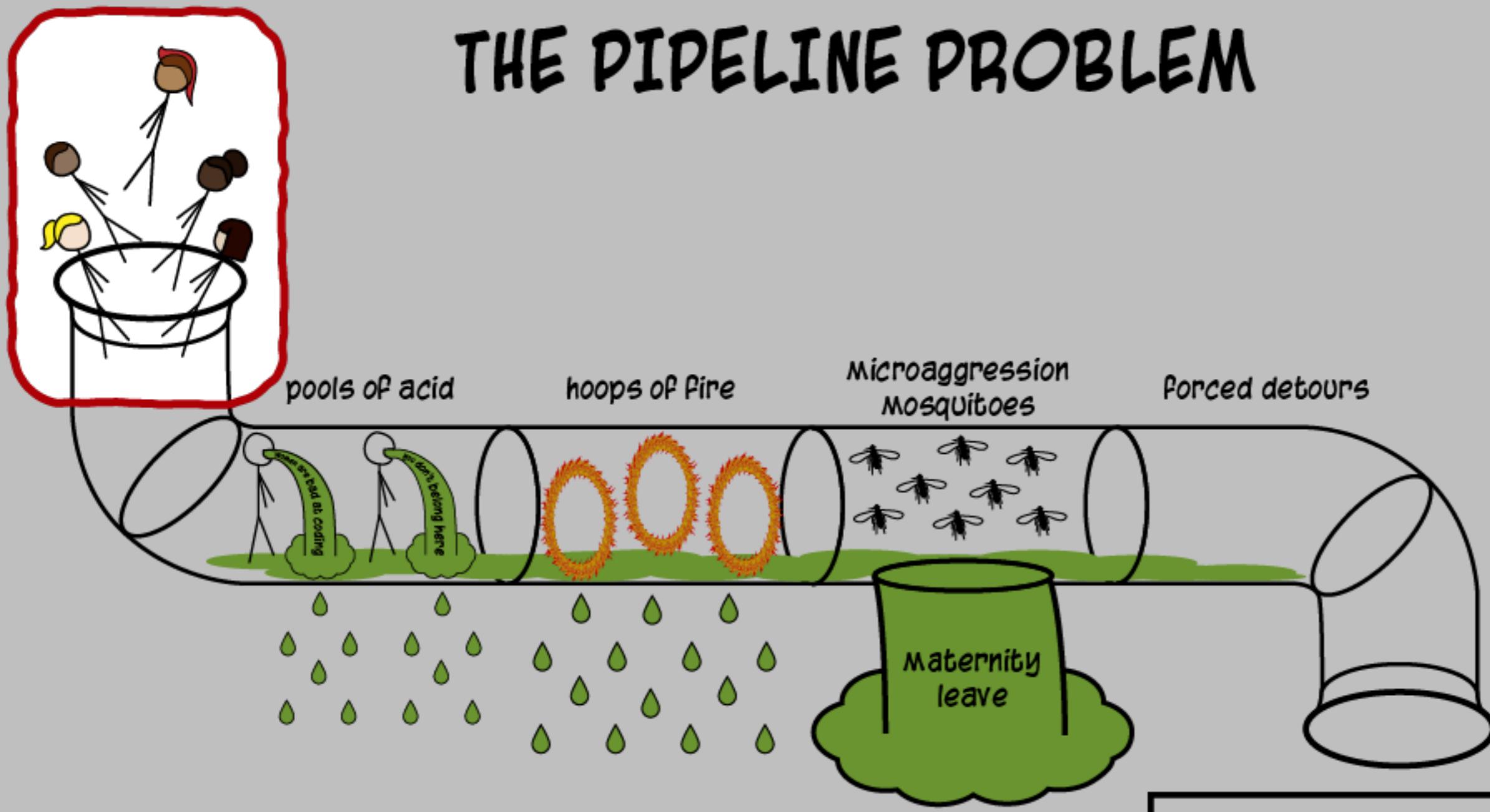
is all in the pipeline

THE PIPELINE PROBLEM



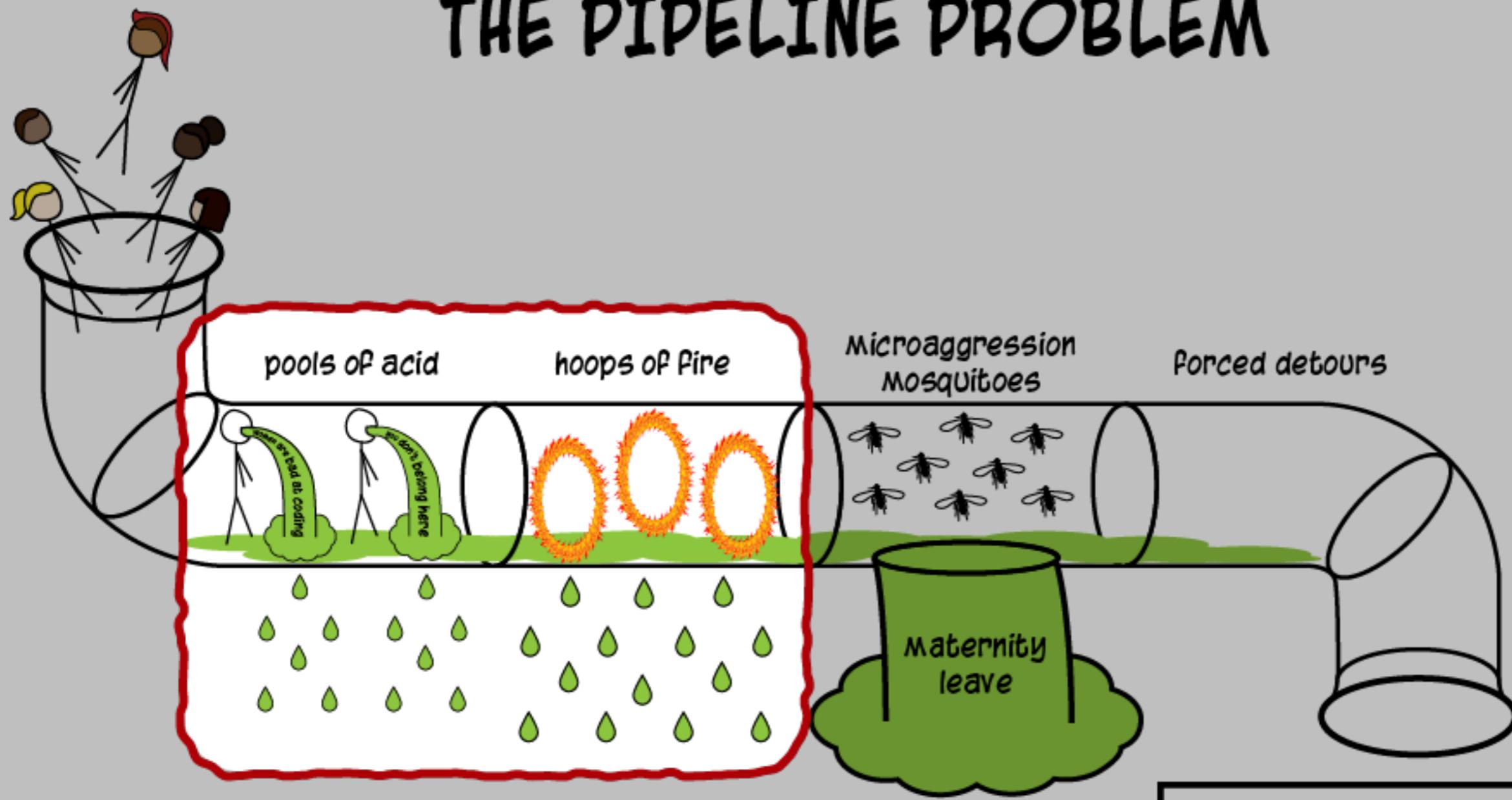
Sewage
Treatment

THE PIPELINE PROBLEM



Sewage
Treatment

THE PIPELINE PROBLEM



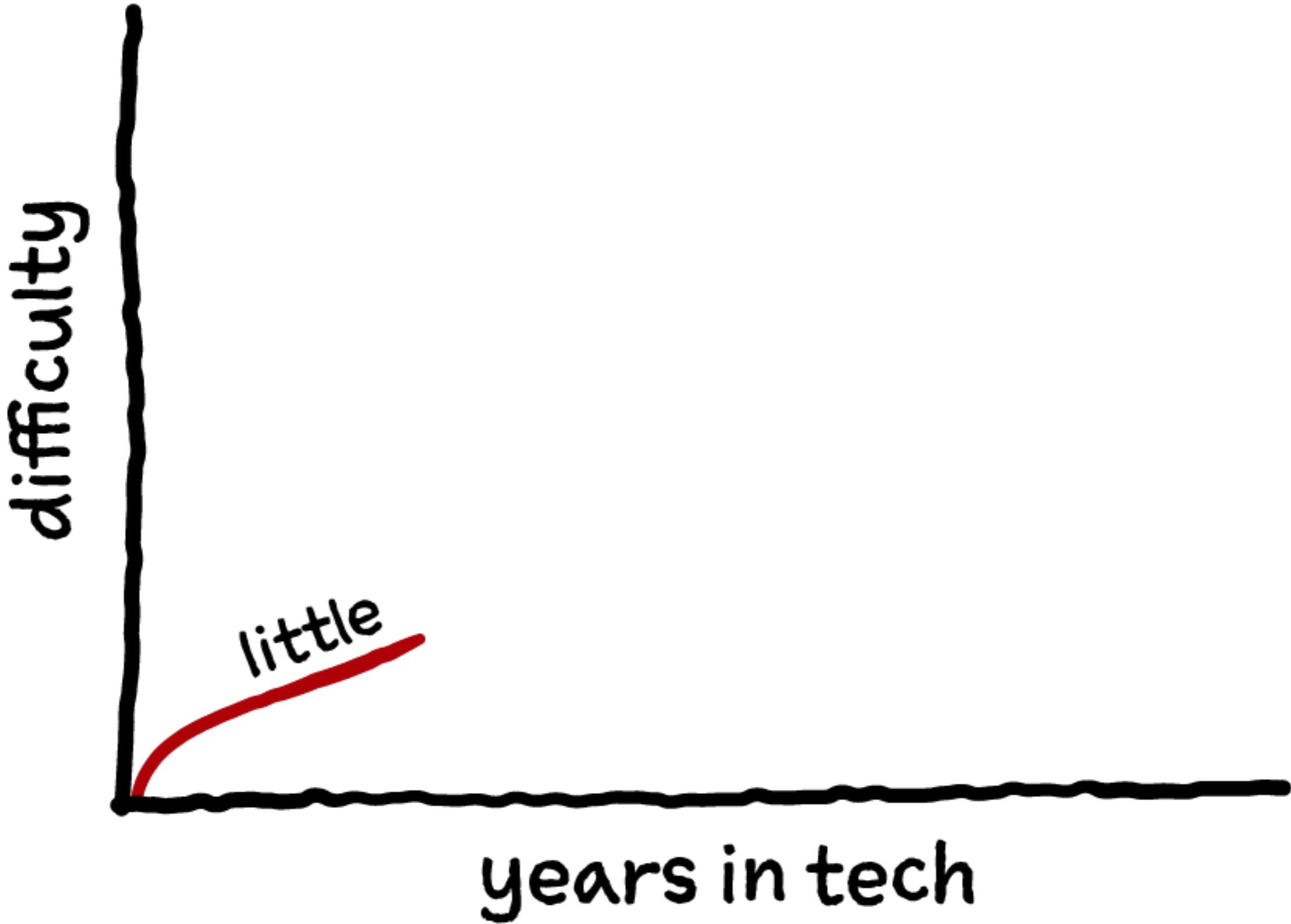
Sewage
Treatment

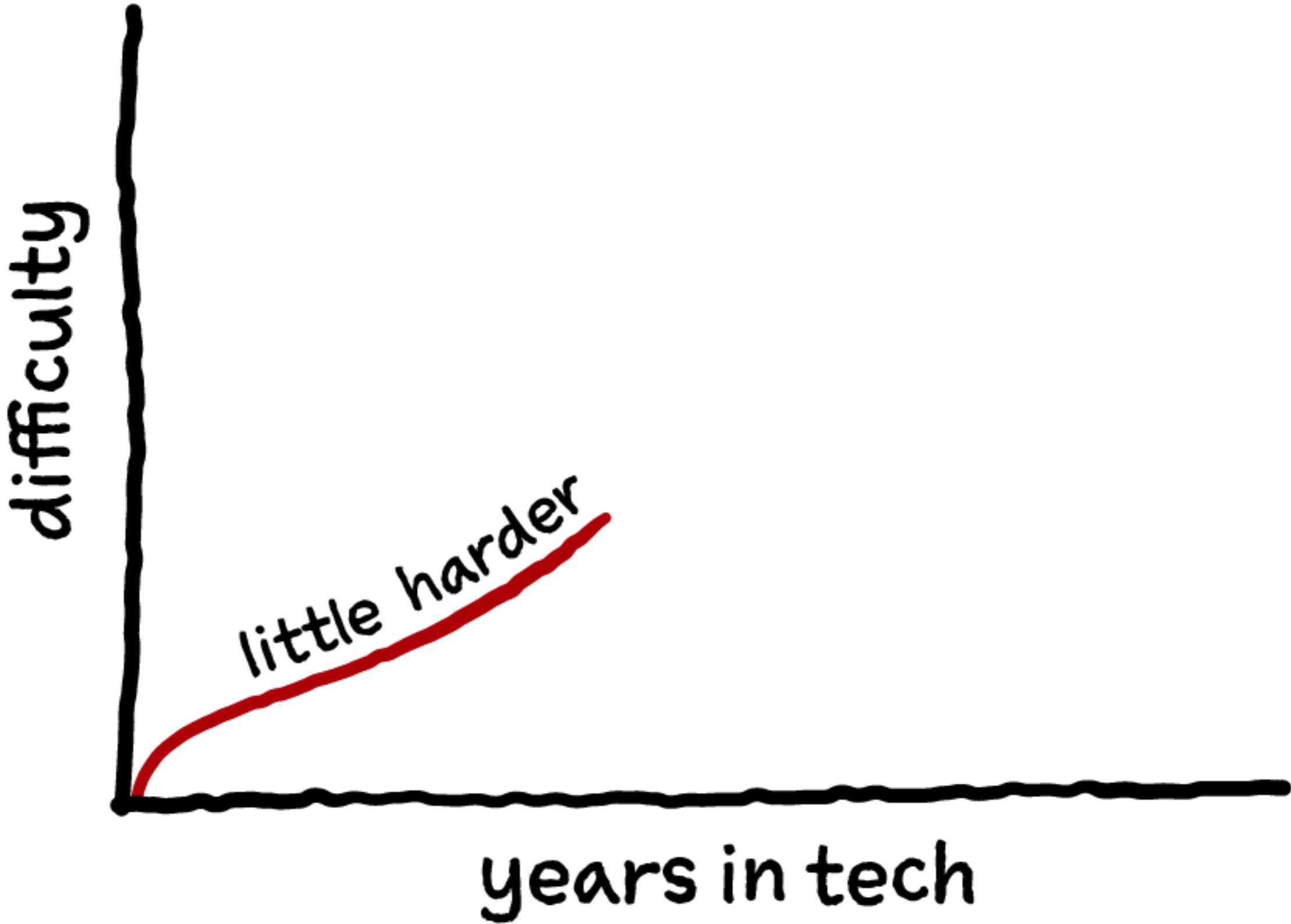
fight or flight?

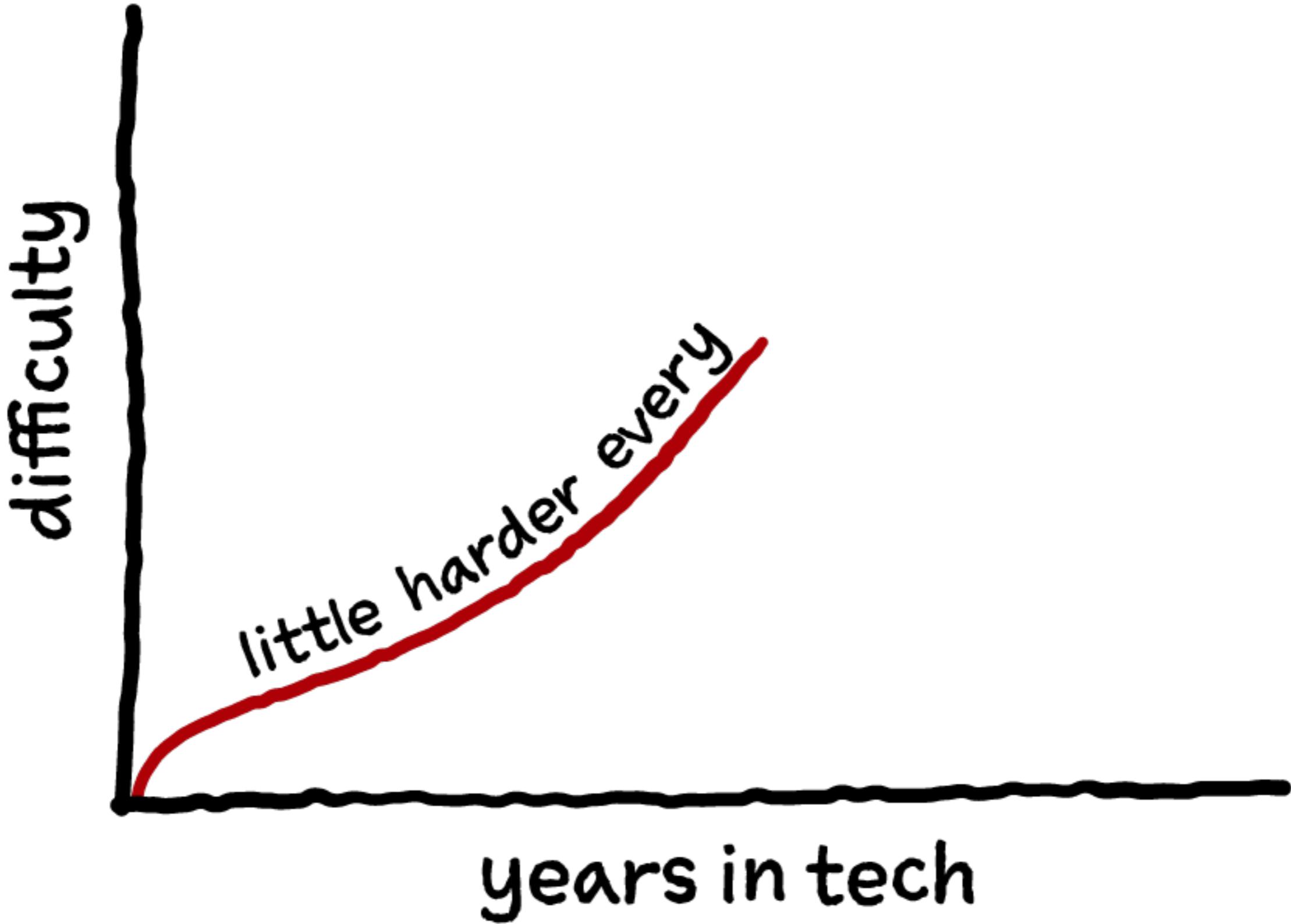
fight

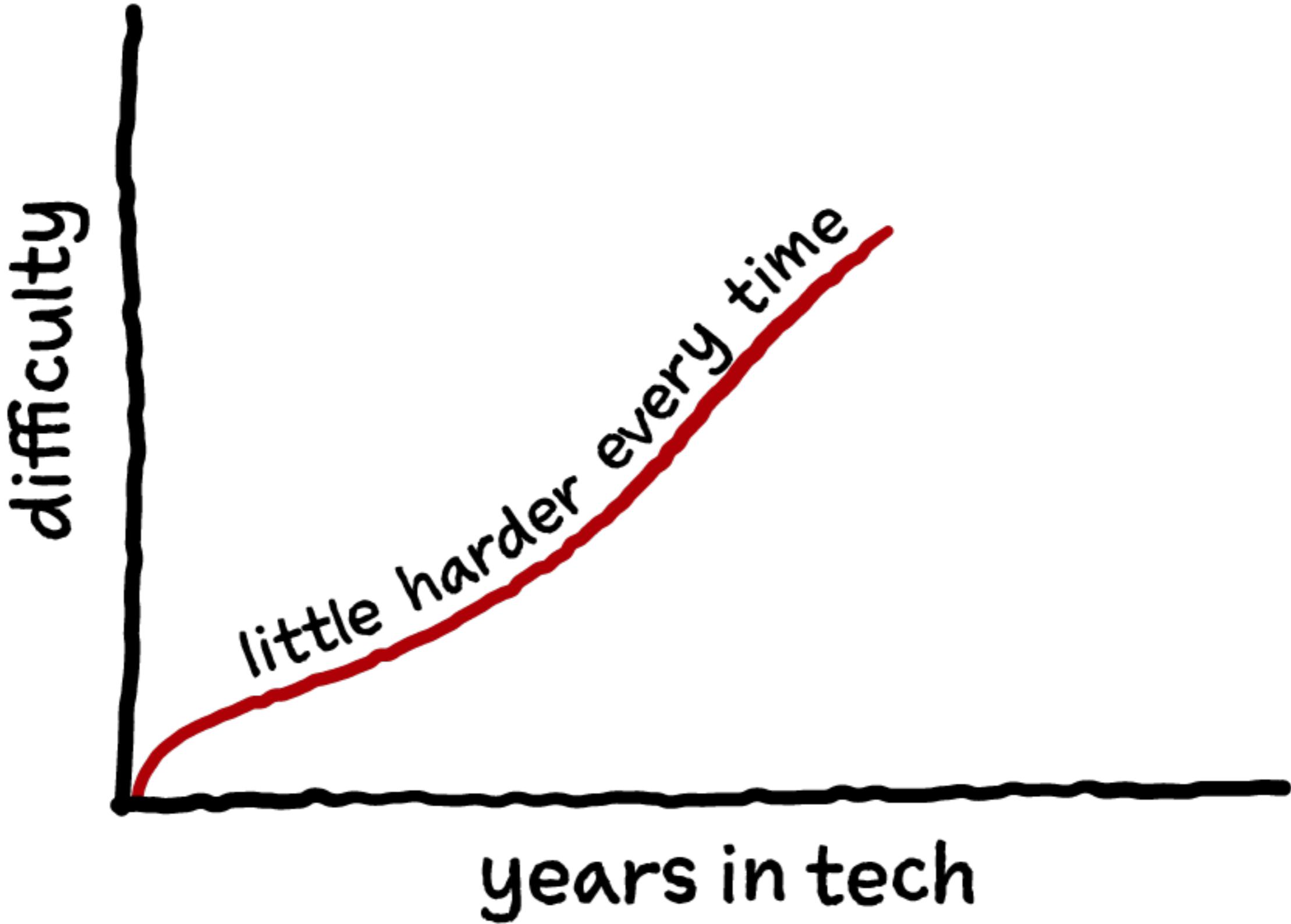
fight...for now

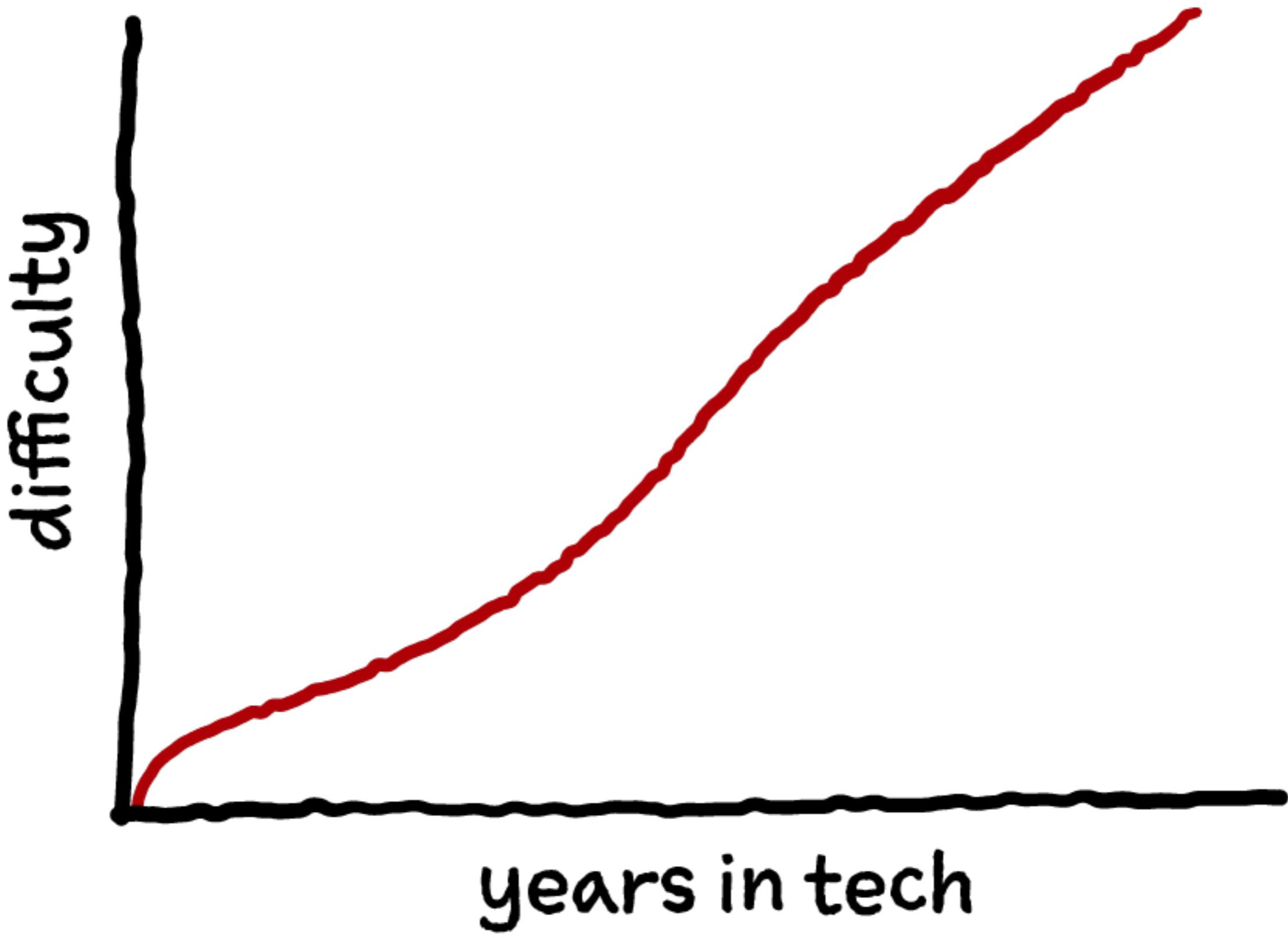
I will be
reconsidering
that choice for my
entire career











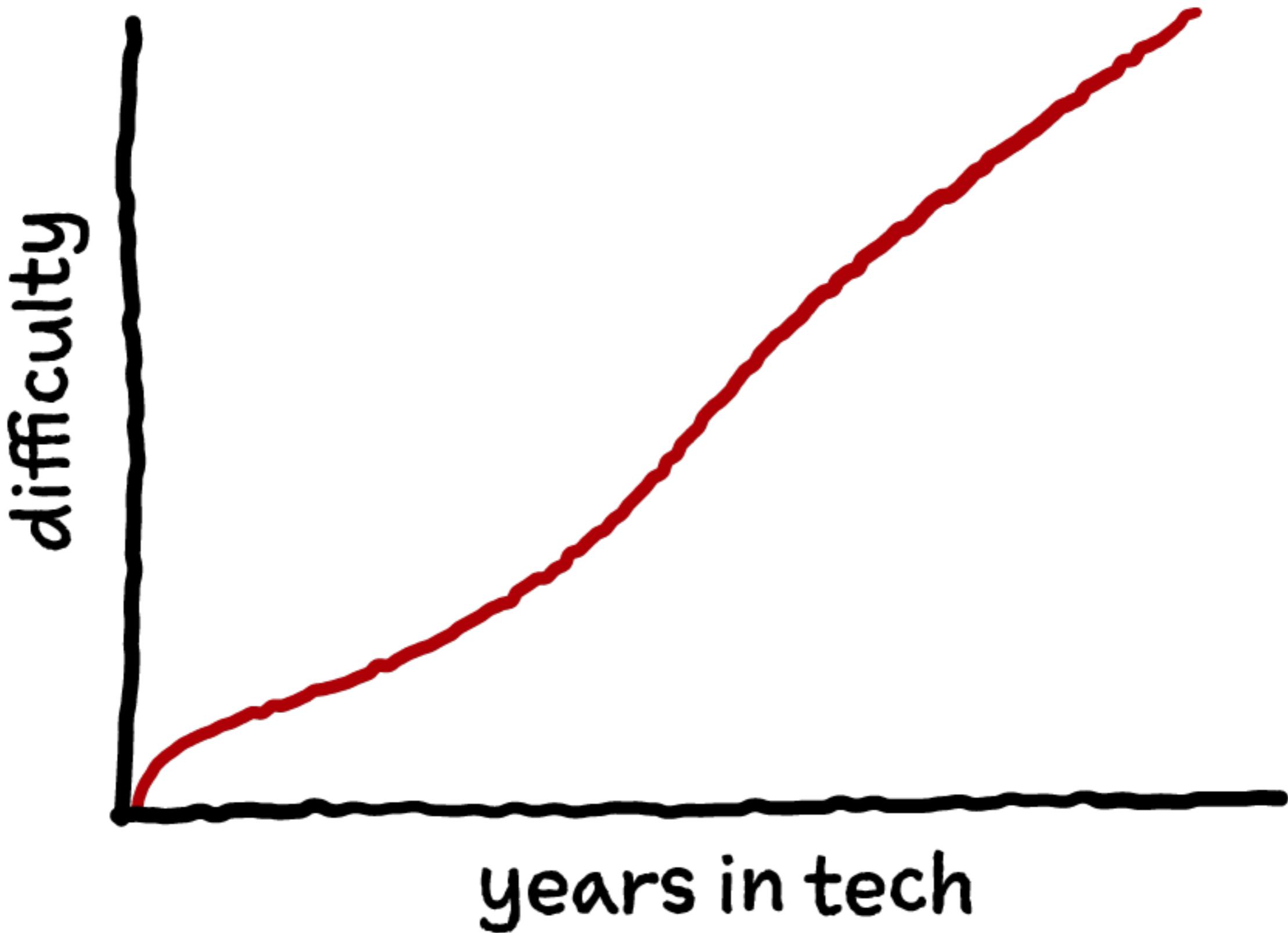
difficulty



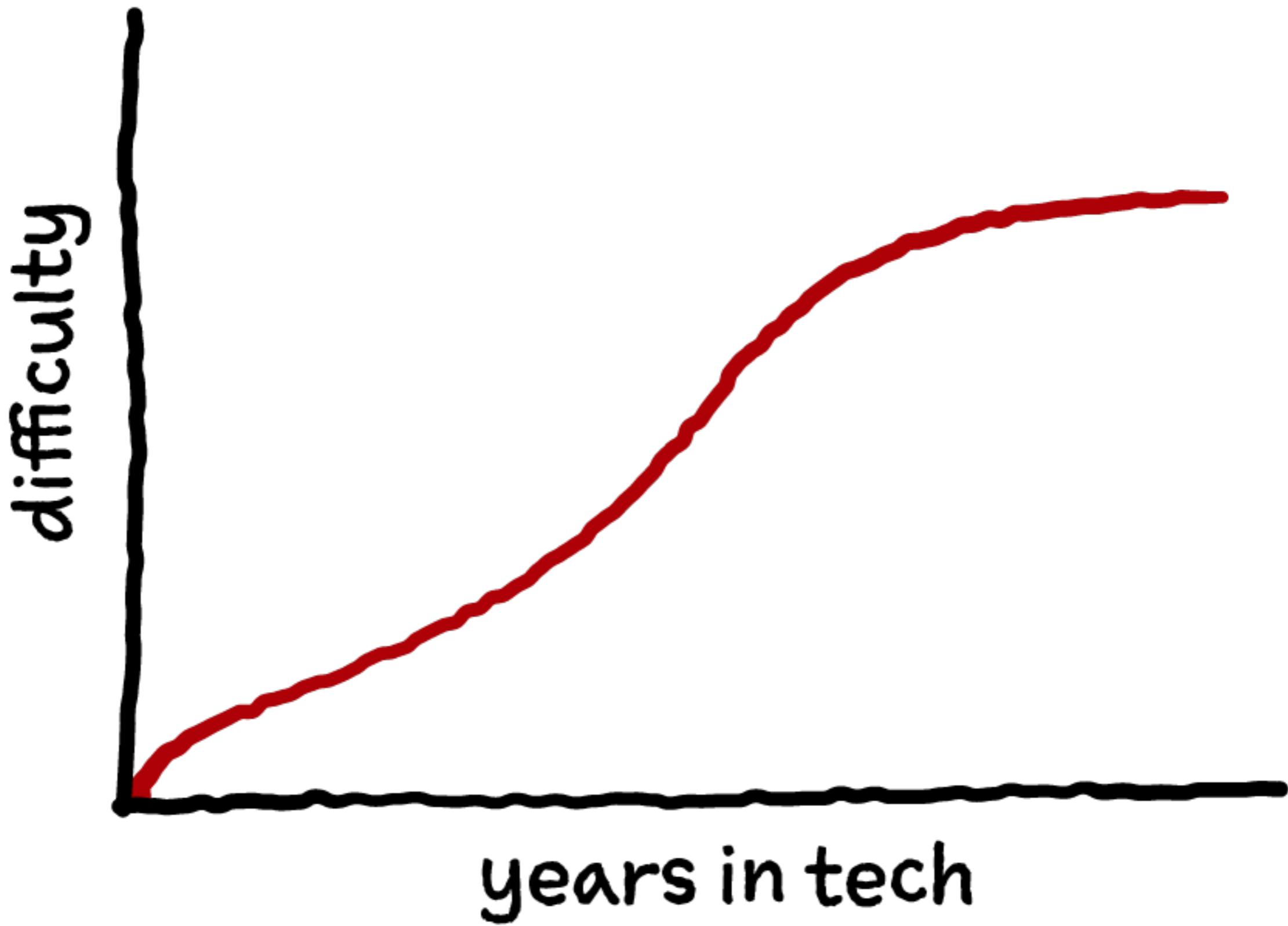
years in tech

UNSUSTAINABLE

survival techniques



survival techniques



I don't want
to be an
attrition statistic
when I grow up

DISCLAIMERS!

QUEER

QUEER

WOMAN

QUEER

WOMAN

INVISIBLE

DISABILITIES

QUEER

WOMAN

INVISIBLE

DISABILITIES

W H I T E

W H I T E

C I S G E N D E R

W H I T E

C I S G E N D E R

A B L E - B O D I E D

W H I T E

C I S G E N D E R

A B L E - B O D I E D

M I D D L E C L A S S

SOFTWARE

ENGINEER

I can't speak for
all experiences

leaving is ok

leaving isn't
easy

leaving isn't
always an
option

Lean

In

Learn

It

~~Loon~~

~~In~~

**longstanding
institutional and
systemic problems**

those types of
problems take a
long time to
get better

I cannot plan for
things to be
significantly
better

I don't have
something to
make it all better

a talk about
harm reduction

a talk about
harm reduction
(and that kind
of sucks)

SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES

therapy

not accessible to all

- stigma
- cost
- availability

individualized
advice

a place to vent

personal
network

Two Criteria

1. get what you're going through
2. share your values

101 work

101 work

commiseration

advice

you are not alone

work to build
relationships

work to maintain
relationships

whisper network

whisper network



liz abinante!

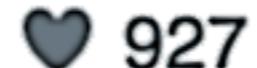
@feministy

confirming your worst fears: yes, all women in tech do know each other and YES we do talk about you.

2:08 PM - 7 Aug 2015



316



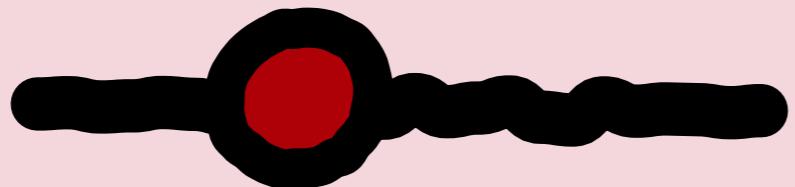
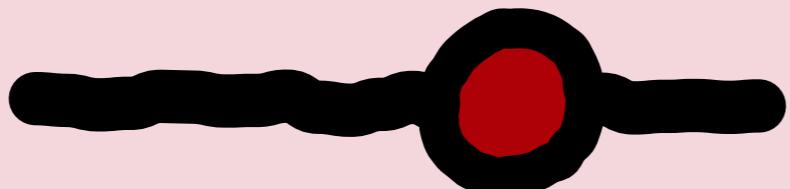
927

reduce

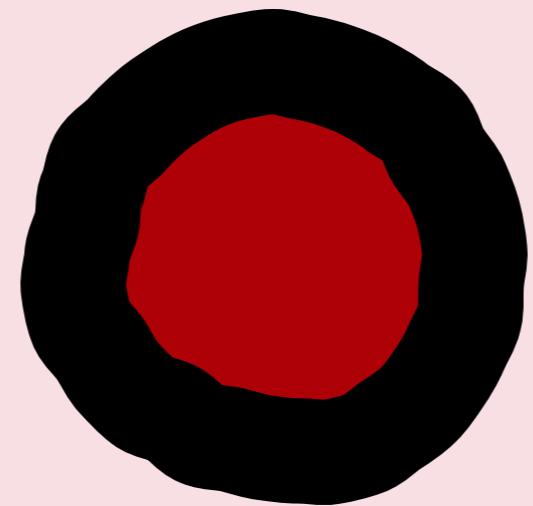
harm

at work

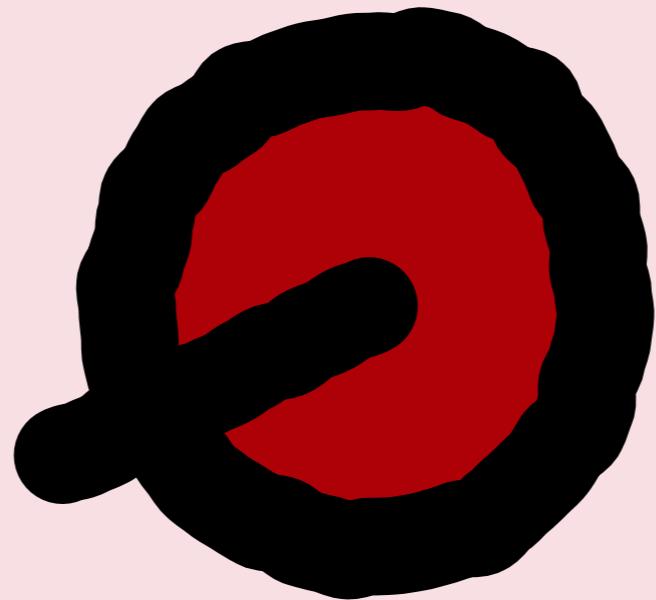
work



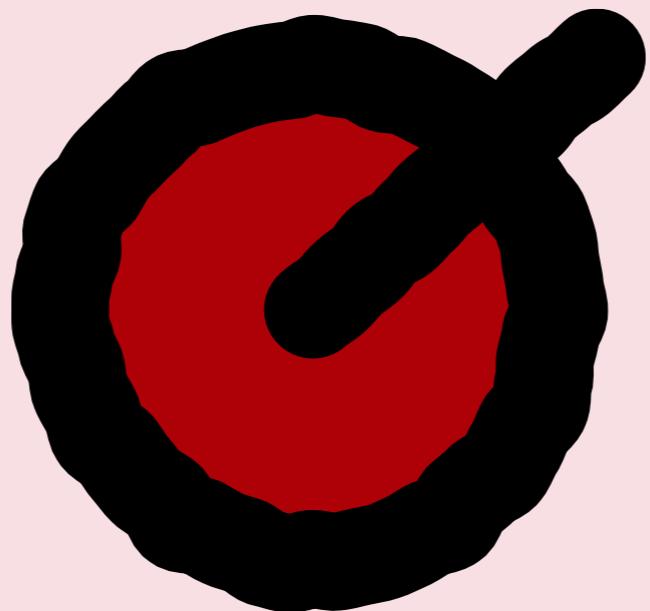
remote



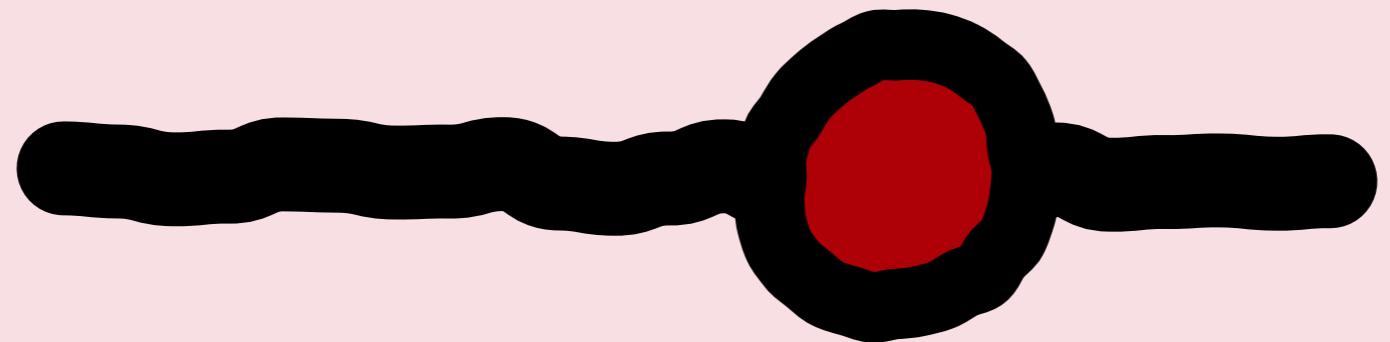
org size



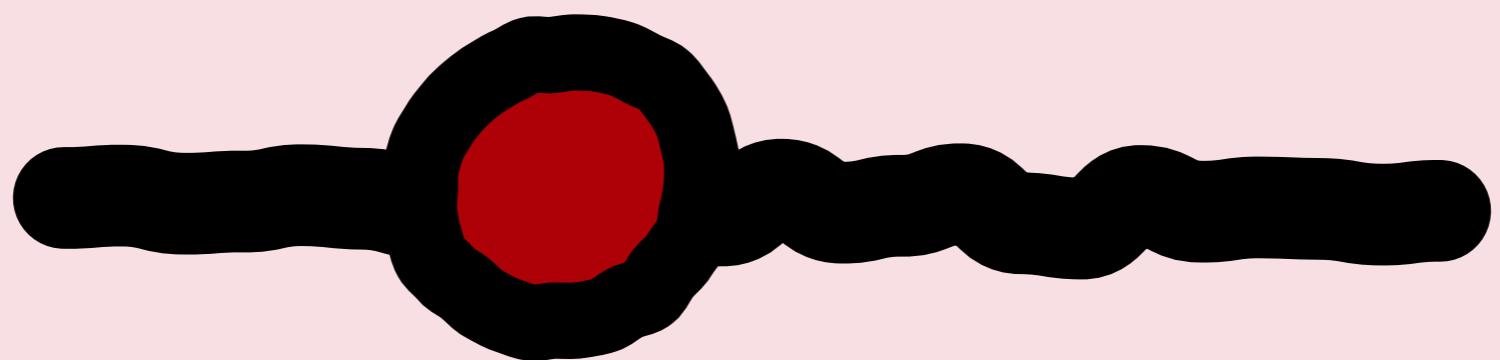
vacation



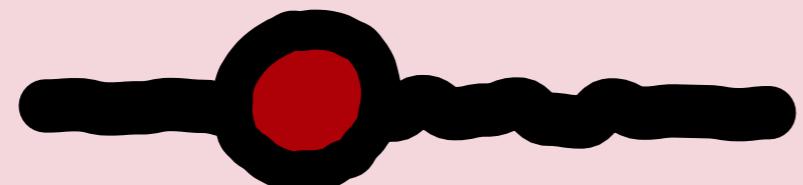
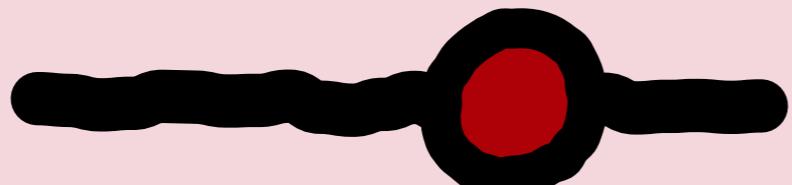
role



location



more work



What I'm Looking For

The three main things I am looking for are:

-  Good people.
-  Interesting problems.
-  Competitive pay.

Location

I am looking for a company that is based in Portland or is based in the US and supports remote employees. I will also consider companies based in Canada if they have good support for remote employees based in the US (e.g. health insurance).

Size

I am looking for a small to midsize company. I've worked for giant corporations (IBM, Google), and it wasn't the right fit for me. Tiny, early stage startups are also unlikely to be a good fit.

Culture

The following are things that are important to me in the culture where I work.

- **Collaboration** — People work together to solve problems. People share knowledge and collaborate with people from other roles (e.g. engineering, QA, design, UX, support).
- **Respect** — People respect the people they work with regardless of their role. People respect users of the software they develop.
- **Empathy** — People try to empathize with the people they work with and users. This is

own your
career path

what do you
want to be when
you grow up?

individual contributor

VS

manager

individual contributor

VS

manager

software engineer

product manager

dev evangelist

architect

more...

software engineer

product manager

dev evangelist

architect

more...

advocate

for

yourself

men are promoted

on potential,

women are promoted

on performance

it's lonely up there...



OMG KITTEN

@juliepagano

career milestone: got promoted to Lead Software Engineer



jerk voice in back of my head: mind that glass, lady, you
might cut yourself 💀

9:43 AM - Apr 20, 2017

**celebrate your
achievements!**



**celebrate your
achievements!**





Alice Goldfuss
@alicegoldfuss

Hey, women in tech, we've had a rough week. I therefore pronounce this [#WITBragDay](#)

8:32 AM - Aug 11, 2017



OMG KITTEN

@juliepagano

I became a lead software engineer earlier this year because
I am a badass. [#WITBragDay](#)

9:49 AM - Aug 11, 2017



OMG KITTEN

@juliepagano

I've survived and succeeded in this industry past the 10 year WIT attrition cliff despite a lot of bullshit and hard things. ★★★ #WITBragDay

12:54 PM - Aug 11, 2017

consider
the
tradeoffs

~~Loon~~

~~In~~

DO AS I SAY,
not as I do.

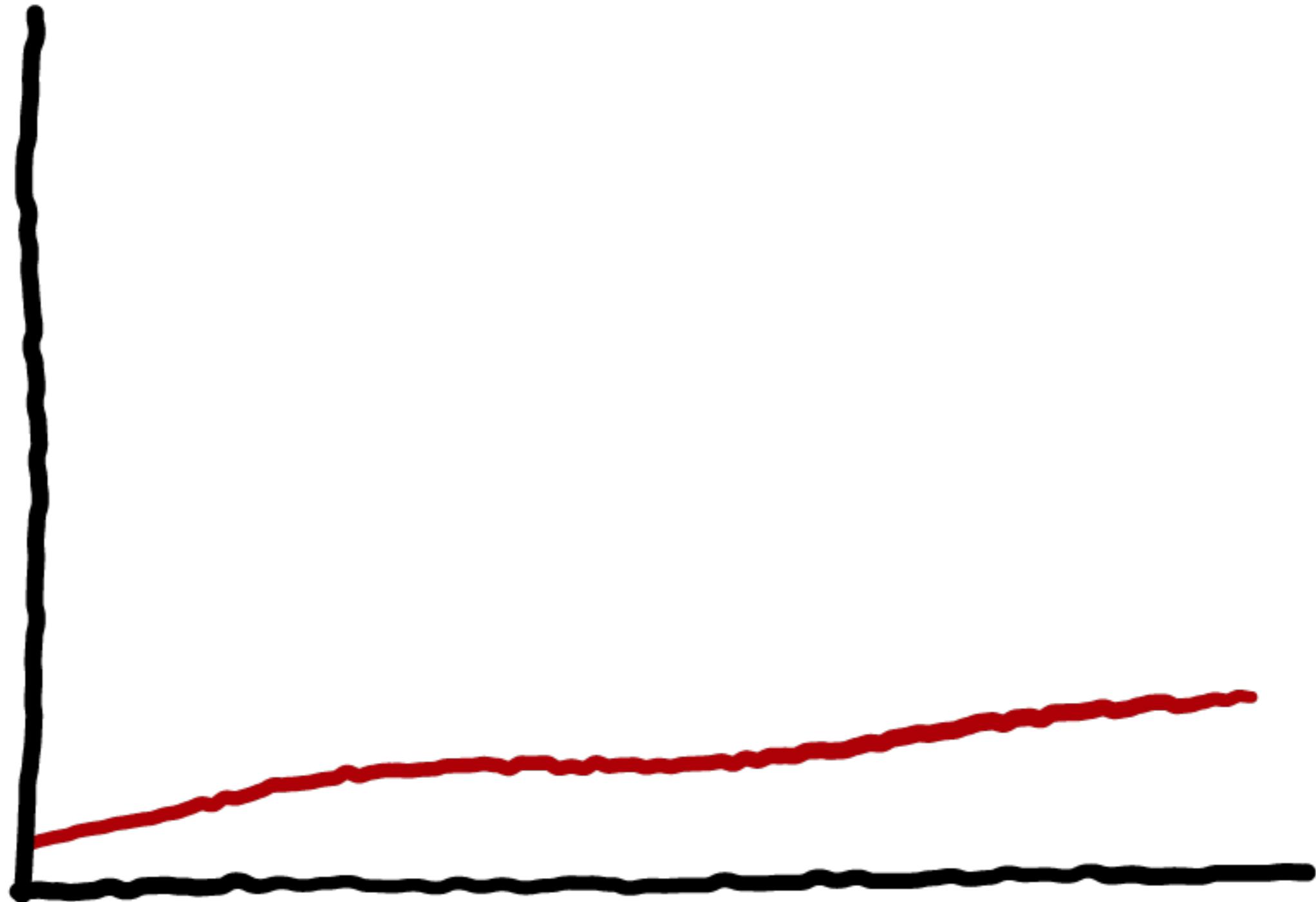
Your life is too
high a cost.

- me, mentoring

reduce
harm from
burnout

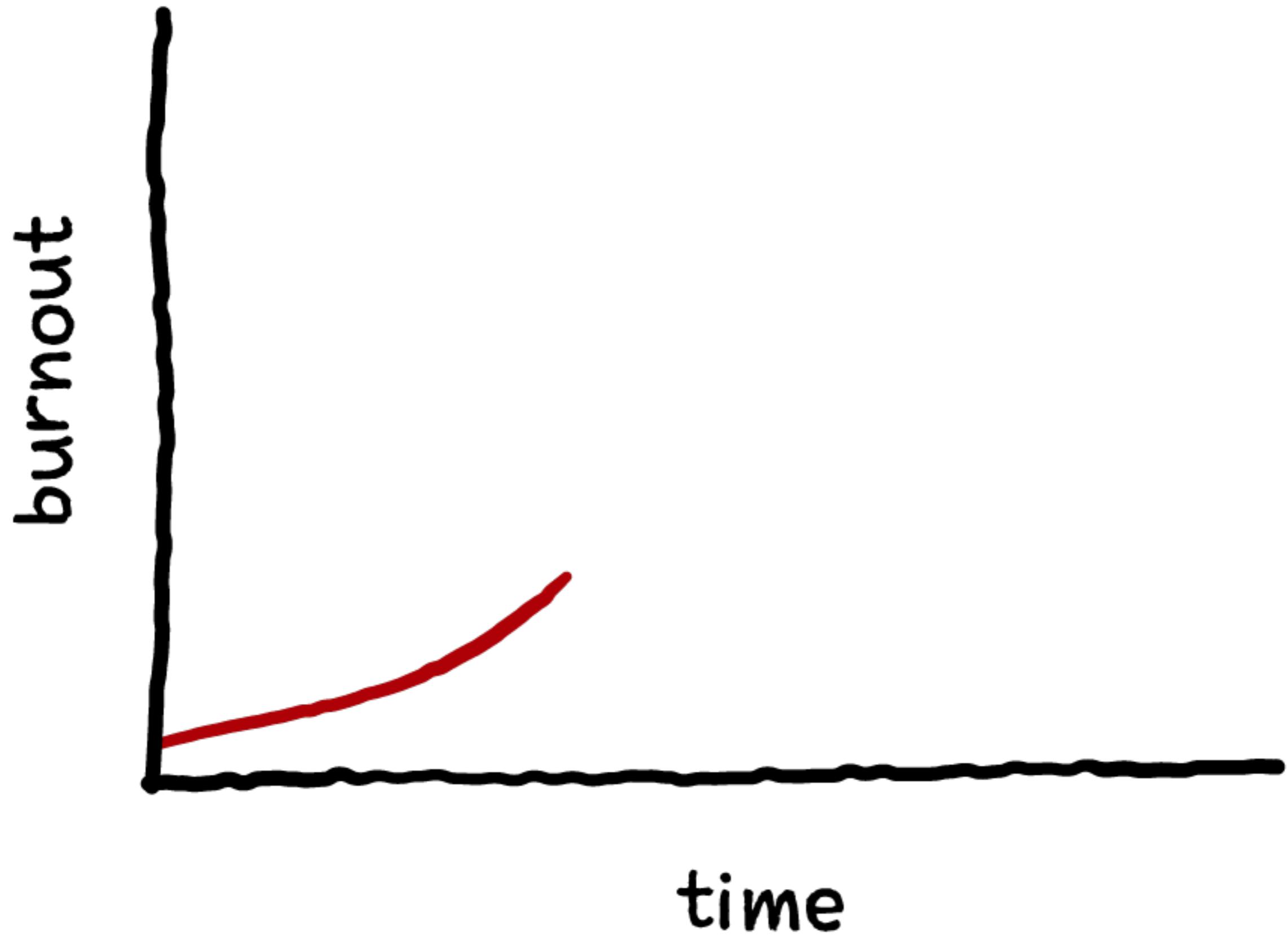
**twice as hard for
half as much**

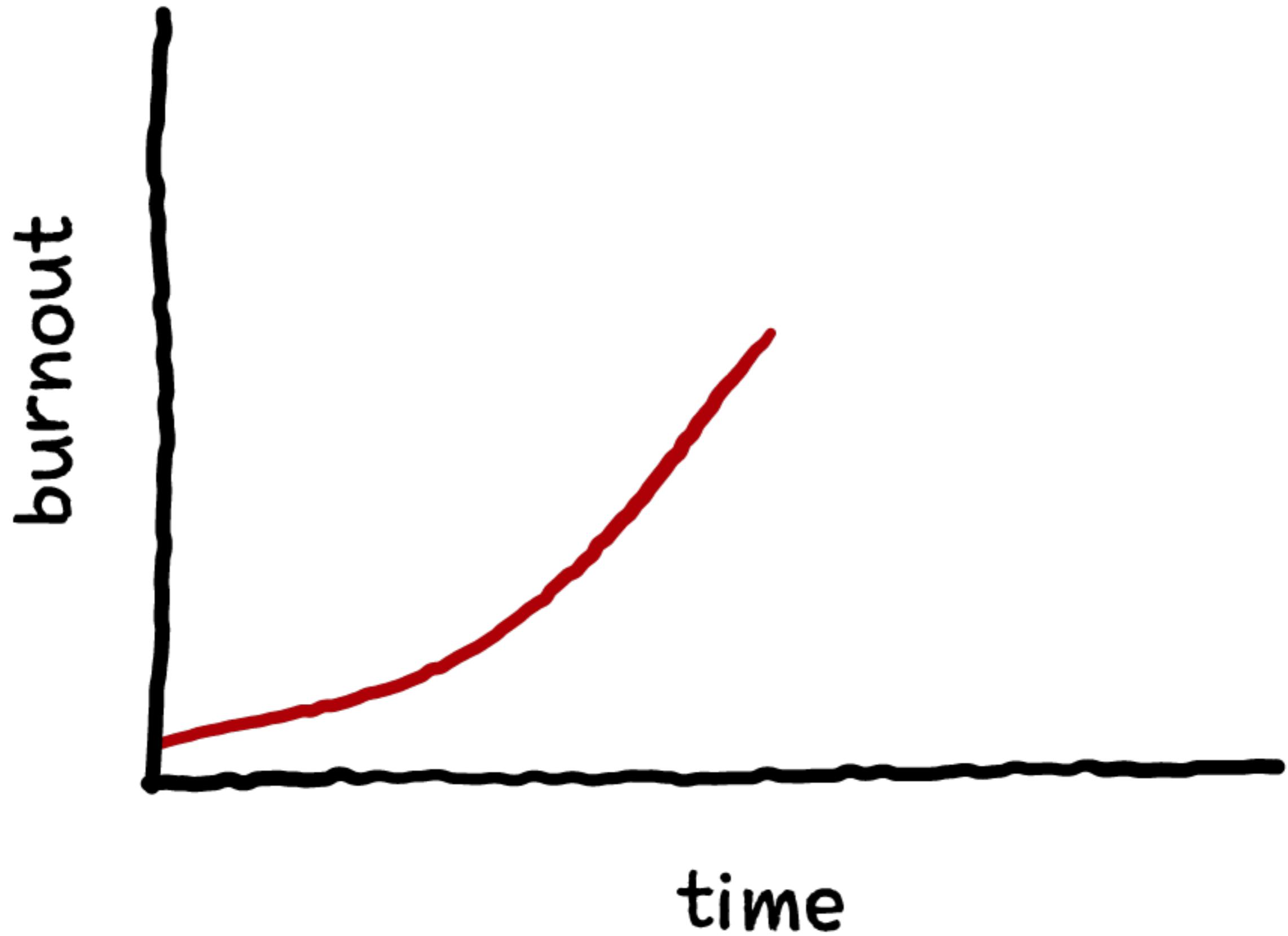
burnout

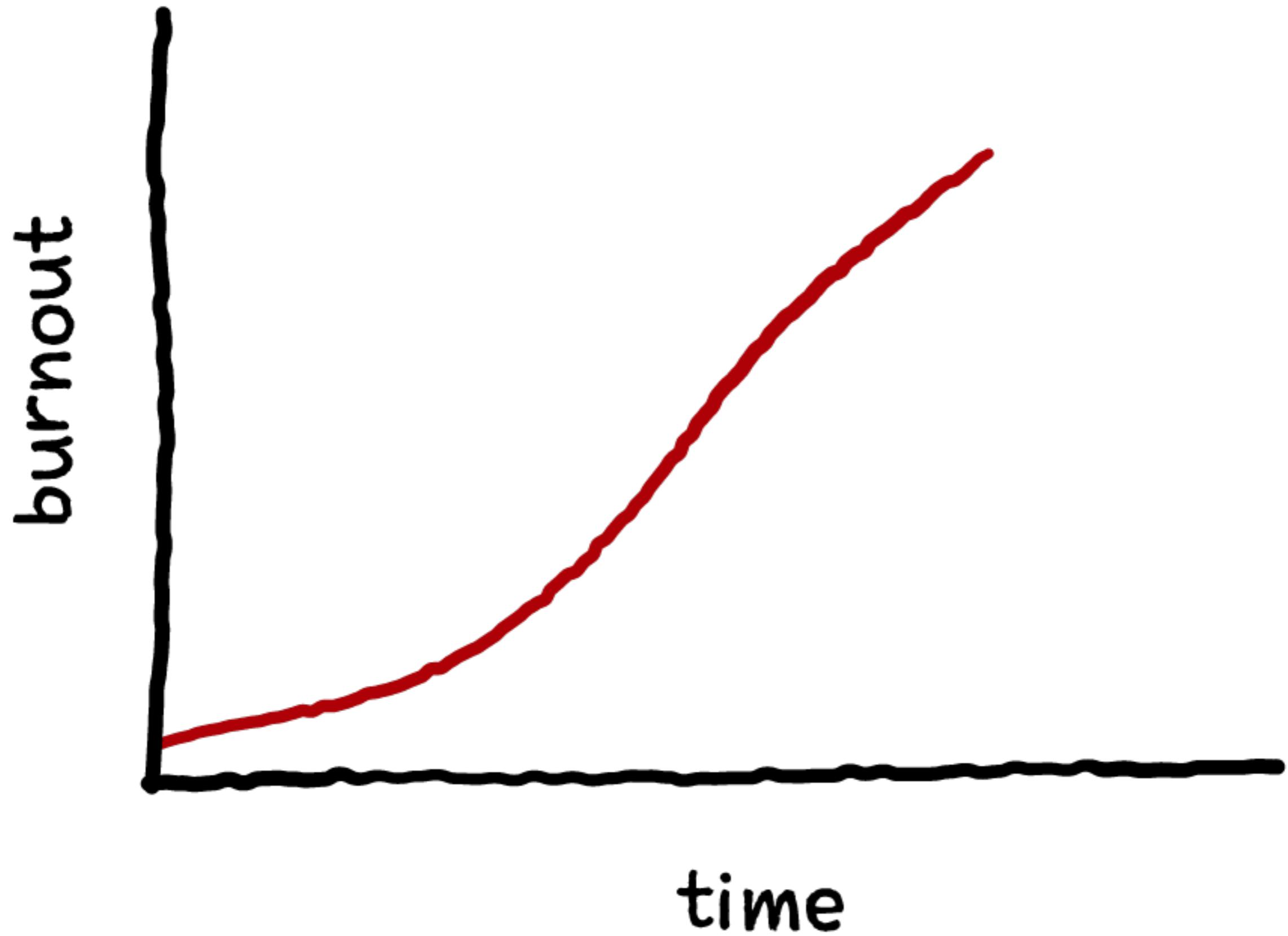


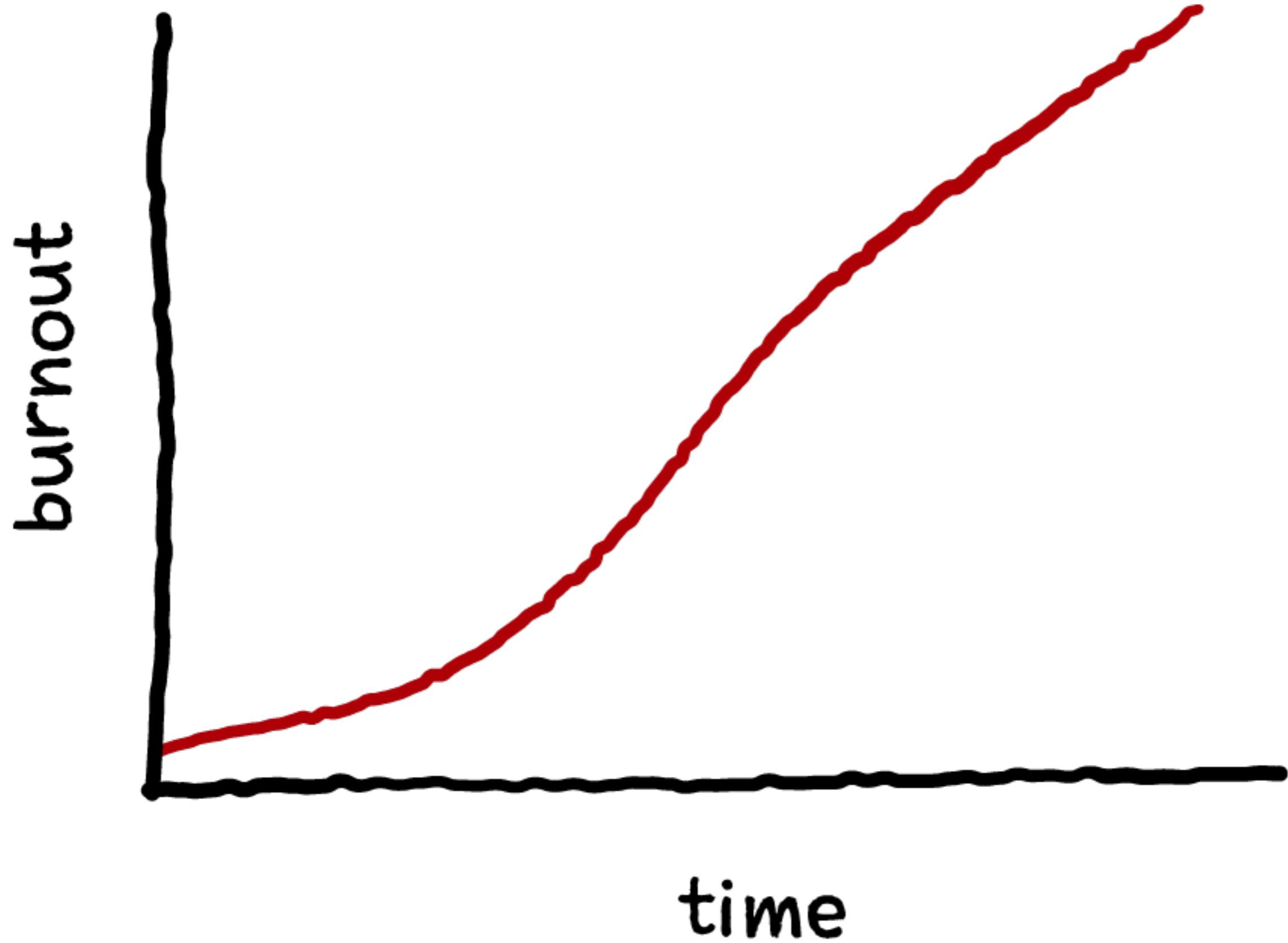
time

Say NO!





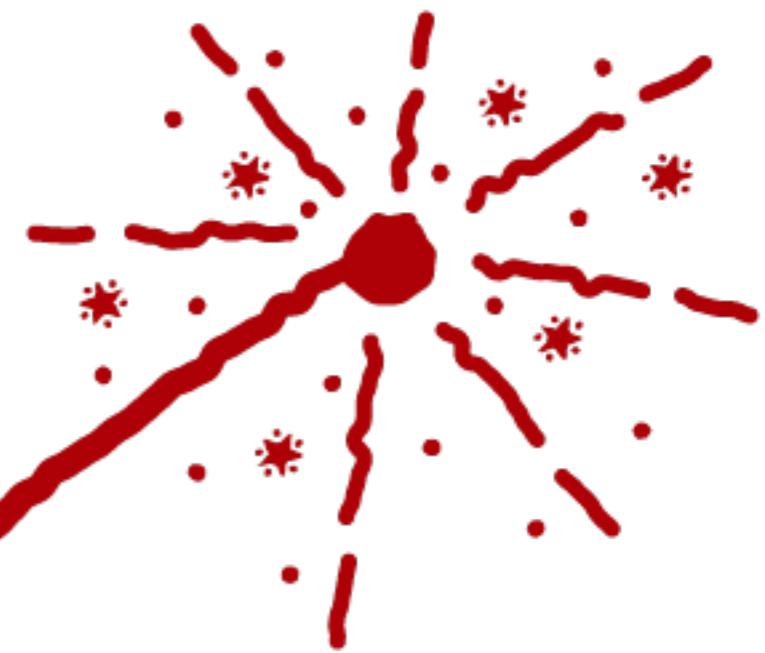




burnout



time



Say NO!

**Say NO to
corporate
diversity work**

story

time!

Diversity work
should be its
own reward.

- some billionaire

on jmpagano leaving

10. The following is a list of statements concerning the use of the Internet. Indicate whether each statement is true or false.

A highly pixelated, low-resolution image showing a blue rectangular shape centered against a background of grey and white pixels.

No one individual issue contributed to my decision to leave. It was a thousand things accumulating to a sign that read GET OUT. SAVE YOURSELF.

I wanted to quit when [REDACTED] I wanted to quit when [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] but I was in the hospital. I wanted to quit when [REDACTED] but I
was still recovering. After yesterday's town hall, I wanted to quit, so I did. It was the last straw.

[View Details](#) | [Edit](#) | [Delete](#)

A horizontal bar consisting of a grid of gray pixels, likely representing a grayscale image or a signal waveform.



Diversity work
should be its
own reward.

- some billionaire

**surviving is
diversity work**

SOMETHING

TO WATCH

OUT FOR

conventional wisdom

can hurt you

if you are different

the confidence
of a mediocre
white man

it works
because you're a
white man

**impostor
syndrome**

**stereotype
threat**

twice as hard
for half as much

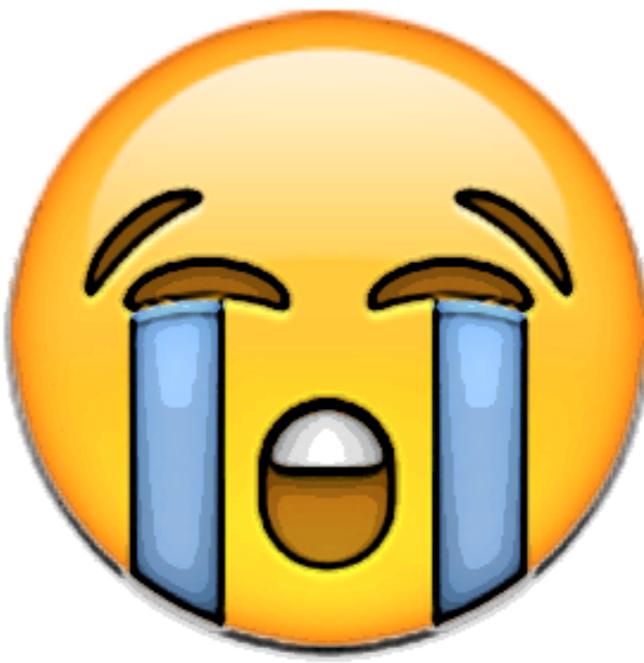
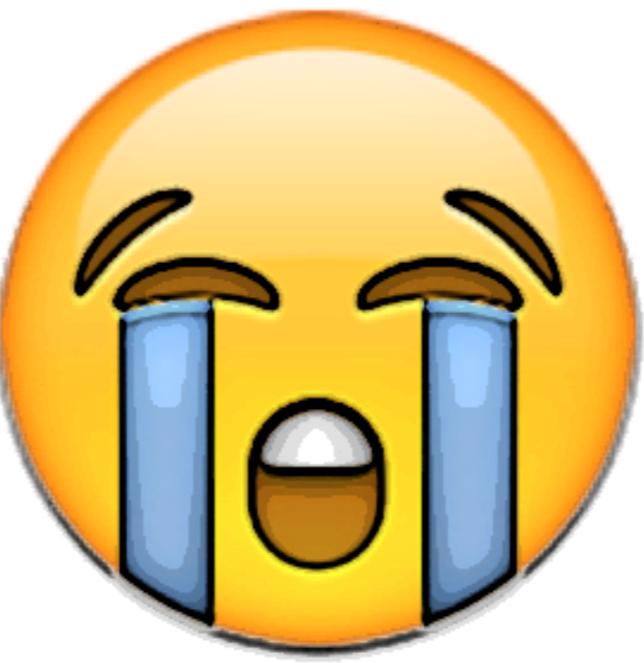
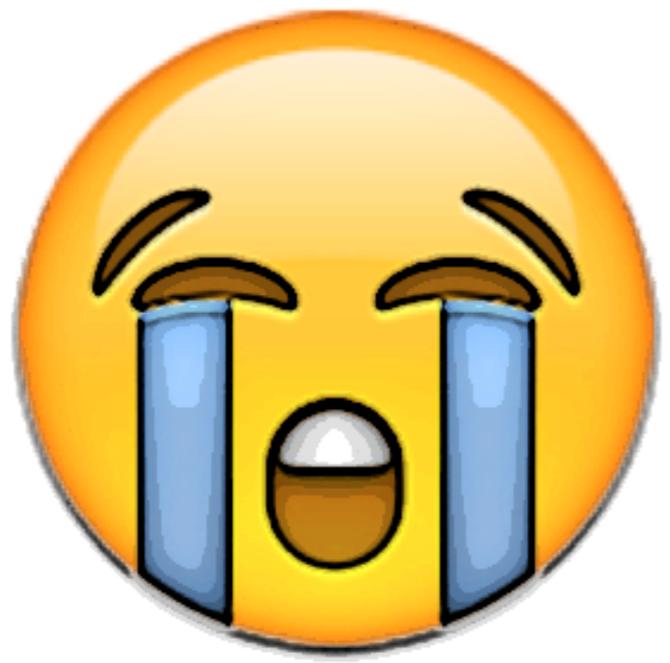
CONFIDENCE

your hard-earned
confidence can be
used **against** you

“uncomfortable”

“aggressive”

“*abrasive*”



story

time!



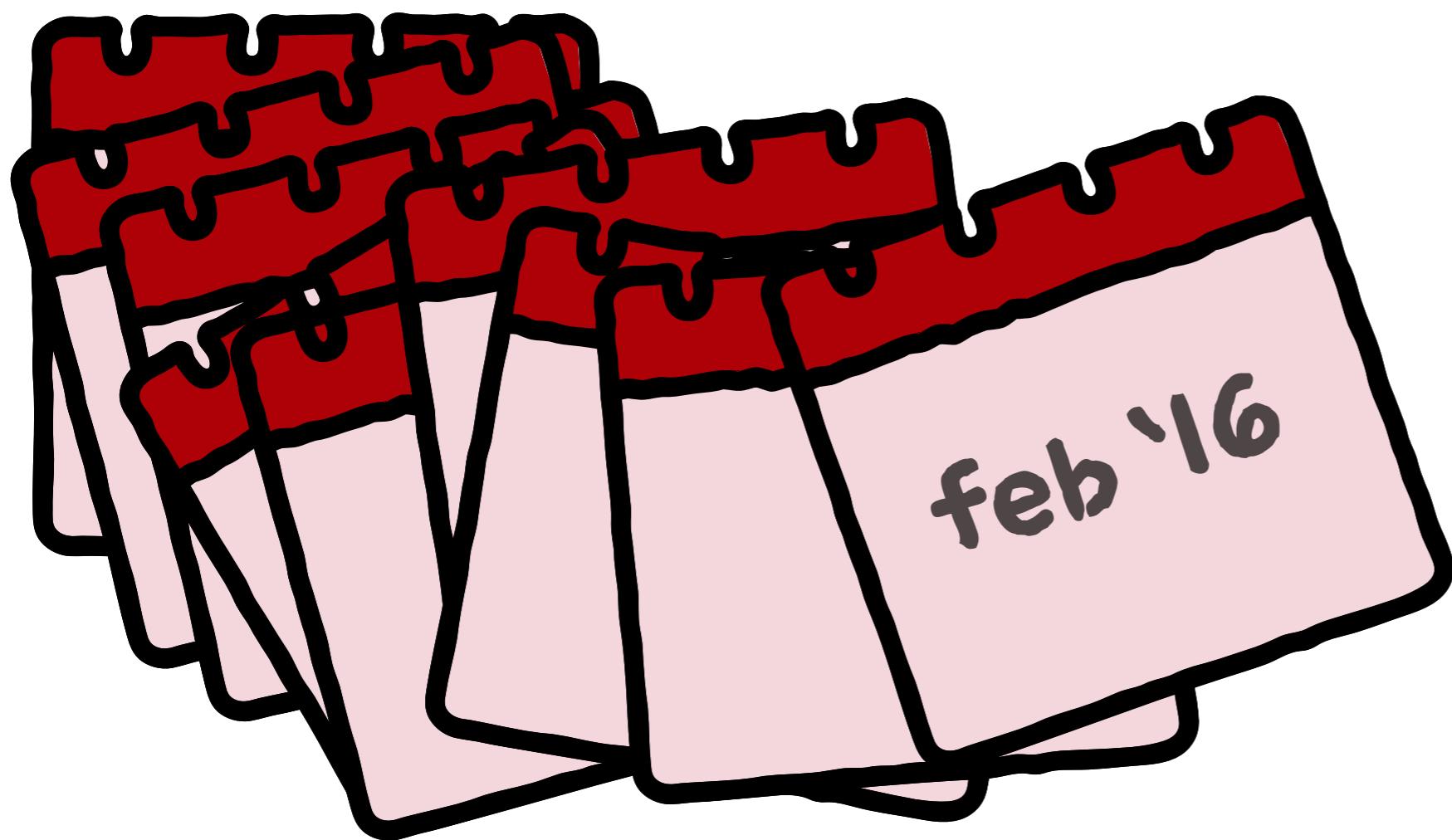
Where I am now

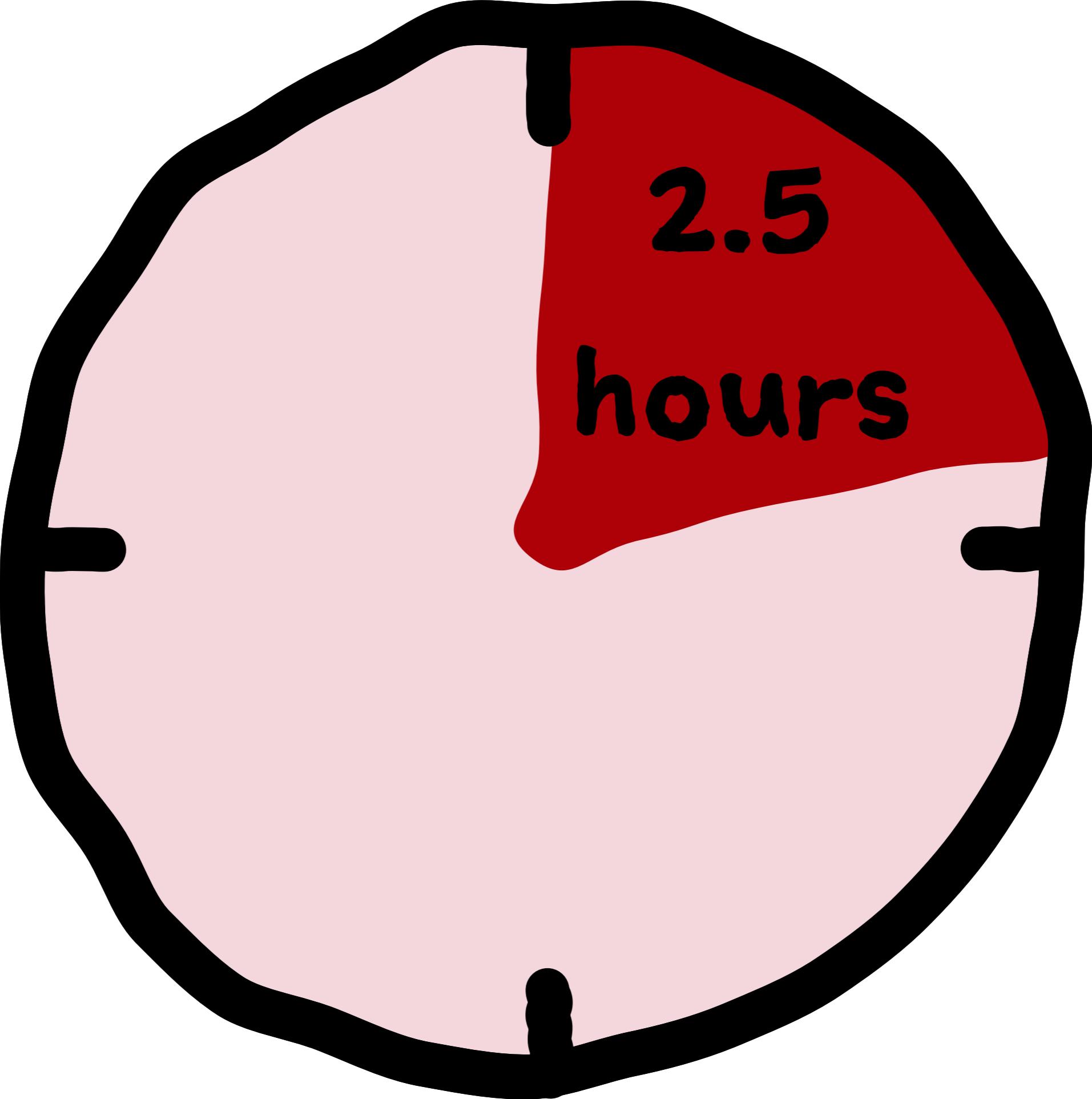
Where I want to be

Where work can be

— — — Me flying across the country with two disgruntled cats

9 months





2.5

hours

A PROBLEM

ME

BAD
“CULTURE FIT”

NEGATIVE
— VIBES —

Examples?

NEGATIVE
VIBES

Actions?

NEGATIVE
— VIBES —

Don't smile
enough in the
morning

Too much
constructive
feedback

Too much
emotional labor
for teammates

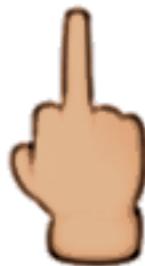
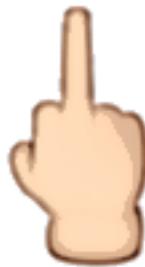
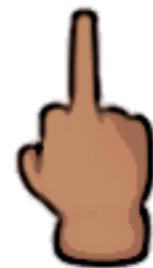
Entitled for
expecting
professional
behavior at work

Ruining the fun

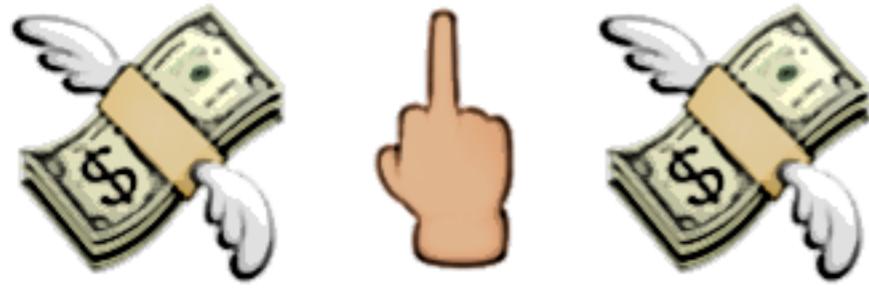
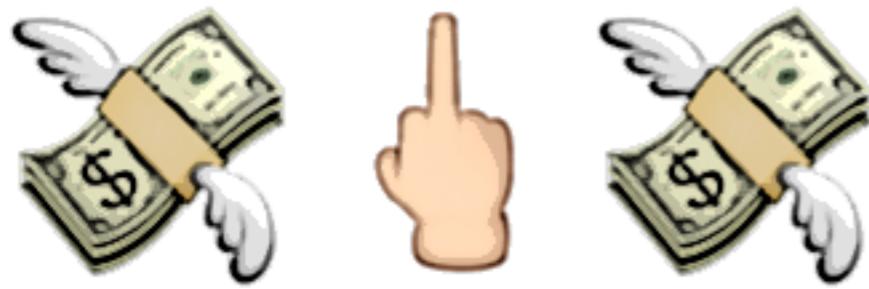
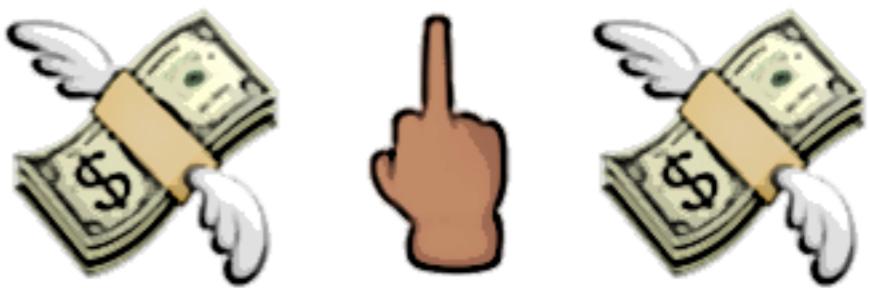
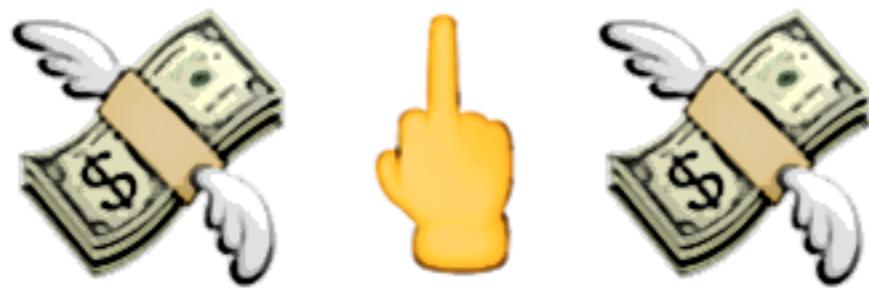
Fix the ~vibes~
or we'll **fire** you
for "culture fit"

I quit!

FUCK YOU MONEY



FUCK YOU MONEY



THANK YOU!

<3

(there's normally
a mic drop here,
but y'all get to
ask questions because
you're awesome)

Attribution

- <https://twitter.com/feministy/status/629760982873575424>
- Lungs by Sergey Demushkin from the Noun Project (modified, colors added) - <https://thenounproject.com/term/lungs/382335/>
- Source for Stranger Things style slides - <http://makeitstranger.com/feminist-killjoy>
- Tutorial that helped me make many of the slides using AI - <http://medialoot.com/blog/create-a-convincing-hand-drawn-effect-in-illustrator/>

Additional Reading

- Julie's Lean In Livetweets - <https://storify.com/juliepagano/julie-s-lean-in-livetweets>
- Julie's posting about what she was looking for in a job - <http://juliepagano.com/blog/2015/04/23/for-a-limited-time-only-looking-for-work/>

Content Notice

High level discussion of *-isms, bias, mental health impact, and other side effects of being from a marginalized or underrepresented group in tech.

Brief discussion of medical issues related to pulmonary embolisms.

Color Palettes

- #AD0007 - Red
- #F4D7DD - Pink
- #B3B3B3 - Light grey
- #5D5D5D - Grey
- #CCE9FE - light blue
- #FDFDCB - light yellow

Fonts

- Sharpie
- COMIC ZINE OT
- Sketchnote Text
- American Typewriter

• IMPACT LABEL

● TOO DRUNK TO FUCK