

# Supporting Individuals with FASD: Co-Regulation, Sensory Strategies and Trauma Informed Practice

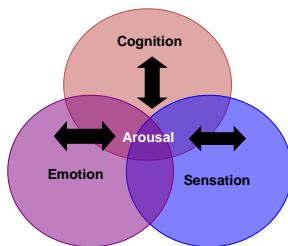
Kim Barthel, OTR  
FASD Keyworker Conference  
Vancouver, January 2018

## Self-Regulation

- Self-regulation is about how we manage our levels of arousal.
- Heightened arousal can come from our senses, emotions, even thoughts.
- Problematic behaviours can be seen as invaluable signs that a person's arousal level is out of balance.



## Arousal is the Foundation of Behaviour





## The Power of Relationship

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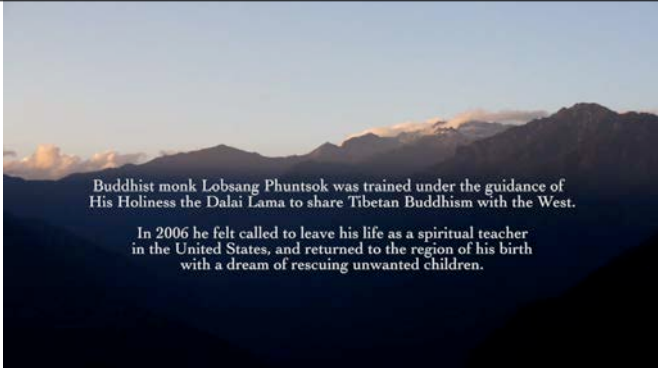
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Buddhist monk Lobsang Phuntsok was trained under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to share Tibetan Buddhism with the West.

In 2006 he felt called to leave his life as a spiritual teacher in the United States, and returned to the region of his birth with a dream of rescuing unwanted children.

"Tashi and the Monk" [www.jhamtsegatsal.org](http://www.jhamtsegatsal.org)

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## Stress and Learning

- Stress interrupts learning.
- When a child feels judged or stressed, the learning centres in the brain shut down.
- The first function compromised by stress is language processing and communication.



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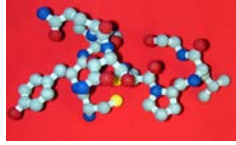
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## The Chemistry of Love

- Oxytocin is released when we feel loved and understood.
- Pleasant experiences with people, good touch and warm friendly voices elicit the release of oxytocin
- Decreases anxiety and soothes stress
- Oxytocin release increases eye gaze
- Love is a healing force.



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"Tashi and the Monk" [www.jhamtsegatsal.org](http://www.jhamtsegatsal.org)

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## Challenging Behaviour

- When children feel good about themselves they have no reason to act out.
- Acting out as a sign that something is wrong with in a child who lacks the ability to articulate his or her feelings.
- When children feel unloved and abandoned, they feel empty and their emptiness can be replaced with pain, rage and violence.



Cozolino, 2014

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## Art of Attuned Regulation

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## Putting your Mind in the Mind of the Child



The eyes hold the information of affect

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## Non-Verbals

- Pay attention to your facial expressions, postures, and tone of voice because they have a powerful influence on the emotional climate of your interaction.
- Make sure to take care of yourself because your clients feel your exhaustion, sadness, or despair.
- Practice what you preach.
- A keyworker's stress, fatigue and anger will resonate within clients via their mirror neuron systems.

Cozolino, 2014

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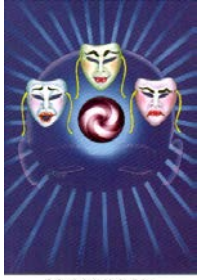
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# Awareness of Projections



Be aware of how the situation affects you personally, and therefore, how your reaction affects the situation.

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# Trust



✓ The development of trust is established through the building of positive feelings between the key worker and the client.

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# Tone of Voice

- When we are under stress, our tone of voice changes taking on a quality of irritability and frustration.
- This will immediately stimulate a defensive reaction in the listener's brain that will undermine the potential of having a productive dialogue even before the conversation begins.



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# Listening

- “When you are listening to others, imagine your heart as a third ear.”
- Use it to pay attention to the emotions behind the words being said.
- Think of your body as a satellite dish picking up faint vibrations from within your clients and see if you can translate them into words that can be shared.



Cozolino, 2014

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## The Healing Power of Holding Space



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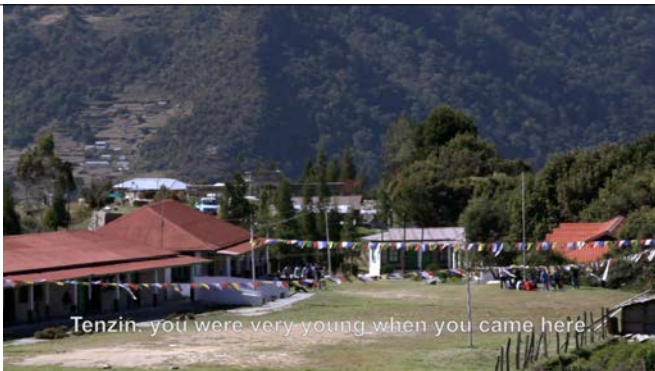
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Tenzin- you were very young when you came here.

“Tashi and the Monk” [www.jhamtsegatsal.org](http://www.jhamtsegatsal.org)

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## Community of Practice



- Network of enthusiasts
- Share and create knowledge
- Shared interest
- Diversity
- **They care!**

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## Mindfulness



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## Compassion



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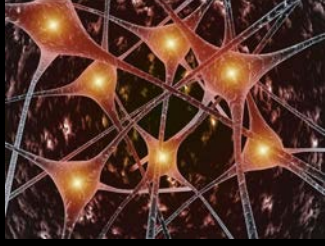
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# Is it Sensory or Is it Behaviour?

Psychological processes and sensory processing are both neurobiological events.



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## Becoming a Sensory Detective



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## Techniques for Self-Regulation



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# The Primal

Jaak Panksepp - The Primal Power of Play

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Rhythm provides structure for movement, telling us how to move through time and space



- The speed of the rhythm can help either up-regulate or down-regulate, dependent upon what is needed.

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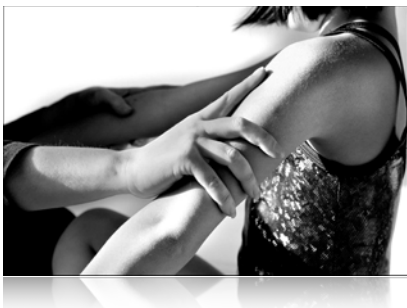
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## Calming Touch



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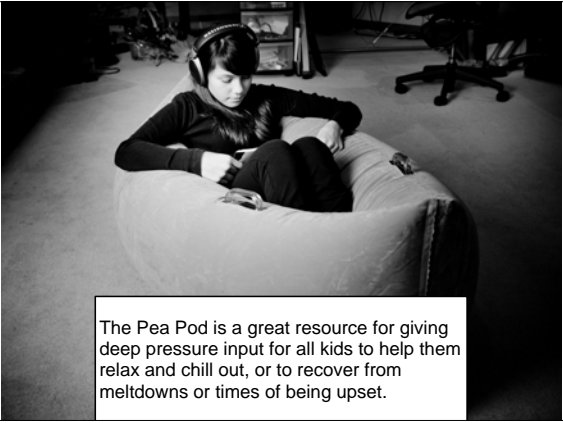
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The Pea Pod is a great resource for giving deep pressure input for all kids to help them relax and chill out, or to recover from meltdowns or times of being upset.

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Kim Barthel - Deep Pressure in the Classroom

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## Snug Vest

- Snug Vest is a therapeutic product for individuals with autism, sensory processing disorder or anxiety.
- Snug Vest inflates to provide adjustable and evenly-distributed pressure to the torso for a comforting hug-like squeeze without pressure placed on the stomach or chest.
- The stylish Snug Vest promotes independence as the user can self-inflate their vest in a discrete way to get the exact amount of safe pressure they need.

[snugvest.com](http://snugvest.com)

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Lycra Swings

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Kim Barthel - Vestibular

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Therapeutic Listening

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### When to use Therapeutic Listening?

- *Therapeutic Listening* is a specific sound-based intervention that is embedded in a developmental and sensory integration perspective.
- The music in Therapeutic Listening gives the listener unique and precisely controlled sensory information.
- The music is electronically modified to highlight the parts of the sound spectrum that naturally capture attention and activate body movement, synchronizing it with the environment.
- It uses electronic modifications, along with the organized, rhythmical sound patterns inherent in music, to trigger the self-organizing capacities of the nervous system.

[vitalinks.net](http://vitalinks.net)

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Unique Spaces for Learning

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Early Learning Centre

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## Movement and Learning



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## Moving to Learn



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### What is Trauma-Informed Practice?

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"**Trauma Informed Care** is an organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of **trauma**."



<http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/>

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### Trauma Informed Principles

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1. There is always a reason for the behaviour.
2. Promoting a culture of comfort and safety.
3. Recognizing situations that are potentially re-traumatizing.
4. Reinforcing training for all staff to create a culture of compassion.
5. Transforming language used to describe behaviour.
6. Recognizing the role of relationship as a healing force.

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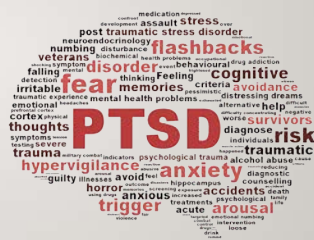
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Trauma is an experience that creates a lasting, substantial negative psychological impact.

Traumatic events may be single occurrences, or several experiences that become traumatic when they are combined.

## What is Trauma?



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## How Does Trauma Present?

- Decreased ability to think and problem solve, with exaggerated emotional responses.
- Children and adults with histories of child abuse often respond with exaggerated arousal and emotion to minor triggers.
- Can get stuck in overload or dissociation, appearing tuned out and shut down.
- Less capacity for memory and new learning.
- Difficulty self-regulating.



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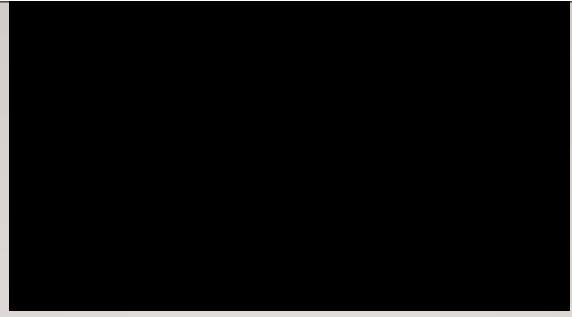
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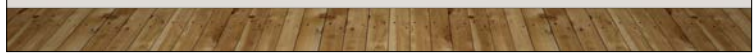
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Kim and Theo - Trauma Affects Us All



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## Trauma Can Begin in Utero



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## Even Before Birth

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Even before birth we are capable of being totally overwhelmed with fear - with almost no ability to inhibit the fear or regulate it.



We rely entirely upon our mom's ability to regulate herself in order to calm our fear.

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## Maternal Depression

- When children grow up in an environment of mental illness, the development of their brains may be seriously weakened, with implications for their ability to learn as well as for their own later physical and mental health.



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Ed Tronick - Still Face Experiment

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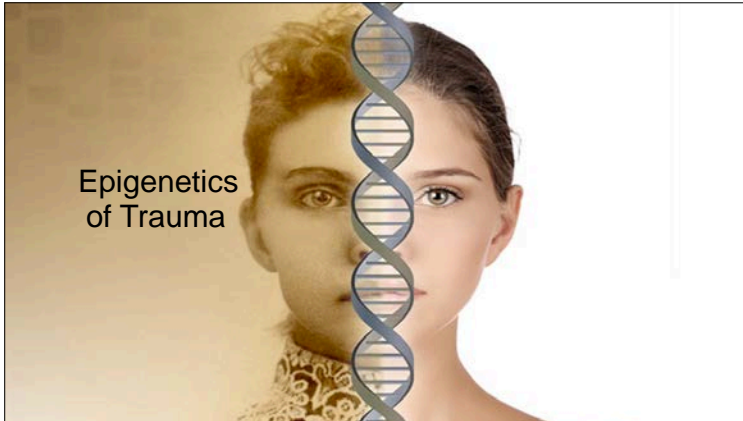
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Epigenetics  
of Trauma

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### Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

- Mothers who had lower levels of cortisol (chronic stress) had babies with lower cortisol.
- Both maternal and paternal exposure to trauma contributed equally to depression and anxiety in their offspring.
- Cortisol suppression in Holocaust offspring. (Lehrner, et al, 2014)
- 911 study (Yehuda, 2015): Relationship between maternal PTSD and PTSD in infant offspring.
- Males pass stress related changes to their male offspring via sperm.

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Manitoba Attachment Network - Serve and Return

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### Early Exposure to Violence

- If during early childhood, the primitive “lizard brain” has been overstimulated through exposure to continual traumatic stress, while the thinking brain has received scant amounts of nurturing, the future scales will be tipped strongly in favour of violent behaviour...

Verny, 2002



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Anxiety in Children

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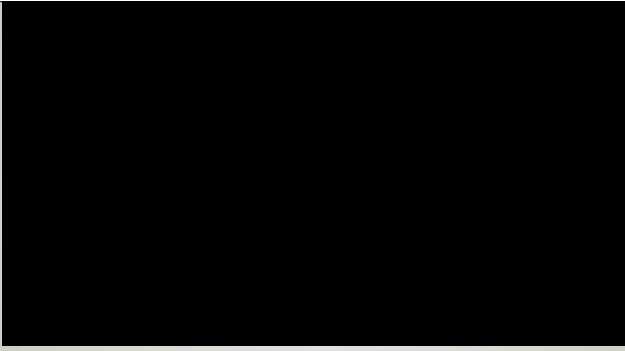
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Kim and Theo - Elevated Stress Response

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### Neurobiology of Developmental Trauma

- Where one suffers true neglect or abuse, the oxytocin response may be so under-developed that the child's and later the adult's brain/body gets locked into fight, flight, fright.
- Chronic stress may lead to excessive pruning in certain brain regions while the brain is developing, resulting in an "under-developed" nervous system.

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### Neglect

- The brain reacts to neglect as a threat to survival.
- Neglected infants' brains do not receive sufficient stimulation for optimum development and growth.
- Neglect is the most rapidly increasing form of abuse.
- Adults who have experienced neglect as children have smaller brains and typically lower IQ.

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## Dissociation



- Infants or children who are the victims of repeated abuse may respond to that abuse, and later in life to other unpleasantness, by mentally and emotionally removing themselves from the situation.
- This may be what's going on when people zone out.

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## Implicit Memory

- Implicit memory is the only form of remembering information from the first 12-18 months of life.
- Implicit memory creates an anticipation of how life will unfold and remains below the level of conscious awareness, guiding our ongoing perceptions and actions in ways that tend to reinforce "foregone" conclusions.



[https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-0-387-79948-3\\_1129](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-0-387-79948-3_1129)

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## Triggers

- Someone rejecting you.
  - Someone leaving you (or threatening that they will).
- Someone discounting or ignoring you.
  - Someone being unavailable to you.
- Someone giving you a disapproving look.
  - Someone blaming or shaming you.
- Someone being judgmental or critical of you.
  - Someone being too busy to make time for you.
- Someone not appearing to be happy to see you.
  - Someone coming on to you sexually in a needy way.
- Someone trying to control you.
  - Someone being needy, or trying to smother you.

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Some underlying beliefs some of us carry, that may help us understand why we get triggered:

- 1) We're feeling rejected or abandoned
- 2) We're feeling "not good enough"
- 2) We're feeling "not lovable"

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The only one you can change is yourself

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## Loss

- During the early weeks following the loss of a loved one, the person affected may not be able to accept that the loss has really taken place.
- Denial and expressions of disbelief are common.
- There is often an intense urge to make contact with the person who has left.
- There can be sadness and uncontrollable crying.
- Loss of a primary attachment figure, whether by separation or death, often feels like a loss of self.

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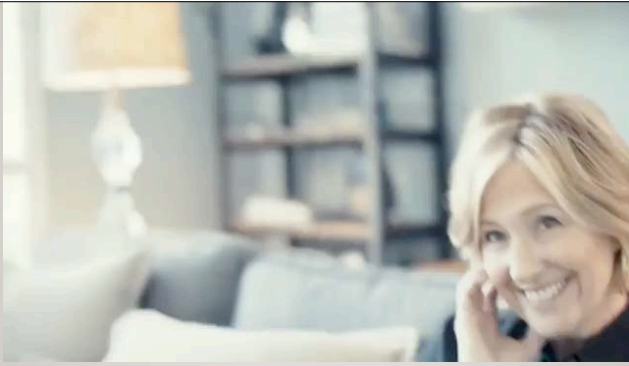
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Brené Brown - Boundaries

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## Learning to Sit with your Shit

- When we learn to sit with our shit, tolerating and experiencing our emotions, the emotions transform themselves into wisdom.
- With increased wisdom comes a greater capacity for compassion.
- True "self-regulation" comes from learning to be with our emotions, allowing us to create conscious actions and reactions to others.

Chapter 9 - *Conversations with a Rattlesnake*

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## Thank you!

[www.kimbarthel.ca](http://www.kimbarthel.ca)

Twitter: @kimbarthelotr

Facebook: Kim Barthel

[www.conversationswitharattlesnake.ca](http://www.conversationswitharattlesnake.ca)

Twitter: @CWAR\_

Supporting the conscious evolution of the human spirit



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