

Gaming and Gambling Awareness and Harm Prevention: Supporting Children in Care Workbook

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Introduction

Thank you for attending our YGAM Gaming and Gambling Awareness and Harm Prevention: Supporting Children in Care workshop.

This workbook has been designed to complement your learning and offer information, activities and resources for use with the children in your care. We have created activities which you may find useful to open conversations about gaming and gambling, explore behaviours and support children to think critically about their digital lives, gaming and gambling. This is explored through the lens of care experience young people who may have experienced additional challenges in their lives to their peers. In the development of this workbook, we have worked with care leavers, carers and care experienced individuals to ensure relevance to your practise.

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Please also visit us at: <https://parents.ygam.org/> where you can find further complementary information and resources.

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Behind the Behaviour

During puberty, the brain is dominated by emotions.⁽¹⁾ Children in care may have faced adverse childhood experiences which has distorted the way their brains have developed. A child's decision making is emotionally led; their brain is not always thinking logically. Their emotions dominate. This leads to children taking risks in all aspects of life. Children in care are vulnerable and can find it hard to express their feelings and can turn to unsafe methods as an outlet for these emotions.

Gaming can provide an outlet for children and young people to express their emotions, provide an escape, or experience feel-good chemicals they may not have experienced before. In turn, this may increase the engagement of such activities and the child may not pause to reflect on their behaviour, the risks, and consequences.

Research suggests care experienced children might be more susceptible to gambling harms.⁽²⁾

For you, these behaviours can impact on your household, in school and within friendship groups. This can be one of the biggest challenges as it can be hard to find effective strategies to address the behaviour whilst managing the impact on others. Some of these behaviours can be interpreted as 'resistant' and/or 'unmotivated'. However, we need to examine the possibility that these behaviours are a way of your child expressing an unmet need or cognitive difficulty. Understanding reasons for behaviour can help you adjust your approach.

Behind the Behaviour

Avoidant children may appear to not care as they have learnt to mask their emotions and feelings (for fear of punishment). They may struggle to follow rules and boundaries yet may not ask for support. (3)

Suggestion

When discussing rules and boundaries, try mind-mapping or use scenarios to explore their behaviour and agree actions. Children need clear structured messages, facts and boundaries delivered in bite size chunks to allow them to digest and follow.

Hyper-aroused children are constantly on high alert and therefore struggle to concentrate as their bodies are on constant alert and this takes precedence in their brain. Due to this they may display negative behaviours and engage in risky behaviours. (3)

Suggestion

Break down activities and transitions into small steps. Look at different coping strategies to calm your child down.

Dissociation may appear to be day-dreaming or not listening when you talk to them. However, their brain has developed differently and their way of coping with their trauma is to naturally switch off. They are unable to do tasks or follow instructions. (3)

Suggestion

Provide consistent boundaries and routines for your child to follow. They may benefit from having a 'safe space' to go to when it becomes overwhelming or when they finish gaming.

Online game play offers many positives – developing skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. New and existing friendships develop, and a sense of achievement can be felt when you beat an opponent or progress to the next level.

However, there are risks too and it is important that you and your child are aware of these.

Behaviour

Young people have told us about the unkind and unacceptable behaviours they have encountered online. Multiplayer games, chat functions and talking to others can generate negative behaviours.

Bullying – Cruel comments, upsetting memes and omitting others from the game are just some of the things young people have told us they encounter whilst playing online and these issues often continue offline too.

Peer pressure – Players can feel pressurised to buy additional content to remain in the game with their friends or play for longer periods. They may experience fear of missing out. FOMO

Other pressures include feeling forced into posting messages or hurtful content to prove their worth or be accepted

Online play offers many positives – developing skills such as communication, teamwork problem solving. New and existing friendships may develop, and a sense of achievement can be felt when you beat a rival or progress to the next level.

However, there are risks too and it is important that you and your child are aware of these.

Safety issues

As multiplayer games continue to grow in popularity, the live chat functions that many of these titles feature bring with them new potential harms as perpetrators target young people:

- Pretending to be of a similar age and encouraging them to send indecent images or perform sexual acts.
- Offering money or in-app items to tempt young people into inappropriate actions.
- Arranging meet ups via private messaging, leading to a young person being in danger.
- Introducing extreme views or grooming a young person for sexual gratification or to carry out other illegal activity.

Safeguarding

As parents and carers, these simple actions can help prevent harm:

- ✓ Keep devices and gameplay in shared areas of the house rather than a bedroom so you can monitor conversations, even if your child wears headphones you can still listen in and pick up on anything suspicious.
- ✓ Check who your child is playing with, ask how they know that person.
- ✓ If your child becomes secretive, mentions a new friend, has new/unexplained possessions or money, talk to your child to find out more.
- ✓ Check security settings and keep accounts private.
- ✓ Set the Wi-fi on their devices to turn off at certain times so they cannot go online when they should be sleeping.
- ✓ Have discussions around unsuitable and inappropriate behaviours. Ask for their views and explain why it could be a problem before agreeing on security steps for them to follow along with what to do if they access content which makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

In a recent report from the Internet Watch Foundation⁽⁹⁾ looking at abuse imagery and content videos from children.

They investigated a record 361,000 reports of inappropriate images and videos, mainly targeting 7-10 year olds.

Typically, the victims were in their bedroom or a bathroom with the door closed, apparently within a home environment.

Spotting the Signs of Harm: Gaming

The World Health Organisation has defined Gaming Disorder as a mental health condition ⁽⁴⁾. This gaming behaviour pattern is characterised by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behaviour pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months. ⁽⁴⁾. The signs of Gaming Disorder may include:



Emotional Signs

- Preoccupation with gaming
- Downplaying time spent gaming
- Lack of interest in other things
- Unable to set time limits
- Struggle to focus
- Avoiding family and friends
- Being overly defensive

Physical Signs

- Persistent headaches or migraines
- Neglecting hygiene
- Extreme fatigue
- Carpel tunnel syndrome



Spotting the Signs of Harm - Gambling

- Unexplained amounts of money or new possessions
- Possessions or money going missing
- Finding it hard to manage or stop
- Chasing losses or suffering debt issues
- Decline in schoolwork and/or attendance
- Gambling until you have nothing left
- Sudden interest in the odds of sport rather than the sport itself

- Selling possessions
- Feeling anxious and/or worried
- Losing interest in hobbies or interests
- Feeling tired or fatigued
- Struggle to focus/preoccupied
- Being secretive
- Arguing with family or friends
- Neglecting personal needs
- Lying about it

Bonus!



William Glasser's Choice Theory

According to Dr. William Glasser [\(5\)](#), we are all born with five genetically encoded needs. We call it the Basic Needs. These needs motivate us in terms of how we try to live our lives.

Fun

Enjoyment
Excitement
Laughter
Learning
Being challenged
Change

Survival

Safety
Clothing
Food
Warmth
Health
Rest
Relaxation

Power

Recognition
Success
Importance
Skills
Achievement
Sense of control

Freedom

Freedom to choose
Independence
Freedom from
Freedom to

Belonging

Feeling loved
Needed
Feeling respected
Friendships
Sharing
Co-operation



William Glasser's Choice Theory

According to Dr. William Glasser, we are all born with five genetically encoded needs. In Choice Theory, we call it the Basic Needs. These needs motivate us in terms of how we try to live our lives.

Think about the child(ren) in your care and their previous experiences. Using Dr Glasser's Choice Theory consider the following questions:

- Has each child had these needs met previously?
- Which of these needs may each child be currently missing from their lives?
- How have they used risky or unsafe practices to try and meet these needs?
- How might gaming meet each of these 5 needs?

Explore how you can support each child to have these needs met. This could include holding conversations with each child to identify their thoughts and what they feel they need. Implementing healthy strategies and activities can reduce the risk of a child turning to unsafe coping mechanisms.



William Glasser's Choice Theory

This case study can be used to explore the Choice Theory and how gaming can meet unmet needs.

Jase (13) has recently been placed in to care after his social worker identified a series of neglect from his family. He doesn't talk much and chooses to spend all his time gaming. Jase has struggled to stick to the rules and would often come home later than agreed. You have identified that at home Jase was left to his own devices and would often be responsible for looking after his younger siblings. His siblings have been placed with another carer.

Using the Choice Theory, you identify that Jase is:

- **Missing the need for freedom:** Previously he could control what he did, had his independence and he made choices on behalf of his siblings. Now his foster family are giving him deadlines for coming home, rules to follow in the house and making choices on his behalf.
- **Missing the need for belonging:** Jase is missing being needed by his siblings, having them respect him and being loved. This is a new house with new people so Jase will not feel he belongs there yet.
- **Missing the need of Power:** Jase had a sense of control at home as he was ultimately in charge. He was important in keeping the family functioning. Now there are adults in charge, making decisions. Although this is to help Jase, he may be unlikely to see that yet.

Gaming has met these needs.

Jase is in control of his character. He can control what his character does, which route to take and can keep his character safe. When he plays against others as a team, he feels he belongs and is respected, especially when his team wins, or he is the last man standing. Jase can escape from the situation he is in and find some peace for a while whilst he plays. He can have a break from worrying about his siblings.

C.I.D Technique

What is C.I.D?

C.I.D is a technique developed by Psychological⁶ to help parents and carers to choose an appropriate action when dealing with challenging behaviour. This prevents boundary overload, reduces conflict and helps to focus on the main issues rather than all issues.

The following three options may be considered when addressing challenging behaviours with your child:

Challenge their behaviour

Ignore their behaviour

Divert their attention

Identifying which option to choose depends on the situation and its severity. The most important thing you need to do is calm the young person down, take them away from the situation and provide breathing space for both parties.

C.I.D Technique

Challenge

Emotions are likely to be running high and you are at risk of a power play battle which could lead to a stand-off, resulting in frustration from both parties and arguments. However, it is important for your child to understand why their behaviour is unacceptable.

You may choose to challenge when you are both calm. Discuss with your child their behaviour and why it is unacceptable. Look at why they may have displayed the behaviour and agree solutions to use the next time in this situation.

Ignore

Often, if you constantly remind your child of boundaries or pick up on every issue you are at risk of your voice becoming nothing more than white noise.

Choose your battles carefully and focus on the bigger issues. For example, a risky behaviour or safeguarding issue cannot be ignored and will need to be challenged. Intervene and explain why the behaviour is unacceptable. If it is a niggle, this can be ignored for a while whilst you focus on the bigger challenges.

Divert

Immediately when you remove your child from playing a game, the lasting image in their mind is that game.

Using a diversion tactic to replace that lasting memory with something else, such as giving them a task to complete, will mean the lasting image of the game will be replaced by something new. However be mindful of the age of your child, a younger child can easily be distracted by a question or task. An older child may require more thought where they require both a physical and mental task.

Responding to Emotions

Practical tips to support your child once they have finished playing on-line.

Young people are unlikely to respond or think with the rational part of their brain. This is due to the rational part of the brain not fully forming until their mid-twenties. When a child finishes gaming, they are still reacting to their feelings and emotions. They may be unable to think or respond logically or address their negative emotions in a safe manner.

Often parents/carers will hear *'I'm bored'*, *'That's not fun'* or *'I have nothing else to do'* because they are unable to think of a suitable distraction. Depending on what they were playing they may be wired, have additional energy, be angry or aggressive and require some direction.

Unhelpful actions include 'you have plenty of toys,' 'I'm sure you can find something to do', 'you need to calm down'. If we remember how the brain develops the last aspect to fully develop is the rational part of the brain so your child will not stop and think about the way they are behaving. They may be unable to acknowledge how irrational their behaviour may seem to you as they are in their bubble of emotions.

What we can do is to recognise the common behaviours your child displays when they finish playing and implement activities or techniques to help them to address these behaviours in a calm and controlled manner.

Activities

This section of the workbook provides suggested activities your child may enjoy as an alternative to game play or to help calm down after game play. Printable templates and techniques are also included to help your child identify and explore their emotions, and with your support, implement suitable coping strategies.

Activities to Calm Emotions

If your child is struggling with their emotions, you may want to help them develop strategies to help them refocus and calm down, particularly if they're feeling overwhelmed. These ideas may be useful if they struggle to leave game play or perhaps in general day- to-day when they experience stressful situations. You may wish to suggest some of the below activities or help them to create their own list of activities they enjoy. You will find a table for them to complete on page 21 if they wish to create their own. Alternatively on page 22 you could ask them to keep a tally chart of all the activities they have done over the course of the week. Use this tally chart to discuss the impact of these on their wellbeing.

Outside Activities

Encouraging children to go outside and get some fresh air is a good way to help calm them down after a session of energising game play.

You might want to suggest:

- Playing/kicking a football
- Jumping on a trampoline
- Going for a run
- Going for a bike ride
- Skipping
- Dancing

Relaxing Activities

Encouraging/supporting your child to calm their thoughts and slow their heart rate can help to them to relax your child. These can include physical and non-physical activities, usually consisting of selfcare time or engaging in activities that requires focus.

- Yoga
- Meditation
- Putting on some music
- Reading
- Lego
- Blowing bubbles
- Arts and crafts
- Puzzles
- Baking
- Playing with playdough/kinetic sand.



Emotions: I feel, I say, I do.

In the boxes below write or draw how you feel, what you say and what you do when you experience different emotions. Then think about something you might like to do/ an activity, it might be to help manage your feelings or do something simply because you enjoy it.

I Feel happy

I say

I do

I could

I Feel angry

I say

I do

I could



Emotions: I feel, I say, I do.

In the boxes below write or draw how you feel, what you say and what you do when you experience different emotions. Then think about something you might like to do/ an activity, it might be to help manage your feelings or do something simply because you enjoy it.

I Feel sad

I say

I do

I could

I Feel lonely

I say

I do

I could



Emotions: I feel, I say, I do.

Why not keep a Tally Chart of all the activities you do in a week. At the end of the week discuss with your carer how each activity makes you feel. What do you like doing best? Do these activities help you to feel more positive and do you notice any changed in your behaviour? You might like to create your own Tally chart with different activities these are just a guide. Please check whether you need any adult supervision first.

Playing/kicking a football	TALLY
Jumping on a trampoline	
Going for a run	
Going for a bike ride	
Skipping	
Dancing	
Yoga	
Meditation	
Lego	
Putting on some music	
Blowing bubbles	
Reading	
Arts and crafts	
Puzzles	
Baking	
Playing with playdough/kinetic sand.	

Activities to Calm Emotions

There are other tools which can help to calm your child down. Some of these require some creation but have been proven to help calm and destress children ⁽¹⁰⁾. Your child may enjoy helping you to make these. Keep them somewhere where they are easily accessible for your child.

Stress Balls: There are different methods to make these – using rice, squidges, rubbers, socks etc. so they do not have to be expensive. Stress balls help muscle relaxation as well as being a tool to calm the body and mind.

Fidget Spinners: You can buy these, or you can create your own with Lego or similar products. These help the brain to focus on something which is less taxing.

Sensory Bottle: These can be bought but are much more fun for your child to make and create their own personal one. Use a water bottle, glue, glitter and choices of marbles, shells, animals, buttons or glow in the dark figures to create a glitter lamp/calming bottle which a child can shake and watch the contents slowly settle. This method relaxes and soothes the brain and regulates emotions.

Putty: There are lots of different types and again you can buy these or make your own. Stretching, pushing or general play can provide comfort and a focus for their hands.

Weighted blankets: Good for when your child wants to sit and relax, having a weighted blanket can help your child feel rooted and calm.

Scents and Oils: Another sensory style is smell which can calm the senses and create a relaxing and soothing environment.

Use a diffuser in a room to help soothe your child without them realising.

Let them explore different scents to identify their personal preferences.

Create a spa environment where they can relax with a face mask or other treatment. Drop some oils onto a pillow to help aid sleep (please check oil suitability).



Triggers and Actions Activity

Children can become so engaged in on-line play they are not aware of their actions or behaviours. If they had the ability to step outside of their body and observe themselves, they might be able to identify these patterns. For others this may not be the case as they are too engrossed in the activity to see.

For those who are starting to spend too much time on these activities this simple activity can help them to learn to recognise triggers and implement safer practices.

Step 1

Have your child complete a diary over two weeks to focus on the following areas:

- What game were they playing?
- Who were they playing with?
- Time spent playing the game
- How much money was spent on microtransactions
- Feelings they experienced whilst gaming.
- Any triggers identified during play



Triggers and Actions Activity

Step 2

- Once the diary is completed, sit with your child and look to see if you notice any patterns:
- What feelings were they experiencing?
- Where there any reoccurring feelings and were these linked to a certain activity?
- Did any outside situations in their life trigger the need to game/gamble?

Step 3

- Help your child review their actions. Look at the triggers.
- **What situations give them the urge to Game/Gamble?**
- If they can identify what pressures/issues/situations make them want to find a form of escape help them to look at how to reduce these issues and cope in a safer way.
- **ASK your child what actions can they take to reduce these triggers?**
- Help them to identify safe coping strategies to implement.



Anger Management Techniques

Anger and frustration are common behaviours displayed by children during and after gaming.

This behaviour may be linked directly to the game or triggered by game play or the behaviours of others.

This exercise can be used with the child to help them to identify negative emotions and enable them to implement healthy practices.

Task

Ask the young person in your care to complete the table on the following page. This helps them to identify their feelings and think of ways they can help themselves.

Discuss what they identify and help them to think of ways they can help that behaviour.



Anger Management Techniques

When I get angry	
What happens in my head?	
What does my body do?	
How do I feel?	
How do I want to react	
How can I vent my anger safely?	





Feelings Thermometer

An important step to help someone understand their anger is understanding how intense it can become and the situations that make it intense. Children sometimes find it difficult to assess a situation and their reaction to a situation.

A feelings thermometer is a helpful visual way to help children reflect on how intensely they feel anger, how strongly they react and how their anger affects the situation and themselves.

Activity.

Ask your child to think about what they can do to help themselves at each emotion on the scale. They can use the aid to identify which level they are feeling and what activity they can do to help themselves.



Feelings Thermometer

Level of Anger

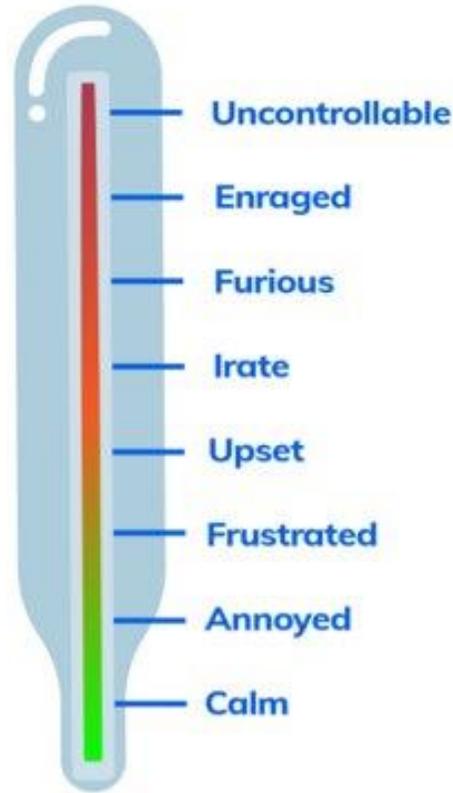
Activity: Feelings Thermometer

(Recommended Age 7+)

An important step to understanding anger is understanding how intense it can become and the situations that trigger this.

Children sometimes find it difficult to assess a situation and their reaction to a situation.

A feelings thermometer is a helpful visual way to help children reflect on how intensely they feel anger, how strongly they react and how the anger affects the situation and themselves.



I feel...	
Annoyed	Distract yourself with an activity
Frustrated	Use the glitter jar for distraction
Upset	Do something comforting: watch a film, read a book, ask for a hug
Irate	Exercise: go for a walk, ride a bike
Furious	Concentrate on breathing exercises, listen to music
Enraged	Kick a football against a wall
Uncontrollable	Go to your safe space and use your box of tools to calm yourself down



Feelings Thermometer Template



I feel...	
Uncontrollable	
Enraged	
Furious	
Irate	
Upset	
Frustrated	
Annoyed	
Calm	



Calming Activity

Sometimes taking a moment and surrounding yourself with your senses can help you to calm down. This exercise is useful in stressful situations (7). Taking a few moments to realign your senses can be calming and soothing. Sit your child down where they cannot be interrupted and follow the activity.

Activity:

Take 2 minutes to close your eyes and relax your body and mind. Take some deep breaths in and out to focus. Try not to let any thoughts creep in and focus on your senses.

The template can be used for children to focus on their senses and jot down their thoughts.



Calming Activity

I See...	
I Hear...	
I Smell...	
I Taste...	
I Feel...	



5 Point Scale

Children can become engrossed in play and immerse themselves in the game. On occasions they may display negative behaviour whilst playing, this can be due to getting caught up in the game, responding to a situation, an internal response to a trigger or the behaviour is masking an additional need.

Children are led by their emotions and can react quickly rather than pausing to think about a situation. To support your child, this simple activity can be completed together to manage their emotions and be able to implement safe coping techniques.

The 5 point scale (8) was developed as a system to teach social and emotional concepts to individuals on the autism spectrum. Created by Kari Dunn Burton, it aims to help children become aware of their emotions

Activity

Use the suggested template as a guide to fill out the blank template with your child. Discuss with your child how they feel, along with any observations both you and your child have made around the child's emotions. From this you can both implement techniques which can help. This can be an ongoing tool to be reviewed and updated.



5 Point Scale

5 I am going to explode I need an adult to help me	4 Rumbling I need some support	3 Feeling I might need to take a break	2 I know something doesn't feel right, But I know what to do	1 I'm happy
Feels like... I feel bad and I'm not sure how to stop this. I want to scream, hit someone, break things or punch someone.	Feels like... I feel like I'm starting to lose control or I might say or do something I could regret later. I'm yelling at the game and I'm arguing with people.	Feels like... I'm starting to feel frustrated. I'm getting frustrated with the game. My voice is getting louder and I feel worried.	Feels like... I'm listening to my body and I'm doing my best. My eyes are tired and my body feels tired	Feels like... I feel good about myself, I'm enjoying playing. I can recognise if I feel tired, angry or stressed
I can... Take a break/leave the room, take some deep breaths, go for a run or do a calming activity.	I can... Take a break and move away from what's upsetting me. Drink some water, Choose another activity, take some time to calm down.	I can... Let someone know how I am feeling. Take a break, take some deep breaths, focus on my senses or something else that makes me happy.	I can... I'm ok to keep playing but I know I need to listen to my body. Take deep breaths, have a drink and do some quick stretches.	I can... I know to take regular breaks – have a drink and get some fresh air and I can carry on having fun



5 Point Scale Template

5 I am going to explode I need an adult to help me	4 Rumbling I need some support	3 Feeling I might need to take a break	2 I know something doesn't feel right, But I know what to do	1 I'm happy

Feels like				
I can				



Other resources

Other resources you may wish to consider.

Books can be good tools to use to identify emotions. Here are some useful books around anger:

- I feel angry by Brian Moses
- There's a Volcano in my Tummy by Elaine Whitehouse & Warwick Pudney
- What Were You Thinking by Bryan Smith
- Don't Rant & Rave on Wednesdays by Adolph Moser
- Hot Stuff to Help Kids Chill Out by Jerry Wilde

Support Organisations



GamCare offers information, advice & support for anyone affected by gambling harms in the UK. Their National helpline is open 24 hours a day. Call free on 08088020133 or access their online chat. For young people call 02030926964 or visit YoungPeopleService@gamcare.org.uk



There are NHS Gambling clinics in Manchester, Leeds, Sunderland and London & a National Gaming clinic in London. They can provide support for those experiencing harm, as well as those affected by someone else's problem



Shout 85258 is a free, confidential 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. Text 'SHOUT' to 85258



Providing support for young people and parents around mental health issues. Call the **parents helpline 0808 802 5544** (M-F 9.30am – 4pm) For young people text **YM to 85258**



Childline is a free private & confidential service for anyone under 19 in the UK. Call free on **0800 1111** to talk to a trained counsellor or via 121 counsellor chat online



Providing information for parents around exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse, mental health issues, along with specialist support for families. Visit: www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-young-people

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